

535 Stow Street, Fond du Lac, WI 54935

## **CONSTITUTION & BY-LAWS**

Adopted March, 1979

Revised October, 2018; Revised January, 2025, Updated January 2026

**ARTICLE I NAME** The name of this church shall be Pilgrim United Church of Christ of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

**ARTICLE II OBJECT** (Purpose) The object of this church shall be to bind together the followers of Jesus Christ for the purpose of sharing in the worship of God and in making God's will dominant in the lives of all people, individually and collectively, and especially as that will is set forth in the life, teachings, and death of Jesus Christ. The object of this church shall also be to teach Christian responsibility not only in the local community but also in the national and world community; to celebrate the sacraments; to promote Christian fellowship and unity within this local church and the church universal.

**ARTICLE III POLITY** The government of this church is vested in its members who exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject in legal matters to the Articles of Incorporation granted it by the Secretary of State of the State of Wisconsin. While this church is amenable to no ecclesiastical judiciary, it accepts the obligation of mutual council, comity and cooperation involved in the free fellowship of the United Church of Christ and pledges itself to share its common aims and work and financial goals as set forth in the Constitution and By-Laws of the U.C.C., adopted July 4, 1961.

**ARTICLE IV DOCTRINE** (Faith) This church recognizes the Bible as the sufficient rule of faith and practice and holds that living in accordance with the teaching of Jesus Christ is the true test of fellowship. Each member shall have the undisturbed right to follow the Word of God according to the dictates of his/her own conscience under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. It claims as its own the faith of the historic Church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers. It affirms the responsibility of the church in each generation to make this faith its own. In accordance with the teaching of our Lord, it recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion.

**Covenant:** We covenant one another and the Lord to seek and respond to the Word and the will of God. It is our purpose to walk together in the ways of the Lord, made known and to be made known to us. We hold it to be the mission of the church to witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world, striving for truth, justice, and peace, while worshipping God and depending on the Holy Spirit to lead and empower us.

**Statement of Faith:** The following statement of faith is not a test but rather a testimony to the Christian faith. This church affirms the U.C.C. Statement of Faith as containing those truths most generally held amongst us:

"We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit, who is made known to us in Jesus our brother, and to whose deeds we testify.

God calls the worlds into being, creates humankind in the divine image, and sets before us the ways of life and death.

God seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

God judges all humanity and all nations by that will of righteousness declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, God has come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the whole creation to its Creator.

God bestows upon us the Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

God calls us into the church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be servants in the service of the whole human family, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table. To join him in his passion and victory.

God promises to all who trust in the gospel, forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, the presence of the Holy Spirit in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in that kingdom which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto God. Amen”

**ARTICLE V MEMBERSHIP** The membership of this church shall be open to all persons who have publicly accepted its covenant, (a) by rite of confirmation, young people or adults, or on presentation of satisfactory letters of transfer from other Christian churches; (b) by re-affirmation of faith if letters are not available; (c) on the confession of faith and baptism; or (d) on recommendation of the Church Council when external baptism is waived because of conviction. Any persons who are unable to attend in public may be received by the Church Council acting in behalf of the church.

1. Responsibilities of members: Members are expected to take an active part in the work of the church. This should include regular attendance at worship, reception of Holy Communion, financial support of the church, and participation in the life of the church.
2. Rights of members: All members of this church shall have the following rights: (a) to vote on all matters brought before the church; (b) to hold office; (c) to initiate business and further the church activities within the limits of the Constitution and By-Laws of the church. Exception: Only adult members (18 years of age or older) may vote on matters which bind the church fiscally or convey or encumber property. (This is required under the laws of the State of Wisconsin) There shall be no right to vote by proxy or absentee ballot unless authorized by the Church Council.
3. Termination of membership: (a) Members may at their own request be granted letters of transfer to other Christian churches. Members may at their own request in writing withdraw from membership; (b) Membership and Evangelism Ministry will conduct an annual review of membership rolls and will identify potential inactive members. A letter of intent will be sent to those members. If no response is received, those persons or families will be placed on the

inactive list which will be presented to the Church Council for approval. Inactive members shall remain on the inactive list for one year. From the date of this transfer such persons shall not be reported on the active membership roll. If no further involvement in the Church life is apparent in the coming year, those inactive members will be removed from the church rolls.

4. **Membership Rolls:** Accurate membership rolls shall be provided to the administrative assistant, the pastor, and the church council. **The accurate rolls will be utilized to update the Membership Book and the Church Directory.**

#### **ARTICLE VI WORSHIP**

1. A worship service shall be held at least weekly except when temporarily suspended by vote of the governing body. Special services may be held at the discretion of the pastor and Council.
2. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at such times as the governing body may determine but not less than six times per calendar year. The baptism of adults and children shall be administered at such times as the pastor determines. No sacrament is compulsory on any member. These sacraments shall be administered at worship services except in extenuating circumstances.

#### **ARTICLE VII**

1. **Office of the Pastor:** The pastor shall be a spiritual leader of the church and its chief administrator. The pastor shall be servant, teacher, preacher and spiritual overseer. The pastor shall be assured of the freedom of the pulpit to express his/her concerns as he/she sees them. The pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all committees and organized groups of the church. As long as there is a pastor, no other minister may perform any religious ceremony in the church without the pastor's consent, except when he/she is incapacitated by illness.
2. **Call of the Pastor:** When a vacancy occurs in the pastorate, the Church Council shall appoint a committee on Pastoral Leadership consisting of at least five members, all of whom shall be members of the church. This committee shall, with the cooperation of the Northeast Association and the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ, make a canvass of available ministers, decide whom should be called to the pastorate, introduce him/her to the membership, and at a duly called meeting for that purpose propose his/her election. He/she shall be called for an indefinite period of service by a two-thirds vote of those members present and voting. In the call, "covenant" terms of the relationship shall be stated, including the church providing health insurance, contribution to retirement fund, and other benefits depending on specific needs of the pastor. The Pastor, the church, the Association and the Conference Office shall each receive a copy of the call.
3. **Termination of the Pastorate**
  - (a) The pastor shall give sixty (60) days' notice in writing of his/her desire to terminate the pastoral relationship, but in case of mutual consent, it may be terminated sooner.

- (b) The membership may terminate the pastoral relationship after efforts have been made to resolve dissatisfactions. If the membership is dissatisfied with the pastor, the dissatisfactions should be reported to the Pastoral Relations Committee, which shall meet with the pastor to attempt resolution of the problem areas(s). If there is continued dissatisfaction, the Church Council shall seek the counsel of the Division on Church and Ministry of the Northeast Association. The pastor is to be informed of the meeting with the Division and is entitled to be heard at such meeting. A special meeting of the congregation may be called to discuss the members' concerns, the results of the Council's and pastor's meeting with the Division, the Council's recommendation(s), and the pastor's views. At least two weeks in advance of the special meeting, the Secretary shall in writing notify all members of the meeting and the nature of the meeting. By a two-thirds majority of members present and voting, the membership may vote to terminate the pastoral relationship. The pastor must be given a six-month's notice.
- (c) In case of the loss of ministerial standing on the part of the pastor, the relationship shall cease at once.
- (d) For Cause: In case of proposed dismissal for cause, the Church Council shall consider the case at a Council meeting called specifically for that purpose, prior to which the pastor shall have been given at least ten days' notice in writing of the pending action and the Church Council shall have sought the counsel of the Division on Church and Ministry of the Northeast Association. The pastor may attend such meeting with the Division on Church and Ministry and be given full opportunity for a hearing with whatever assistance he/she may choose. In like manner, when the Church Council meets by itself, this same privilege shall prevail. If a majority of the Church Council votes for dismissal of the pastor, a special meeting of the church shall be called, at which the recommendation of the Church Council shall be presented. At least two weeks in advance of the special meeting, the Secretary shall in writing notify all members of the meeting and the nature of meeting. The pastor shall be given ample opportunity to comment and any appropriate action may be taken. If a two-thirds majority of members present and voting favor dismissal, the pastorate shall be declared open and the action shall be reported promptly to the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ and the Northeast Association.

#### **ARTICLE VIII GOVERNING BODY AND MEETINGS**

1. The governing body of this church shall be the members assembled in a congregational meeting—"assembled" meaning either in person or virtually in special circumstances. A quorum shall consist of 10% of the active membership and is required for congregational meetings. The vote of a majority of the members present at the meeting shall be the action of the church.
2. An annual congregational meeting shall be held at the beginning of each year, the exact date to be set by the Church Council. Written notification to the active members shall be made at least two weeks prior to the meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to present annual reports of the officers, ministries, and standing committees, to act on

the proposed budget for the current year, to elect officers and ministry members for the current year, and to transact any other appropriate business.

3. Special meetings for business may be called by the pastor, by the Church Council, or upon the written request of ten (10) members of the church. The notice of a special meeting shall be issued by the Secretary in writing at least two weeks in advance and shall state the nature of the meeting.
4. The official year shall begin on January 1. Officers and ministry members shall assume duties upon being elected.

#### **ARTICLE IX CHURCH COUNCIL**

1. The Church Council shall consist of a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer or assistant treasurers and chairpersons of seven special church ministries: Worship, Christian Education (of all ages), Property and Maintenance, Stewardship and Finance, Lay Life and Leadership, Christian Outreach, and Membership and Evangelism. The Church Council officers and ministry representatives shall be members of the church. The president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer shall be elected by the congregation for 2-year terms. The officers may not serve for more than two consecutive terms, except the treasurer, assistant treasurers, and secretary who may serve indefinitely or until the Church Council or the treasurer, assistant treasurers or secretary request a change.
2. The members of the Church Council shall be the trustees of the church, having care and custody of the property and having charge of its financial affairs subject to regulations prescribed by the laws of the State of Wisconsin. The Council shall not have power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer real property without specific authority granted by a vote of the congregation. The Council may not borrow in excess of \$7,500 without vote of the congregation.
3. The Church Council shall have full authority to act on behalf of the congregation between congregational meetings unless otherwise specified in these articles. It shall meet monthly September through May and as necessary June through August to oversee the general affairs of the church and shall set policies in accord with those articles relating to doctrine, polity and purpose. A quorum shall consist of six members.
4. The minutes of the Church Council shall be published and provided to all members of the congregation, either by postal mailing or electronic format; and either separately or in the monthly newsletter.
5. The Church Council shall have authority to fill all vacancies except that of the pastor until the next annual congregational meeting.
6. The Church Council shall be responsible for the preparation of a proposed budget to be acted on by the membership at the annual congregational meeting.

7. The Church Council shall receive and review the proposed amendments and/or revisions from the Constitutional Review Committee. Amendments and/or revisions recommended by the Council shall be presented to the congregation for action at a regular or special congregational meeting.
8. Special meetings of the Church Council may be called by the president or pastor or at the request of three members of the Church Council.
9. The pastor shall not be a voting member of the Church Council.
10. The Financial Assistants shall be appointed by the Church Council.
11. The Church Council shall appoint the delegates to the Northeast Association and to the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ annual meetings.
12. The Church Council shall appoint all Standing Committees as detailed in Article XII.
13. No paid employee shall be a voting member of the Church Council.

#### **ARTICLE X DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS**

##### The President:

1. Shall preside at all meetings of the congregation and Church Council.
2. Shall, together with the treasurer, be empowered to sign all contracts, loans, and deeds in the name of the congregation.
3. Shall be a member of the Constitutional review committee or designate a Council member.
4. Shall appoint three members to the Nominating Committee.

##### The Vice President:

1. Shall perform the duties of the president in his/her absence.
2. Shall serve on the Personnel Committee for all church employees except the pastor and shall be the liaison between employees and the Church Council.
3. Shall advise and recommend to the Council regarding equipment and furnishings for the pastor's study and the secretary's office.
4. Shall be a member of the Nominating Committee and Safe Church Advisory Committee.

##### The Secretary:

1. Shall keep a record of all transactions of the meetings of the congregation and the Church Council;
2. Shall attend to all necessary correspondence;

~~3.—Shall maintain the official roll of members; and (DELETE)~~

4. Shall deliver to his/her successor in office all books, papers, etc., in his/her possession belonging to the congregation.

The Treasurer:

1. Shall see that all money of the church is deposited in such depository as the Church Council shall direct;
2. Shall have custody of all securities, accounts, titles and intangible property of the church;
3. Shall pay all budgeted bills of the church and unbudgeted bills on certification by the Church Council;
4. Shall keep an accurate account of all receipts and disbursements;
5. An insurance contract shall be in place which guarantees payment in the event of financial loss through action of the treasurer.
6. The treasurer may with the approval of the Church Council contract with a trust company, bank, the Wisconsin Conference or a corporation of the General Synod of the United Church of Christ to invest endowment legacies, trust funds, and securities, and shall keep an account of all such funds.
7. Shall provide detailed statements at least annually to each contributor.
8. Shall review the church investments.
  - a. This shall be done at least annually (more often if appropriate)
  - b. This shall be done with at least 2 voting members of the church, one of which will be from the Stewardship and Finance Ministry.

The Assistant Treasurer/s:

1. Shall perform all of the duties of the treasurer at the request of the treasurer.
2. An insurance contract shall be in place which guarantees payment in the event of financial loss through action of an assistant treasurer.
3. Shall assume the office of treasurer to complete the remaining term of office if the treasurer should become incapacitated or resign.

Financial Assistant/s:

1. An insurance contract shall be in place which guarantees payment in the event of financial loss through action of a financial assistant.
2. Shall receive all monies and keep an account of the same.
3. Shall deposit or otherwise secure all monies as directed by the Treasurer.

## **ARTICLE XI CHURCH STRUCTURE**

1. The life of the congregation shall be facilitated by lay responsibility in seven special church ministries: Worship, Christian Education (for all ages), Property and Maintenance, Stewardship and Finance, Lay Life and Leadership, Membership and Evangelism, and Christian Outreach.
2. Each ministry shall consist of four members elected by the congregation at the annual congregational meeting for a term of two years, two to be elected each year. A ministry member may serve additional terms. Each ministry shall meet to elect one of its members to be chairperson, who shall represent the ministry on the Church Council by the January meeting. If the chairperson cannot attend a Council meeting, the ministry shall appoint a substitute representative.
3. Each ministry may appoint additional members for the purpose of administering the responsibilities of the ministry, and such members shall have voice and vote at all meetings within the committee except for the selection of the ministry chairperson.
4. Each ministry shall be responsible for the administration of the church program and policy in its area. At its initial meeting, each ministry shall be charged with reviewing its purpose and the scope of its responsibilities. These shall be contained in a written statement which shall be submitted to the Church Council for approval. Any changes shall be submitted through the ministry chairperson for approval by the Church Council. These statements plus authority granted by the Church Council shall be the guideline for the ministry, and statements defining all ministries shall be kept on file.

## **ARTICLE XII COMMITTEES (Standing and Ad Hoc Committees)**

1. Nominating Committee: The committee shall consist of the Vice President of the Church Council and three other church members. The committee will be appointed annually by the President of the Church Council. This committee shall nominate Church Council officers and members of the seven special ministries. The report of the nominating committee shall be published at least two weeks prior to the date of the annual congregational meeting. Nominees will be elected at the annual congregational meeting. Nominations may also be proposed from the floor at the meeting with the consent of the nominee. The nominees for Ad Hoc committees will be submitted to the Church Council for approval and appointment.
2. Constitutional Review Committee: This committee shall be comprised of three members: the President of the Church Council or his/her Church Council designee and two church members who shall be appointed annually by the Church Council. The committee shall review the Constitution and By Laws to assure compliance by the Council and Governing Body and to suggest changes to reflect current practices or to address specific concerns in the governing process. The Church Council may suggest amendments and/or revisions to be considered by the Constitutional Review Committee. The committee shall report to the Church Council one month prior to the Annual congregational meeting.

3. Pastoral Support Committee: This committee shall be comprised of church members. Each member shall serve for three years, one being appointed each year. The committee shall meet at least four times per year to discuss with the pastor areas of special concern, to serve as a liaison between the pastor and the church membership and to serve as a means of resolving conflicts in a proper and timely manner and to be a confidential community with whom the pastor can share some of his/her parish burdens and concerns. The committee shall provide support to the pastor during periods of transition and conflict. The committee shall be appointed by the Church Council and shall report once a year to the Church Council or whenever the Council or Committee deems it appropriate. This committee shall annually review the pastor's performance and report its findings to the Council. This committee shall annually review the pastor's compensation and initiate changes to be proposed for the next annual budget.
4. Memorial Committee: This committee shall consist of three members appointed by the Church Council. Each member shall serve three years, one being appointed each year. This committee shall administer the Memorial Funds with the approval of the Church Council.
5. Trust Fund Committee: This committee shall exist as defined by the Pilgrim United Church of Christ Trust Fund Document and Pilgrim United Church of Christ Maintenance and Capital Improvements Trust Fund.
6. Financial Auditing Committee: This committee shall consist of a Stewardship and Finance Ministry member and two other people appointed annually by the Church Council. The Treasurer shall attend the Auditing Committee meetings. The committee shall review the general fund and all other funds of the church and present its report at the annual congregational meeting.
7. Safe Church Advisory Committee: The Safe Church Advisory Committee will be comprised of the Vice President and three members including at least one female and one male, appointed by the Church Council. Each member shall serve for three years, one being appointed each year. The ministry shall be responsible for providing policy relevant to an abuse free environment for everyone—children, youth, adults, visitors and employees who participate in our programs and use our facilities. We want our congregation to be a safe haven, free of all forms of abuse, harassment, exploitation, and intimidation.
8. Personnel Committee: The Vice President will serve on this committee with a recommended two additional members. This committee is responsible for the following: (1) establishing employee (excluding the pastor) pay grades, job classifications, and making recommendations and decisions on employee benefits (2) developing policies and procedures that help employees understand expectations for their time at work (3) making recommendations for staff training (4) reviewing job applications and recommending job candidates for interviews. Oversee paperwork needed for employment (5) overseeing employee performances and answering

employees' questions when needed (6) developing reward and recognition for employees.

9. Just World Covenant Committees:

Each UCC Just World Covenant approved by the congregation shall have a committee which will work to ensure the congregation lives into its covenants. Each Covenant Committee shall have a month in which it promotes the covenant within the congregation. Each committee shall be provided a voice on the council through the Council Vice President. If needed, the committee may request time at a council meeting to be heard.

Current Covenants held by Pilgrim United Church of Christ:

1. Open and Affirming (O&A)
2. Welcome, Inclusive, Supportive, Engaged (WISE)
3. Creation Justice

10. Ad Hoc Committees: Ad Hoc committees may be created by the Church Council. Ad Hoc committee members shall be appointed by the Church Council.

### **ARTICLE XIII FINANCES**

- 1) General Fund: The General Fund consists of all items used to transact the operating budget.
- 2) Additional Funds:
  1. Memorial Fund: The Memorial Fund shall exist as a dependent of Pilgrim United Church of Christ Memorial Fund policy with Church Council approval.
  2. Trust Fund: The Trust Fund and Maintenance and Capital Improvements Trust Fund shall exist as dependents of Pilgrim United Church of Christ and shall operate according to the Pilgrim United Church of Christ Trust Fund document and Pilgrim United Church of Christ Maintenance and Capital Improvements Trust Fund.
  3. Ad Hoc Funds: Ad Hoc Funds may be created and administered by the Church Council.
  4. Capital/Building Fund: The Capital/Building Fund shall exist as a dependent of Pilgrim United Church of Christ. It shall operate according to the Pilgrim United Church of Christ Capital/Building Fund policy with Church Council approval.
- 3) Apportionment: The church will make every effort to meet the apportionment quota recommended by the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ.
- 4) Legacies: All legacies not specifically appropriated by the donor to some other purpose shall be distributed by the Church Council to the general fund, the Pilgrim United Church of Christ Trust Fund, Pilgrim United Church of Christ Maintenance and Capital Improvements Trust Fund, or the Memorial Fund. Special funds may be established by the Church Council for memorials, "conditional gifts," and endowments.

### **ARTICLE XIV AMENDMENTS**

These By-laws may be altered or amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote at any regular or special meeting, provided that a notice specifying the time of the meeting and the substance of the proposed amendment shall have been sent two weeks before the meeting.