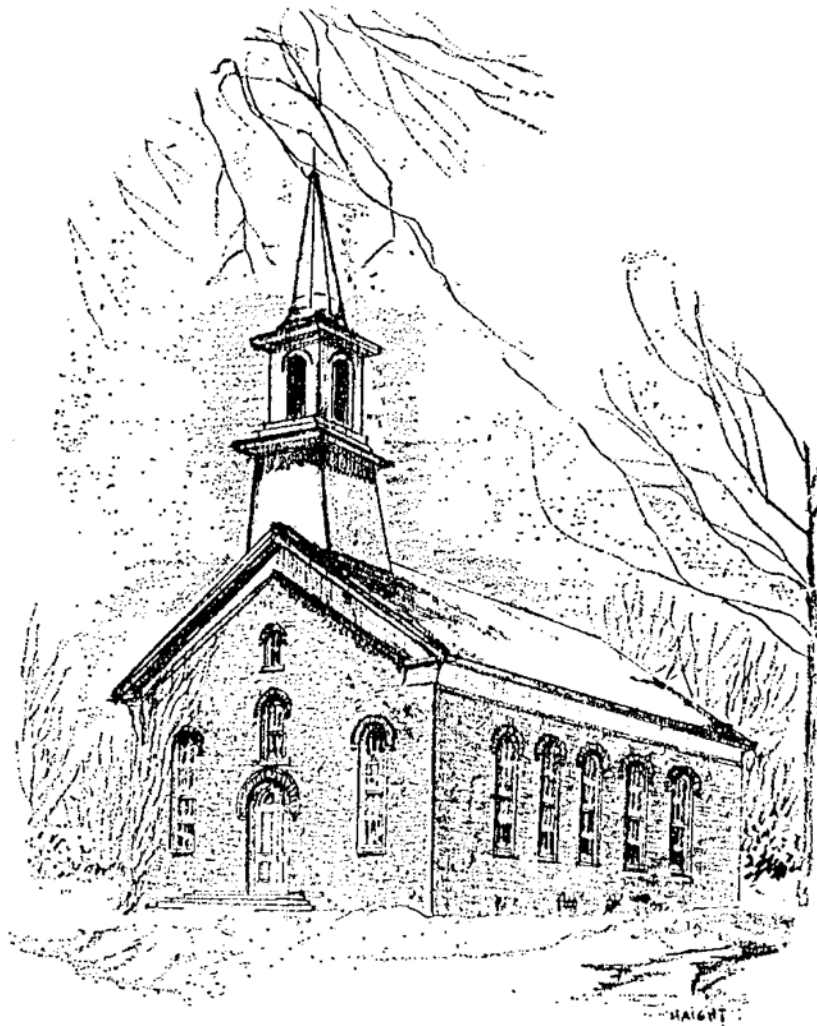


Jericho Congregational Church Constitution and Bylaws



Adopted January 10, 1980

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PREAMBLE

"Be it resolved that the members of the First Congregational Church of Jericho Center and the members of the Second Congregational Church of Jericho unite to become one Church under one Constitution and Bylaws, with one set of governing officers, continuing our affiliation with the United Church of Christ." Thus, on May 11, 1979 and January 10, 1979, respectively, the two churches took a giant step under God's guiding hand, and each approved this resolution unanimously. Additional approved resolutions called for all officers and committees to work jointly during 1979, plus charging a Constitution Committee with presenting a new Constitution and Bylaws for approval at our first united annual meeting on January 10, 1980.

The foresight of previous Constitution Committees was uncanny in that there existed only a few minor differences between First and Second Church constitutions. The joint Constitution Committee has modified, as necessary, some specifics of the bylaws, and, when assistance was needed, called on other committees and individuals for their expertise in certain areas. Included in the Constitution revisions are the Articles necessary for incorporation.

Now, on January 10, 1980, as we strive to put into practice the words and thoughts of our new constitution, we give thanks to our Lord for His help and guidance in reaching this milestone.

The church voted to end its affiliation with the United Church of Christ on September 24, 2002, because of our differences with the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ regarding the authority of God's Holy Word.

Subsequently, the church voted to join the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, known as the 4C's, and was officially accepted by the 4C's as a member on July 5, 2005.

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CONSTITUTION

The undersigned, acting as an incorporator of a corporation under the Vermont Non-Profit Corporation Act, adopts the following articles:

Article I: Name

The name of the corporation is the **Jericho Congregational Church**.

Article II: Duration

The period of its duration is perpetual.

Article III: History

In 1979, the First and Second Congregational Churches of Jericho voted to unite to become one Church under one Constitution and Bylaws, with one set of governing officers, continuing our affiliation with the United Church of Christ. The uniting of the First and Second Congregational Churches of Jericho expressed a common witness to make visible the unity of Christ's Church. The church subsequently voted to end its affiliation with the United Church of Christ on September 24, 2002, because of our differences with the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ regarding the authority of God's Holy Word. From 1791 when the first Congregational Church was founded in Jericho Center, there was one Congregational ministry to the community. When on August 31, 1826, the Second Congregational Church was formed at the Brick Meeting House in Jericho corners, its members set forth with blessings from the First Congregational Church at Jericho Center: "...wishing you, dear brothers and sisters, grace, mercy and peace, we subscribe ourselves affectionately yours."

The newly formed Church in 1980, therefore, represents both the old and the new: "old" in that it reflects a common historical origin; "new" in that it will be structured in fact to reflect what has been true in form since the United Parish was established in 1969. By uniting under one constitution in 1980, we both preserve our tradition and reaffirm our dedication to the work of Christ, His whole Church in Jericho and in the world today.

Article IV: Purpose (Mission Statement as Adopted)

The mission of the Jericho Congregational Church is to glorify God as a worshipful and nurturing body of believers. Under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and the truth as revealed in God's written Word, the Holy Bible. As we disciple one another to maturity of faith and use our spiritual gifts

and talents, God will unify us and make His love known in our church, community and the world.

Article V: Faith and Covenant

Preamble:

Uniquely created in the image of God, man is called to love Him with all of his heart, soul, mind and strength. Because man at the Fall chose disobedience which resulted in alienation from God and a heart that is deceitful and desperately wicked, unsaved man always seeks to suppress God's truth. Yet God in His mercy provided redemption from this unregenerate condition through the atoning sacrifice of His Son, Jesus, on the cross of Calvary. Therefore, all who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, indwelt and empowered by His Spirit, are called to preserve and proclaim God's truth and His message of judgment and salvation in and to every generation. This present generation is plagued by a grave erosion of truth. Such an erosion has borne the fruits of lawlessness and violence, the breakdown of Biblical Marriage and the family, the tolerance of all manner of sexual perversion, the devaluation of human life, especially that of the unborn, the elderly and the infirm, leading to a general state of moral confusion and despair, even among some who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we seek to proclaim a clear statement of our faith, a faith based on the unchanging truth of the Holy Scriptures and embodied in the historic ecumenical and Reformation creeds and confessions of the Church.

Statement of Faith:

- 1.) We confess our faith in the one true God, creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- 2.) We confess that God the Father is perfect in holiness, infinite in wisdom and measureless in power. We rejoice that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of mankind, hears and answers prayer and saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ.

- 3.) We confess that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully Man, the Word of God incarnate. Because of our sin and estrangement from God, at the Father's bidding, the Son took on flesh. Conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, He became like us in all things apart from sin. He died on the cross to atone for our sin and reconcile us to God and on the third day rose bodily from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God the Father. He is the sole head of the Church, the only Lord and Savior of us all, who will one day return in glory, power and judgment to usher in the Kingdom of God in all its fullness.

- 4.) We confess that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and has been given the ministry of glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ, convicting the world of sin, regenerating the hearts of those called by God to repent of their sins and confess Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord. The Holy Spirit indwells all believers, preserving, guiding, comforting, instructing and equipping them with spiritual gifts and empowering them for witness, godly living and service.

5.) We confess that the Bible is the inerrant written Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit, the infallible rule of faith and practice for the Church of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures have binding authority on all people. All other sources of knowing stand under the judgment of the Word of God.

6.) We confess that the central content of the Scriptures is the gospel of reconciliation and redemption through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ and victory over death through His glorious resurrection from the grave. The Good News is that we are saved from judgment and eternal separation from God by the grace of God alone, the grace revealed and fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus Christ, which is received by faith. Yet, this faith does not remain alone, but inspires works of mercy, justice and love for our neighbors.

7.) We confess that God by His Word and Spirit calls us into the fellowship of Christ's body, the Church, whose mission is to glorify God, as a worshipful and nurturing body of believers who encourage spiritual growth consistent with Scripture. As members of Christ's body, we are sent into the world to glorify God in every area of life and to make disciples of all peoples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything Jesus has commanded us. We seek to obey this commission in the full assurance that our Lord and Savior is with us always, even to the end of the age. We recognize two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion).

8.) We confess that all people are created in the image of God. As a consequence, all human life is sacred, endowed by God with inviolable worth and dignity. We are called by God to be good stewards of His entire creation.

9.) We confess that God created mankind "male and female" and ordained Biblical Marriage to be between one man and one woman.

10.) We confess the literal resurrection of all people, both the living and the dead, at Christ's return: the unsaved to judgment and everlasting separation from God in hell, and the saved to an everlasting life of blessedness and joy with the Lord in heaven. AMEN

Covenant:

We, the members of the Jericho Congregational Church, now bind together in covenant with one another and with eternal God. Walking together under God, and strengthened by the knowledge and love of Christ that has been made known to us, we hold it to be our mission and the mission of our Church to enter into a deeper relationship with God through Jesus Christ and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to express that relationship through a commitment to minister to the world according to Christ's way and word.

Article VI: Polity (Form of Government)

This Church acknowledges Jesus Christ as its Head, and finds in the Holy Scriptures, inspired by the Holy Spirit, its guidance in matters of faith and Biblical Discipline.

The government of this Church is vested in its members who exercise the right to control all its affairs. While this Church is subject to no other ecclesiastical body of authority, it accepts the mutual counsel, comity, and cooperation involved in the free fellowship of the Congregational Christian Churches, and all the member Churches of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference. Furthermore, it desires fellowship with all persons or groups of persons, who love and worship the God and Father of Jesus and who wait on His Word.

Article VII: Registered Office and Agent

The address of the registered office of the corporation is 331 Browns Trace (P.O. Box 1022) Jericho Center, Vermont 05465. The name of its registered agent at such address is the Reverend David Coons, or the successor Senior Pastor: of the Church corporation.

Article VIII: Advisory Board

The Advisory Board shall be the official board of the Church. In order to vote on the Advisory Board, you must be a member of Jericho Congregational Church. The number of members constituting the Advisory Board is twenty-four (24):

1. Senior Pastor:
2. Youth Pastor:
3. Moderator:
4. Clerk:
5. Financial Secretary:
6. Assistant Financial Secretary:
7. Treasurer:
8. Assistant Treasurer
9. Historian:
10. Superintendent of Church School:
11. Board of Deacons, Chair or Representative:
12. Board of Deacons, Representative:
13. Prudential Committee, Chair or Representative:
14. Prudential Committee, Representative:
15. Christian Education Committee, Chair or Representative:
16. Christian Education Committee, Representative:
17. Investment Administrator
18. Music Committee, Representative:
19. Flower Committee, Representative:
20. Fellowship Committee, Representative:
21. Nomination Committee, Representative:
22. Mission Committee, Representative:
23. Youth Board, Representative:
24. Information Technology Representative

Article IX: Real Property

The real property of the Church corporation, or any part or parcel thereof, or any interest therein, shall not be sold, mortgaged, leased for five (5) years or longer, or in any way transferred or diverted without the approval of the membership. For purposes of this Article only, at an annual or special meeting duly warned, with a quorum of at least fifty (50) members present, eighty (80) percent of those voting must vote in favor in order to authorize the sale, mortgage, lease for five (5) years or longer, or any other transfer or divestiture of real property of the Church.

[Formula: #for/(#for + #against). Note: Abstentions not counted.]

Article X: Merger, Consolidation, or Dissolution

This corporation shall not merge or consolidate with another corporation, nor shall it proceed to dissolution without the approval of the membership. For purposes of this article, at an annual or special meeting duly warned, with a quorum of at least fifty (50) members present, eighty (80) percent of those voting must vote in favor in order to authorize the merger or consolidation with another corporation or entity, or authorize the dissolution of this corporation.

In the event dissolution of this corporation is validly voted, it shall be accomplished consistent with the intent that the assets or funds shall be transferred or distributed only to such charitable or educational organizations as are described in Section 501 (C) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, or corresponding provisions of any subsequent federal tax laws. The membership shall choose which one or more of those qualifying organizations shall receive the assets of any portion thereof.

Article XI: Amendments

These Articles or any one of them shall only be amended or altered at an annual or special meeting duly warned with a quorum of at least forty (40) members present. At least two-thirds (2/3) of those voting must vote in favor in order for the amendment to be accepted.

Article XII: Effective Date

This Constitution shall become effective upon adoption and shall be filed with the Office of the Secretary of State.

Article XIII: Incorporator

The name and address of the incorporator was:

NAME

ADDRESS

Stephen R. Crampton

Jericho, Vermont 05465

Dated: Jericho, Vermont, on the 10th day of January, 1980.

Revised March 16, 1997

BYLAWS

Article I: Membership

Section I: Definition

Members shall endeavor to attend the regular worship of the Church and the celebration of the Lord's Supper; to live the Christian life; to share in the life and work of the Church; to contribute to its support and benevolences; and to seek diligently the spiritual welfare of the membership and the community.

Section II: Relational Commitments:

Relationships in the church will be guided and governed by the biblical principles set forth in a document entitled "Relational Commitments", which is incorporated into these Bylaws by reference and Attachment B. This document establishes our commitments related to peacemaking and reconciliation, preserving Biblical Marriages, protecting children, Biblical Counseling, confidentiality, accountability, and Biblical Church Discipline. These Commitments shall apply to the members of our church, and may be amended from time to time in the same way that these Bylaws may be amended.

Section III: Eligibility

Persons shall become eligible for membership as high school freshmen, or at the equivalent age, or at the discretion of the Board of Deacons. Members of this Church shall be qualified by acceptance of the Constitution and Bylaws of Jericho Congregational Church, being baptized, and making a public confession of faith in Jesus Christ.

Section IV: Receiving Members

Members of this Church shall be received by:

- A. A favorable vote by three quarters of the Deacons present at their meeting; and
- B. Majority vote of the membership at a regular or special meeting; and
- C. A service of reception at a regularly scheduled worship service unless such is deemed impossible by the Senior Pastor and Board of Deacons.

Section V: Types of Membership

Membership shall be of two kinds, active and inactive, for record purposes:

- A. Active membership shall consist of all members who have contributed of their time, talent, money, or have otherwise shown an interest in the welfare of the Church.

- B. Inactive membership shall include the names of members who have not attended at least one service and who have not contributed to the support of the Church during the previous year financially or otherwise, or upon request. -
- C. The Membership Roll shall be reviewed at the end of each Church year by the Board of Deacons, the Senior Pastor, and such other officers of the Church as may need be called to determine the above separation. Notification of those being considered for the inactive list will be made in writing by the Board of Deacons. The Roll shall be finalized at the January meeting of the Board of Deacons.
- D. The Board of Deacons shall reinstate members to active membership, at such time as an inactive member requests, when the reason for inactive membership has been nullified.

Section VI: Transfer of Membership

A letter of transfer may be granted upon request by mutual agreement and approval of the Senior Pastor and Board of Deacons.

- A. Letters addressed to more than one particular Church shall not be granted.
- B. The names of those granted letters shall be read by the Clerk at the next annual meeting.

Section VII: Termination of Membership

The Church may terminate a membership for good cause. Reasons for termination of membership include, but are not limited to:

- A. Death;
- B. By request of the member
- C. For church Biblical Discipline and failing to repent and humbly accept correction;

Termination shall require a notice, a hearing, and a two thirds (2/3) vote at a duly-warned meeting.

Article II: Worship

Section I: Times of Worship

Services of worship shall be held at given hours each Sunday, unless otherwise ordered by the vote of the Church, or directed by the Board of Deacons.

Section II: Holy Communion

The Sacrament of Holy Communion (or the Lord's Supper) shall be celebrated at such times as may be voted by the Church, or directed by the Board of Deacons.

Section III: Special Worship Services

Other special worship services may be held as determined by the Board of Deacons.

Article III: Membership Meetings

Section I: Official Church Year

The official year of the Church shall be the calendar year. All Officers, Boards, and Committees shall assume their duties immediately after the annual meeting and shall continue these duties until their successors are selected, nominated and elected.

Section II: Annual Meeting Day

The annual business meeting of this Church shall customarily be held on the fourth (4th) Thursday of January, or on a different day within the next two weeks established by the Moderator if necessary because of the lack of a quorum or a significant conflict exists with that day. The purpose of the meeting is to receive the annual reports of officers, committees and organizations and to act on any of their recommendations; to elect officers and other nominees; to hear and act upon the proposed elect officers and other nominees; to hear and act upon the proposed budget; and to transact such business as may properly come before it.

Section III: Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called by the Senior Pastor, Moderator, Advisory Board, or by petition of ten (10) members to the Advisory Board.

Section IV: Meeting Notices

Notices of meetings shall appear in two consecutive Sunday church bulletins prior to the meeting, posted to the www.jccvt.org web site, and be announced from the pulpit for two consecutive weeks.

Section V: Quorum

A quorum at any meeting, with four (4) exceptions, shall consist of twenty-five (25). These four (4) exceptions deal with the real property of the Church, merger consolidation and dissolution, amendments to the Constitution, and calling or dismissing a pastor. These are Articles IX, X and XI in the Constitution and Articles X and XI in the Bylaws. Each Article specifies its own quorum requirements.

Section VI: Voting Requirements

Voting on all motions or resolutions will be limited to active members of the Church. All motions and resolutions, except as provided for in Articles IX, X and XI of the Constitution and Articles X and XI in the Bylaws, and as set forth below, shall be adopted by a majority of those present and voting.

Article IV: Officers

Section I: Nomination and Election

Annually, at least one person shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee to fill each of the following offices: Moderator, Clerk, Financial Secretary, Assistant Financial Secretary, Treasurer,

Assistant Treasurer, and Historian. Additional nominations may be made by individual members at the annual meeting. All nominations will be from the Membership Roll of the Church. Each of the seven (7) officers shall be elected by a majority of those voting.

Section II: Vacancy

Any vacancy of an officer's position shall be filled by nomination of the Nominating Committee and elected by a majority of those voting at an Advisory Board meeting. Those elected shall serve for the remainder of the term of office.

Section III: Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the seven (7) officers are as follows:

- A. Moderator: To preside over the annual meeting and any business meeting of the Church or Advisory board. Any officer may preside in his absence.
- B. Clerk: To keep a true and faithful record of all meetings of the Church and Advisory Board; issue certificates of transfer of membership when granted by the church, noting to which Church addressed; and perform all of those duties which usually are given such office.
- C. Financial Secretary: To receive all offerings and all other income of the Church; keep records of same; and issue statements to members as requested; and deposit all monies. No individual financial information shall be released in any form without the expressed permission of the individual. See also Article XII on Memorial & Special Gifts
- D. Assistant Financial Secretary: To actively assist the Financial Secretary of the Church and be authorized to perform the Financial Secretary's duties during the Financial Secretary's absence.
- E. Treasurer: To ensure the recording of all monies and special gifts from the Financial Secretary and pay all bills, wages and salaries as ordered and directed by the Prudential committee, and keep records of same in coordination with the Church's bookkeeper.
- F. Assistant Treasurer: To actively assist the Treasurer of the Church and be authorized to perform the Treasurer's duties during the Treasurer's absence.
- G. Historian: To be responsible for keeping the Church archives and maintain a record of all valuables such as memorial plates, service plates, hymnals, and other personal property of the Church, see also Article XII on Memorial and Special Gifts.

Article V: Advisory Board

Section I: General Powers and Responsibilities

The Advisory Board shall be the official Board of the Church, setting the policy, making provision for determining unusual expenses and raising funds over and above the annual budget; planning and carrying out of future Church programs for either renovation or addition to Church property; planning community activities; and issuing statements of the Church. Special Church activities, new programs, or projects for Church action shall be presented to the Advisory Board before action is taken at a normal business meeting. All acts and deliberations of the Board are subject to revision by the members of the Church at any business meeting.

Section II: Number and Qualifications

The Advisory Board shall consist of the Senior Pastor; Youth Pastor; Officers of the Church; two representatives of the Board of Deacons, Prudential, and Christian Education; and one representative of each of the remaining committees of the Church. The Moderator shall preside at all Advisory Board meetings, or in his absence, one of the other officers.

The representatives to the Advisory Board shall be active members of the Jericho Congregational Church.

Section III: Meetings

The Board shall meet the first Wednesday of the third month of each quarter. If there is a conflict with other church activities, this date may be varied up to two weeks at the discretion of the Moderator. Special meetings may be called at the direction of the Moderator.

Section IV: Quorum

A quorum at any meeting shall consist of ten (10) members.

Section V: Voting

All motions shall be passed by a simple majority of those voting.

Article VI: Committees

Section I: Purpose and Election

Each committee shall perform a specific function for the Church. They shall be elected from a slate of nominations presented by the Nominating Committee or by individual members at the annual meeting of the Church. Where noted, committee members must be from the active Membership Roll of the Church. All committees and organizations shall submit a written report prior to the Annual Meeting for inclusion in the Annual report. Each committee shall annually choose its own chairperson and any other necessary officers.

All Committee Chairs shall be active members of the Jericho Congregational Church.

Section II: Board of Deacons

The Board of Deacons shall consist of a minimum of eight (8), maximum of twelve (12) members, with a minimum of four (4), maximum of six (6) men and minimum of four (4), maximum of six (6) women elected from the active Membership Roll each year for a term of three (3) years. Members shall exemplify Christian faith, conduct, and service. Deacons who have served for many years with distinction may be elected Deacon Emeritus for life.

The Board shall cooperate with the Senior Pastor and the Youth Pastor in tending to the spiritual and charitable interests of the Church and community, calling on members of the Church who are temporarily or permanently confined with illness and seeing to their comforting; shall be responsible for assisting the Senior Pastor and the Youth Pastor in instructing and receiving all applicants for membership in the Church; shall prepare and assist in the administering of the Sacraments; and shall vote to place members on the inactive rolls and keep records of the membership roll, acting in accordance with the procedure described elsewhere in these bylaws.

Section III: Prudential Committee

The Prudential Committee shall consist of nine (9) members with three (3) members elected from the active Membership Roll of the Church at the annual meeting each year for a term of three (3) years. The Treasurer and Investment Administrator shall serve as ex-officio members of this Committee.

The Prudential Committee shall have the care of the Church property and the interests of the Church; prepare a proposed budget for the ensuing year to be presented to the Advisory Board in December for approval; draw orders on the Treasurer for payment of all financial obligations of the Church as approved by the members in the annual budget or at a business meeting, setting priorities within available funds; and do such other duties as may be required of them.

The Prudential Committee shall have charge of all insurance on the Church property; recommend policy coverage where required; and see that all insurance policies are in proper order and safekeeping.

The Prudential Committee shall have no authority to contract for unusual expense without a consenting vote of the membership.

Section IV: Investment Administrator

The Investment Administrator shall have charge of all trust funds and have charge of all funds bequeathed to the Church for specified purposes. The Investment Administrator shall be elected from the active Membership Roll of the Church at the annual meeting for a term of one (1) year. See ATTACHMENT A

Section V: Christian Education Committee

The Christian Education Committee shall consist of a minimum of six (6) persons elected at the annual meeting for a term of one (1) year.

The Christian Education Committee shall have the supervision and direction of the educational program of the Church; shall provide for Church School curriculum and instruction; and shall recommend instructional activities for the Church as a whole. The are also charged with overseeing the nursery and library sub committees. The Committee shall present to the Prudential Committee at least three (3) months prior to the Annual Meeting a budget proposal for the following Church year.

Superintendent of Church School shall be responsible for the administration and supervision of church school programs of the Church under the direction of the Christian Education Committee. The term of office shall be from January to January.

Section VI: Youth Board

The Youth Board shall consist of a minimum of four (4) persons; at least one of which shall be a parent of an active youth. These persons shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of one (1) year. The Youth Pastor shall serve as an ex-officio member.

The Youth Board shall meet regularly to support and assist the Youth Pastor and the Senior Pastor with significant decisions or issues in the youth ministry. The Youth Board shall be knowledgeable of all programs involving youth and have periodic joint meetings with the Christian Education Committee, up to three (3) times a year to share information relevant to both groups.

The Youth Board shall present to the Prudential Committee, at least three (3) months prior to the Annual Meeting, a budget proposal for the following year.

Section VII: Missions Committee

The Missions Committee shall consist of a minimum of six (6) persons nominated annually for a term of one (1) year.

The Missions Committee is responsible for: (1) Promoting the interests and knowledge of missionary activities, both home and abroad, to the Jericho Congregational Church. (2) Assuring that each ministry we support has as its goal to make Jesus Christ known as Lord and Savior which includes evangelism and discipleship, as well as attention to human need. (3) Providing support for members who are called to prepare for a Ministry which will spread the gospel.

Section VIII: Music Committee

The Music Committee shall consist of a minimum of three (3) persons elected at the annual meeting for a term of one (1) year.

The Music Committee shall appoint choir directors as needed to organize and direct the activities of the choirs; schedule the organists, pianists and the special music; and coordinate a time of praise and worship music. The committee will also plan music for special services in the Church year, and coordinate with the pastor for specific worship themes. The committee will be responsible for extra musical events as the opportunities present themselves.

The Music committee shall also see to the maintenance of hymnals, music, and instruments, and advise the choir directors in matters of budget. The committee shall present to the Prudential Committee at least three (3) months prior to the Annual meeting a budget proposal for the following Church year.

Section IX: Flower Committee

The Flower Committee shall consist of a minimum of six (6) persons elected at the annual meeting for a term of one (1) year.

The Flower Committee shall be responsible for obtaining flowers and arranging them for the worship services of the Church, utilizing the memorial funds necessary; and for decorating the Church for special holidays.

Section X: Fellowship Committee

The Fellowship Committee shall consist of a minimum of twelve (12) persons elected at the annual meeting for a term of one (1) year.

The Fellowship Committee shall be in charge of the planning, preparation, and direction of church social events; arrange for refreshments for the annual meeting and as requested for special meetings.

Section XI: Delegates-At-Large

Delegates-at-large can be elected at the annual meeting for a term of one (1) year or appointed by the Advisory Board at a later time as required.

The Delegates-at-large shall represent the Church at all conferences, Association meetings and boards requiring a voice of the Church to be present, meeting in advance with the Advisory Board to ascertain the position and interests of the Church. These delegates shall be responsible for reporting to the membership at an annual meeting.

Section XII: Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee shall consist of six (6) persons with three (3) persons elected at the annual meeting for a term of two (2) years.

The Nominating Committee shall nominate at least one (1) person for each office and committee position plus three (3) auditors for the ensuing year, obtaining the consent of each person before

placing the name in nomination at the annual meeting. This list must be published two weeks prior to the Annual Meeting.

Section XIII: Information Technology Committee

The Information Technology Committee shall consist of a minimum of four (4) persons elected at the annual meeting for a term of one (1) year.

The Information Technology Committee has three main areas of responsibility including church office IT support, church AV ministry support and scheduling AV operators at both services and special events such as weddings, funerals, or guest speakers/performers. The committee shall present to the Prudential Committee at least three (3) months prior to the Annual meeting a budget proposal for the following Church year.

Section XIV: Compensation Committee

The Compensation Committee shall consist of six (6) persons for a term of one (1) year. The membership of the Compensation Committee will consist of the Moderator, the chair of the Deacons, the chair of the Prudential Committee, the chair of the Youth Board and 2 members of the congregation to be elected at the annual meeting.

The Compensation Committee is responsible for reviewing the compensation of the church employees annually and recommending adjustments needed to the Prudential Committee to incorporate in the annual budget.

Section XV: Usher Administrators

There shall be a minimum of two (2) Usher Administrators elected at the annual meeting for a term of one (1) year.

The Usher Administrators shall be responsible for obtaining at least two (2) ushers for each worship service and on other occasions when needed to greet and register visitors at the Church entrance; to aid the congregation as to seating; to receive the offering; to record the attendance; and to perform all other usual duties.

Section XVI: Special Committees

Special committees may be established for a specified function not to supersede the function of any existing committee. The committee shall cease to exist at the completion of its business. Members shall be appointed by the Advisory Board.

Section XVII: Vacancy

If a vacancy occurs, it shall be filled by nomination of the Nominating Committee and approved by the Advisory Board at its next regular meeting.

Article VII: Auditors

There shall be three (3) Auditors elected at the annual meeting for a term of one (1) year. They shall audit the books from the year previous to the one in which they were elected. They will communicate their findings the following year within the church annual report and at the annual meeting. For example, auditors elected at the 2025 annual meeting will audit the 2024 books and report their findings at the 2026 annual meeting.

Article VIII: Miscellaneous

Section I: Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the Church shall be the same as the Julian calendar year. (January 1st through December 31st)

Section II: Amendment of the Bylaws

These Bylaws or any one of them may be amended or altered at an annual or special meeting duly warned, with a quorum of at least twenty-five (25) active members.

A simple majority of those voting must vote in favor in order for the amendment or alteration to be accepted.

Section III: Bylaws Review

A committee of active members shall be appointed by the Advisory Board at least once every five (5) years to review these bylaws for possible amendment, alteration or revision. Any suggested amendments, alterations or revisions shall be approved by the Advisory Board, then brought to the congregation in accordance with Section II above.

Section IV: Obergefell v. Hodges

Due to the Supreme Court's decision in Obergefell v. Hodges, which altered the traditional definition of marriage, Jericho Congregational Church is now restating its foundational beliefs and long standing doctrines on marriage in its bylaws. Prior to Obergefell, Jericho Congregational Church had declared its beliefs that participating in and/or facilitating same-sex marriages would violate the doctrines of Jericho Congregational Church, but is now compelled to delineate some of the implications associated with our belief.

Jericho Congregational Church follows the teachings of the Bible and, consequently, Jericho Congregational Church policies and standards must be consistent with Scripture. (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Marriage: We believe that God created man and woman in His own image to complete one another as husband and wife. (Genesis 2:24). We further believe that at the time God created man and woman He created the institution of marriage. (Genesis 2:20-24, Mark 10:6-9). Jericho Congregational Church defines marriage as a sacred union ordained by God between one

biological man and one biological woman. (Matthew 19:4–5). For this reason, Jericho Congregational Church will only recognize a marriage between one man and one woman.

Ceremonies: Jericho Congregational Church recognizes a marriage ceremony as a form of worship. In adherence to religious doctrines grounded in Scripture, Jericho Congregational Church and the pastors will only facilitate, conduct, participate in, and/or solemnize marriages between one (biological) man and one (biological) woman.

Article IX: Indemnification / Conflict of Interest

The Corporation shall indemnify and hold harmless each Advisory Board member and officer and each member of the committees now or hereafter serving the Corporation from and against any and all claims and liabilities to which he/she may or become subject by reason of his/her now being or hereafter becoming an officer, Advisory board member and/or member of a committee of this Corporation and/or by reason of his/her alleged acts or omissions as an officer, Advisory Board member and/or member of a committee aforesaid and shall reimburse each Advisory Board member, officer or member of the committee of the Corporation for all legal and other expenses reasonably incurred by him/her in connection with defending against any such claims or liabilities, provided however, that no officer, Advisory Board member or member of a committee shall be indemnified against or be reimbursed for any expense incurred in defending against any claim or liability arising out of his/her own gross negligence or willful conduct. The foregoing rights of officers, Advisory Board members and members of committees shall not be exclusive of other rights to which they may be entitled lawfully.

Conflict of Interest / Self-Dealing Transactions **Policy Statement**

Each Officer or Committee Member of the Corporation shall, in the course of his or her duties on behalf of the Corporation, exercise the utmost good faith in all matters and transactions involving the Corporation and adhere to the highest ethical standards of fiduciary duty to the Corporation.

Each Officer or Committee Member of the Corporation shall endeavor to avoid, to the best of his or her ability, any situation which may compromise his or her duty to the Corporation personally because of a duality or conflict of interest with any other entity or person with which the Officer or Committee Member may be involved; and each Officer shall endeavor to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest which may have adverse effect on the Corporation.

- A. Duty of Full Disclosure: An Officer or Committee Member shall disclose relationships and interests which may present a conflict of interest or a self-dealing transaction in writing to the Advisory Board immediately when the relationship is formed or upon the Officer or Committee Member's discovery of the potentially conflicting interests. Disclosure shall occur when the personal interests of the Officer (or member of his or her family) could affect the activities, property, employees, or services of the Corporation or involve any matter potentially requiring action by the Board, a Committee or an Officer

or Committee Member exercising powers delegated by the Board. All disclosed information shall be maintained in confidence by the Board. The Board shall provide access to financial information, if any, related to the disclosed relationships or transactions only to those persons who have a reasonable need to know the contents thereof.

- B. Recusal: When an Officer or Committee Member has a direct or indirect financial interest in a proposed transaction, the Officer or Committee Member shall be recused (leave the room) and shall not participate in the deliberations on the merits of the proposal or vote.

The Advisory Board shall consider and evaluate each potential conflict of interest and/or self-dealing transaction disclosed in light of the Internal Revenue Code (“IRC”) standards for, and prohibitions of, self-dealing and private inurement, and the requirements of the Vermont statutes associated with Corporations Code. The Board shall approve or authorize such transaction, if at all, only in good faith and without unjustified favoritism, provided that the primary beneficiary of the transaction is the Corporation

Article X: The Senior Pastor

Section I: Call of the Senior Pastor

Candidates for Senior Pastor shall be reviewed and interviewed by a special search committee established for this purpose when a vacancy occurs. The committee shall select one candidate to be heard by the congregation at a service of worship following which the membership shall meet to consider extending a call. In order to extend such a call, there must be a quorum of at least eighty (80) percent of the Available Active Members present at a duly warned annual or special meeting, with ninety (90) percent of those Available Active Members present voting in favor of the call. Available Active Members will be defined as the Active Membership List excluding those who are not local (Missionaries, college students, etc.) and those physically not able to attend the meeting (shut-ins, hospitalized, etc.). The number of available active members will be determined by the Deacons prior to the meeting.

In the call, the terms of the relationship shall be stated, including arrangements for salary, housing, and all other benefits agreed upon by the candidate and the compensation committee. The Senior Pastor’s call shall be for an indefinite period. To terminate this relationship, three (3) months notice shall be given by either party. Any decision by either the Senior Pastor or the Church to terminate the relationship shall require a majority vote of the congregation, voted at a special Church meeting.

Section II: Duties of the Senior Pastor

Responsibilities

The Senior Pastor shall promote the teachings of Jesus Christ and the study of the Word of God, guiding the youth and adults in study, discussion, understanding, and resolution; and guide, assist, and comfort all persons who require spiritual, religious, or charitable counsel to live in

faith with God and render loving service toward mankind, calling on all members for assistance in the execution of these activities.

The Senior Pastor shall be the accepted leader and spokesman for all spiritual and religious activities of the Church. He shall direct and conduct regular services of worship as requested by the Board of Deacons; administer the sacraments; perform special services as sanctioned by his position; and carry on all duties usually associated with the intent of his office. By his Biblical Discipline and service, the Senior Pastor shall show others how to strive to live a full Christian life.

The Senior Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all committees and shall guide Church activities with spiritual, charitable and righteous direction, Biblical Counseling all committees in the performance of their functions and suggesting courses of action as required. The Senior Pastor shall abide by the detailed roles and responsibilities laid out in the job description kept with the church office.

Accountability of the Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor will be accountable to the Jericho Congregational Church body as a whole. This accountability will be maintained through meetings and by working with the Board of Deacons, two or three members of which will meet with the Senior Pastor at least twice a month.

Article XI: The Youth Pastor

Section I: Call of the Youth Pastor

Candidates for Youth Pastor shall be reviewed and interviewed by a special search committee established for this purpose when a vacancy occurs. The committee shall select one candidate to be presented to the congregation following which the membership shall meet to consider extending a call. In order to extend such a call, there must be a quorum of at least eighty (80) percent of the Available Active Members present at a duly warned annual or special meeting, with ninety (90) percent of those Available Active Members present voting in favor of the call. Available Active Members will be defined as the Active Membership List excluding those who are not local (Missionaries, college students, etc.) and those physically not able to attend the meeting (shut-ins, hospitalized, etc.). The number of available active members will be determined by the Deacons prior to the meeting.

In the call, the terms of the relationship shall be stated, including arrangements for salary, housing, and all other benefits agreed upon by the candidate and the compensation committee. The Youth Pastor's call shall be for an indefinite period. To terminate this relationship, three (3) months notice shall be given by either party. Any decision by either the Youth Pastor or the Church to terminate the relationship shall require a majority vote of the congregation, voted at a special Church meeting.

Section II: Duties of the Youth Pastor

Responsibilities

The Youth Pastor shall promote the teachings of Jesus Christ and the study of the Word of God, guiding the youth in study, discussion, understanding, and resolution; and guide, assist, and comfort all youth who require spiritual, religious, or charitable counsel to live in faith with God and render loving service toward mankind, calling on all members for assistance in the execution of these activities.

The Youth Pastor will be responsible for ministering to the teens within the church and, as appropriate, the teens within the community; keeping parents and the congregation informed of youth activities through the monthly church newsletter, periodic meetings, and, most importantly, direct communication with their youth; and performing such duties as appropriate for a youth pastor and as an agent of the Jericho Congregational Church. The Youth Pastor shall also, within reason, assist the Senior Pastor. The Youth Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of the Youth Board, and will present a Youth Pastor report at Advisory Board meetings. The Youth Pastor shall abide by the detailed roles and responsibilities laid out in the job description kept with the church office.

Accountability of the Youth Pastor

The Youth Pastor will be accountable to the Jericho Congregational Church body as a whole. This accountability will be maintained through meetings and by working with the Senior Pastor and Youth Board. The Youth Pastor shall meet weekly to inform the Senior Pastor of Youth Group activities, to seek his guidance in establishing and maintaining the direction of the ministry, to maintain accountability and to keep the Senior Pastor apprised of areas of concern. The Youth Pastor shall meet at least monthly with the youth board as it supports and assists the Youth Pastor and the Senior Pastor with significant decisions or issues in youth ministry.

Article XII: Memorial and Special Gifts

Gifts to the Church are those monies and/or real property given to JCC outside of the weekly offering. They may be given as special gifts or as memorial gifts by: family members, others outside the family, trusts or legacies.

Section I: Recording

- A. All memorial gifts will be recorded in the Memorial Book by the Historian.
- B. All gifts of cash and trusts will be recorded by the Financial Secretary or Assistant Financial Secretary.

Section II: Handling

A. Cash Gifts:

- 1.) Undesignated Gifts: Gifts will be unspecified as to use unless the family designates a particular use of the funds.
- 2.) Designated Gifts: Every attempt will be made to honor designation. If unable, the family will be notified and a change in designation will be requested.

3.) A list of Memorial gift donors will be provided regularly to the family for a period of up to 3 months by the church office.

B. Real Property Gifts:

1.) Undesignated Gifts: Acceptance of real property will be authorized by Advisory Board with recommendation from Prudential Committee.

2.) Designated Gifts: Every attempt will be made to honor designation. If unable, the family will be notified and a change in designation will be requested.

C. JCC Advisory Board will be responsible for final acceptance of all designated gifts.

Section III: Disposition

A. Undesignated Funds:

Use of the funds will be authorized by the Advisory Board or by the members at an annual meeting or at a special meeting.

B. Designated Funds:

1.) Designated funds will be kept in specific accounts by the Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer. Designated funds will be invested by the Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer until used for their designated purpose.

2.) Status of designated funds will be reviewed by the Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer at quarterly Advisory Board meetings.

Article XIII: Parliamentary Procedure

Robert's Rules of Order shall govern all procedures, and shall decide all questions not covered in the Constitution and Bylaws.

Article XIV: Effective Date

These Bylaws become effective upon adoption.

*Revised January 23, 1997
Amended January 22, 1998
Amended September 9, 2001
Amended January 23, 2003
Revised January 26, 2006
Amended January 27, 2011
Revised October 27, 2014
Revised August 9, 2015
Amended January 28, 2016
Revised January 26, 2017
Amended January 23, 2025*

Attachment A - Investment and Special Funds

I. Investment Fund

A. Fund Name

The name of the fund shall be the Jericho Congregational Church Investment Fund (hereinafter referred to as the Investment Fund).

B. The Investment Fund

The Investment Fund shall include and consist of all property, whether real or personal, which is from time to time donated, bequeathed, or otherwise received by the Jericho Congregational Church (hereinafter the Church), designated for general support of the Church.

C. Administration and Accounting

The Investment Fund shall be managed and invested by the Investment Administrator (herein after the Administrator) in accordance with the following goals and procedures:

- 1.) The Administrator shall direct the Investment Fund in a manner that shall conserve the principal value and generate a reasonable rate of return.
 - a.) Each quarter the Administrator shall review the method, amounts and instruments of principal investment and shall administer, monitor, and reinvest the Investment Fund as it sees fit.
 - b.) Any real property in the Investment Fund shall be managed by the Administrator, but no real property shall be transferred, converted to personal funds, pledged, mortgaged, leased for a period of three years or more (including options, the effect of which would be to extend a leasehold beyond three years), without the prior authorization of the Church membership, acting in accordance with the procedure set forth in its articles or bylaws.
- 2.) Income generated from the Investment Fund shall be used for the following purposes:
 - a.) The first twenty (20) percent (or a larger percentage if authorized by the Church) shall be reinvested and become part of the Investment Fund.
 - b.) The remainder shall be used as directed by the Church membership.
- 3.) The Administrator, in conjunction with the treasurer of the Church, shall maintain proper accounting records evidencing all activities and uses of the Investment Fund, and accounting for all proceeds and earnings of the Investment Fund.

II. Special Fund

A. Fund Name

The name of the fund shall be the Jericho Congregational Church Special Fund (hereinafter referred to as the Special Fund).

B. The Special Fund

The Special Fund shall include and consist of all property, whether real or personal, which is from time to time donated, bequeathed, or otherwise received by the Jericho Congregational Church (hereinafter the Church), specified for a particular use or purpose of the Church.

C. Administration and Accounting

The Special Fund shall be managed and invested by the Insurance-Administrator (hereinafter the Administrator) in accordance with the following goals and procedures:

- 1.) The Administrator shall invest the Special Fund in a manner which shall conserve the principal value and generate a reasonable rate of return and/or growth of principle.
 - a.) The Administrator shall periodically review the method, amounts and instruments of principal investment and shall administer, monitor, and reinvest the Special Fund as he/she sees fit.
 - b.) Any real property in the Special Fund shall be managed by the Administrator, but no real property shall be transferred, converted to personal funds, pledged, mortgaged, leased for a period of three years or more (including options, the effect of which would be to extend a leasehold beyond three years), without the prior authorization of the Church membership, acting in accordance with the procedure set forth in its articles or bylaws.
- 2.) Both the Principal and Income generated from the Special Fund shall be used for the following purposes:
 - a.) Principal and Income shall be used as designated by the Donor or Bequest and as administered by the responsible Church committee.
 - b.) The remainder shall be used as directed by the Church Advisory Board.
- 3.) The Administrator, in conjunction with the treasurer of the Church, shall maintain proper accounting records evidencing all activities and uses of the Special Fund, and accounting for all proceeds and earnings of the Special Fund.

III. Responsibility

The Administrator shall be held to the standard of performing their duties as a reasonably prudent person could be expected to have performed said duties, and shall not be liable for losses or other actions unless due to negligence or willful misconduct. The Church may obtain insurance and/or bonding coverage for the Administrator as the Church sees fit.

IV. Amendment

The terms and conditions of this document may be amended by resolution of the Church membership acting in accordance with its articles or bylaws.

V. Termination of the Investment Fund

The Investment Fund shall continue perpetually or as otherwise specified by the donors or devisees, or until terminated by the dissolution of the Church. Any termination of the Trust Fund due to the dissolution of the Church shall only be effective if done in accordance with the following procedures:

- 1.) All property in the Investment Fund shall have been itemized and the donors, their executors, or their heirs shall have been notified of the pending termination and given the option to direct the Church as to how the property shall be disposed of.
- 2.) If the donors, or their executors or heirs cannot be identified or found within a 24 month period, then the Church shall disperse the property to such charitable organization as the Church sees fit.

VI. Termination of Any Special Fund

Any Special Fund shall continue as otherwise specified by the donors or devisees, or until terminated by the use of all Special Fund monies by the Church. Any termination of the Special Fund due to the dissolution of the Church shall be effective if done in accordance with the following procedures:

- 1.) All property in the Special fund shall have been itemized and the Advisory Board of the Church shall determine how the property shall be disposed of.

Attachment B – Relational Commitment

Jericho Congregational Church Relational Commitments



Adapted by permission from Peacemaker® Ministries.
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Edition 2.0

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Introduction

The following Commitments and Church Covenant are designed to help the people of our church understand how best to relate to one another in a way that honors God and promotes authentic relationships. These Commitments cover important relational issues, such as peacemaking and reconciliation, Biblical Marriage and divorce, protecting children from abuse, Biblical Counseling, confidentiality, and mutual accountability.

These Commitments are intended to help us build a strong community of faith. By community, we mean a group of people who have voluntarily joined together to encourage and support one another as we worship God, grow in our understanding of his love for us, and seek to tell others about the salvation and peace they, too, can find through faith in Jesus Christ.¹ The allegorical story in Appendix A further explains the profound affect that following these Commitments can

¹ Unless indicated otherwise, the words "we" and "us" refer to the members and leaders of this church, as well as the people who continue to attend our church after receiving a copy of these Commitments.

have on our Jericho Congregational Church community. We invite you to read this before reviewing the Commitments and the Church Covenant.

We know that true community isn't easy to achieve. Each of us brings our own expectations and agendas into the church. This diversity usually leads to rich discussions and creative ministries; but sometimes it can lead to conflict (James 4:1-2).

These Commitments pull together key principles directly from God's Word. These Commitments are designed to accomplish several important purposes:

- They remind us of our mutual commitment to work together to pursue unity, maintain friendships, preserve Biblical Marriages, and build relationships that reflect the love of Christ.
- They help to prevent surprises, disappointed expectations, confusion and conflict by describing how we expect to relate to one another within the church.
- They provide a clear path when conflict threatens to divide us, and they remind us how to move quickly toward reconciliation.
- They establish guidelines for how our leaders will counsel others, guard confidential information, and protect our children from abuse.
- They define and limit the spiritual authority of church leaders and thereby insure that all members are treated fairly.²
- Finally, they reduce our church's exposure to legal liability by clearly establishing our relational practices and by affirming our mutual commitment to resolve conflict biblically.³

As you read our Relational Commitments, we encourage you to study the Bible passages that are cited next to particular provisions. We want you to be confident that these Commitments are fully consistent with the Word of God.⁴

If you have not yet formally joined our church, then we'd encourage you to begin the process to do so. In the mean time, you and your family are welcome to attend our worship services, find fellowship, and seek assistance. These Commitments establish how all the people of Jericho Congregational Church intend to interact with each other. Therefore, while as a non-member you will not be held strictly accountable for these Commitments, there is an expectation that regular adherents will appreciate and seek to abide by these basic biblical principles.

² The term "leader" in these Commitments refers to the *pastors and deacons* of our church.

³ See www.peacemaker.net/risk_management for information on how these Commitments can help to prevent conflict and reduce exposure to legal liability in our church.

⁴ Embracing these Commitments does not imply that you affirm every explanatory comment, biblical interpretation, or resource mentioned in this document, but rather that you agree to support and follow the specific action steps set forth in sections entitled "Commitment to" If your conscience prevents you from affirming a particular concept or commitment in this document, you may request a special waiver of that provision.

As followers of Christ, we will do all we can to encourage you to grow in faith and godliness and to live a life that honors our Lord Jesus Christ and enhances the witness of His church.

The Leaders of Jericho Congregational Church Adopted on January 27, 2011

Commitment to Peacemaking and Reconciliation

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God (Matt. 5:9).

Our church is committed to building a culture that accurately reflects God's peace and the power of the gospel of Christ in our lives. We realize that bitterness, unforgiveness and broken relationships are not appropriate for the people whom God has reconciled to himself through the sacrifice of his only Son (John 13:34-35; Eph. 4:29-32; Col. 3:12-14).

Therefore, out of love for Christ and in reliance on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we are committed to resolving our differences according to the following principles of peacemaking and reconciliation:

Personal Peacemaking

- Whenever we are faced with conflict, our primary goal will be to glorify God with our thoughts, words and actions (1 Cor. 10:31).
- We will try to get the "logs" out of our own eyes before focusing on what others may have done wrong (Matt. 7:3-5).
- We will seek to overlook minor offenses (Prov. 19:11).
- We will refrain from all gossip, backbiting and slander (Eph. 4:29). If we have a problem with others, we will talk *to* them, not *about* them.
- We will make "charitable judgments" toward one another by believing the best about each other until we have facts that prove otherwise (1 Cor. 13:7).
- If an offense is too serious to overlook, or if we think someone may have something against us, we will go promptly to seek reconciliation (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15).
- When we offer a word of correction to others, we will do so graciously and gently, with the goal of serving and restoring them (Prov. 12:18; Eph. 4:29; Gal. 6:1).
- When someone tries to correct us, we will ask God to help us resist prideful defensiveness and to welcome correction with humility (Ps. 141:5; Prov. 15:32).
- As we seek to resolve differences with others, we will look out for their concerns and interests as well as our own (Phil. 2:3-4).
- When others seek forgiveness, we will ask God to give us grace to forgive them as freely and fully as he has forgiven us so that we might glorify his reconciling grace (Eph. 4:32).

Assisted Peacemaking

- When two of us cannot resolve a conflict privately, we will seek assistance from our church leaders or other wise people, and we will listen humbly to their counsel and correction (Matt. 18:16; 1 Cor. 6:1-8).
- If a person has an unresolved conflict with someone in his former church, we will assist him in seeking to be reconciled to the other person before joining our church (Matt. 5:23-24; Rom. 12:18).

- If we have a dispute with or within our church and cannot resolve it internally through the steps given above, we will obey God's command not to go into the civil court (1 Cor. 6:1-8). Instead, we will submit the matter to mediation or arbitration.⁵

Above all, we pray that our ministry of peacemaking will bring praise to our Lord Jesus Christ and lead others to know his infinite love and peace.⁶

Commitment to Preserving Biblical Marriages

So they are no longer two but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate (Matt. 19:6).

God designed Biblical Marriage to reflect the beauty and permanence of Christ's loving relationship with his bride, the church (Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7). Therefore, he established Biblical Marriage to be a life-long, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman (Matt. 19:4-6). God also designed it to provide mutual companionship through life's joys and difficulties, to create stability for raising and nurturing children, and to give strength and cohesiveness to society in general.

In our society, Marriages fail under a wide range of circumstances. Many people have gone through a divorce before having a relationship with Christ, and others have experienced divorce through no desire or decision of their own. Still others may have divorced because of their own wrongful choices, but have since experienced the repentance and forgiveness offered through our Lord Jesus. We want all to know that you are welcome in our church.

We also encourage couples to nurture their Marriages by participating in fellowship groups in which people can grow together in their love for God and for one another (Heb. 10:24-25). We hope that husbands will spur each other on to love and cherish their wives, and that wives will encourage one another to respect and love their husbands (Eph. 5:33).

Our leaders are committed to helping couples who face marital difficulties. We will discourage couples from using divorce as a way to run away from issues that instead can be resolved through Spirit-guided Biblical Counseling, repentance, forgiveness and ongoing discipleship.

We recognize, however, that there are times when God permits a believer to seek a divorce without sinning against God or a spouse. We believe divorce is permissible when the other spouse has been sexually involved with a person outside the Marriage (Matt. 5:31-32), or when an unbelieving spouse abandons a Marriage (1 Cor. 7:12-16).

Even though divorce is *permissible* in these situations, it is not *required*. God patiently bears with our sins, repeatedly calls us to turn back, and freely forgives us when we return to him (Ps. 103:8-12; Isa. 55:7). When divorce becomes an option, an offended spouse can imitate God's love by offering a straying spouse these same evidences of grace (Eph. 5:1-2). When someone is considering divorce, he or she is advised to bring the situation to our leaders and work with them

⁵ By making this commitment, the church as a corporate entity and each of its members recognize and agree with the biblical principle of not taking each other to civil court. We commit to resolve legal differences through biblical mediation or arbitration, as commanded by 1 Corinthians 6:1-8. We recognize that if a dispute involves possible coverage by an insurance company, it may be necessary to file a legal action to engage the company and access coverage.

⁶ These principles are adapted from *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, by Ken Sande (Baker Books, 3rd Ed. 2004).

as they determine whether grounds exist, promote repentance and reconciliation, and provide additional support for the couple.

Regardless of the situation, we rejoice that divorce never diminishes God's free offer of love, grace and forgiveness.

Commitment to Protecting Our Children

The prudent see danger and take refuge (Prov. 27:12a).

Children are a blessing from God, and he calls the church to support parents in their responsibility to train children in the Lord. Therefore, the church should be a safe and blessed place for children, where they can grow, play, form friendships, and learn to experience and share the love of Christ.

Since sin affects every person and organization in the world, however, it is possible that children could be harmed even during church activities. We cannot guarantee that such things will never happen within our fellowship, but we are committed to taking every reasonable precaution to protect our children from foreseeable harm. This commitment includes, but is not limited to, the following steps:

- We do not allow anyone to work regularly with our youth (children or teenagers), unless he or she has regularly attended our church for at least six months or is under the supervision of a regular Jericho Congregational Church attender.
- We require all of our youth workers to complete a thorough application and screening process.
- We require that, whenever practicable, youth workers serve in teams of two or more and be visible to other workers.

If a child is harmed in our church, we will take immediate steps to inform the parents, to accept responsibility for our role in the situation, and to hold offending youth workers fully responsible for their actions.

Commitment to Biblical Counseling

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another (Rom. 15:14).

All Christians struggle with sin and its effect on our lives and our relationships. When believers struggle with wrong attitudes or behaviors, God can call them to seek assistance from other believers, church leaders, and/or our pastors, who have the responsibility of providing pastoral Biblical Counseling and oversight (see Rom. 15:14; Gal. 6:1-2; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Heb. 13:17; James 5:16).

We believe that the Bible provides good guidance and instruction for faith and life (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Therefore, pastoral Biblical Counseling is based on scriptural principles rather than psychology or psychiatry. Unless they specifically state otherwise, none of those who counsel in this church are trained or licensed as psychotherapists or mental health professionals.

God calls our leaders to set an example for us “in speech, in life, in love, and in faith and purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). Therefore, we expect them to treat everyone with every respect and courtesy, and to avoid even the appearance of impropriety (Eph. 5:3).

To prevent our pastors from being placed in situations that might compromise their pastoral commitments, we agree that we will not try to compel them to testify in any legal proceeding or otherwise divulge any confidential information they receive through pastoral Biblical Counseling or ministry (Prov. 11:13, 25:9).

Commitment to Confidentiality

*A gossip betrays a confidence,
but a trustworthy man keeps a secret (Prov. 11:13).*

The Bible teaches that Christians should carefully guard any personal and private information that others reveal to them. Protecting confidences is a sign of Christian love and respect (Matt. 7:12). It also discourages harmful gossip (Prov. 26:20), invites confession (Prov. 11:13), and thus encourages people to seek help. Since these goals are essential to the ministry of the gospel and the work of the local church, all members and attenders are expected to refrain from gossip. In particular, our leaders will carefully protect all information that they receive through pastoral Biblical Counseling, subject to the following exceptions.

When our leaders believe it is biblically necessary, they may disclose confidential information to appropriate people in the following circumstances:

- when a leader is uncertain of how to help a person or person(s) about a particular problem and needs advice from other leaders in our church (Prov. 11:14) or when steps for additional accountability or redemptive actions clearly become necessary to help bring about restoration (Matt 18:15-20);
- when the person who disclosed the information, or any other person, is in imminent danger of serious harm unless others intervene (Prov. 24:11-12);

- when leaders are required by law to report suspected abuse (Rom. 13:1).

Commitment to Accountability

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24).

A. Accountability and Biblical Discipline Are Signs of God's Love

God has established the church to reflect his character, wisdom and glory in the midst of an imperfect world (Eph. 3:10-11). He loves his church so much that he sent his Son to die for her (Eph. 5:25). For this reason the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are continually working to purify the church and bring her to maturity (Eph. 5:25-27).

This does not mean that God expects the church to be made up of perfectly pure people. He knows that the best of churches are still companies of imperfect people (1 John 1:8; Phil. 3:12). Therefore, it would be unbiblical for us to expect church members to live perfectly. What we can do, however, is confess our common struggles and our mutual need for God's mercy and grace. We also can spur one another on toward maturity by encouraging and holding each other accountable to love, seek after, and obey God with all of our hearts, souls, minds and strength, and to love others as we love ourselves (Mark 12:30-31; Heb. 10:24-25).

The Bible sometimes refers to this process of mutual encouragement and accountability as "Discipline." The Bible never presents Biblical church Discipline as being negative, legalistic or harsh, as society does. True Biblical Discipline originates from God himself and is always presented as a sign of genuine love. "The Lord Disciplines those he loves" (Heb. 12:6). "Blessed is the man you Discipline, O Lord, the man you teach from your law" (Ps. 94:12). "Those whom I love I rebuke and Discipline" (Rev. 3:19).

God's Discipline in the church, like the Discipline in a good family, is intended to be primarily positive, instructive and encouraging. This process, which is sometimes referred to as "formative Discipline," involves preaching, teaching, prayer, personal Bible study, small group fellowship and countless other enjoyable activities that challenge and encourage us to love and serve God more wholeheartedly.

On rare occasions God's Discipline also may have a corrective purpose. When we forget or disobey what God has taught us, he corrects us. One way he does this is to call the church to help us back onto the right track.

This process, which is sometimes called "corrective" or "restorative" Biblical Discipline, is likened in Scripture to a shepherd seeking after a lost sheep (Matt. 18:12-13).

Thus, restorative or corrective Biblical Discipline is never to be done in a harsh, vengeful or self-righteous manner. It is always to be carried out in humility and love, with the goals of restoring someone to a close walk with Christ (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1), protecting others from harm (1 Cor. 5:6), and showing respect for the honor and glory of God's name (1 Pet. 2:12).

Biblical Discipline is similar to that which we value in other aspects of life. We value music teachers and athletic coaches who bring out the best in their orchestras or teams. These same principles apply to the family of God. We, too, need to be helped and lovingly corrected if we do something contrary to what God clearly teaches in his Word.

We also recognize that church leaders are called to high level of accountability about their faith and conduct (James 3:1; 1 Tim. 5:19-20). Therefore, they are committed to listening humbly to loving correction from each other or from any member in our church.

B. Most Corrective Biblical Discipline Is Private, Personal and Informal

God gives every believer grace to be self-Disciplined. "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-Discipline" (2 Tim. 1:7). Thus Biblical Discipline always begins as a personal matter and usually remains that way, as each of us studies God's Word, seeks him in prayer, and draws on his grace to identify and change harmful habits and grow in godliness.

But sometimes we become so blind or tangled in our shortcomings that we cannot free ourselves. This is why the Bible says, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently" (Gal. 6:1). In obedience to this command, we are committed to giving and receiving loving correction within our church whenever a word, behavior or doctrine seems too serious to overlook (Prov. 19:11).

If repeated private conversations do not lead another person to repentance, Jesus commands that we ask other brothers or sisters to get involved. "If he will not listen, take one or two others along" (Matt. 18:16).

C. Formal Biblical Discipline May Involve the Church

If an individual persistently refuses to listen to personal and informal correction, Jesus commands us to bring the situation to church leadership (Matt 18:17a). If the offense is not likely to cause imminent harm to others, our leaders may approach the individual privately to personally establish the facts and encourage repentance of anything they discover. The individual will be given every reasonable opportunity to explain and defend his or her actions. If the individual recognizes his sin and repents, the matter usually ends there, unless a confession to additional people is needed.

If an offense is likely to harm others or lead them into sin, or cause division or disruption, our leaders may accelerate the entire disciplinary process and move promptly to protect the church (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Titus 3:10-11).

After much prayer and discussion and with a conviction that action is truly necessary, our leaders may impose a variety of sanctions to encourage repentance, including but not limited to private

and public admonition, withholding of the Lord's Supper, and/or requesting them to step down from an office or ministry. (Matt. 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; Matt. 18:17).

If, after a reasonable period of time, the individual still refuses to change, then our leaders may bring the situation before the congregation with the recommendation that the individual be removed from membership. If the congregation enacts that recommendation, we will then begin to treat that individual as an unbeliever (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20). We will lovingly care for this person as someone who has yet to fully understand and/or accept biblical truths, but may certainly be seeking them.

We realize that our natural human response to correction often is to hide or run away from accountability (Gen. 3:8-10). To avoid falling into this age-old trap and to strengthen our church's ability to help us, we agree not to run away from this church to avoid corrective Biblical Discipline.

If an individual leaves the church while Biblical Discipline is in effect or is being considered and begins attending another church, that church may be informed of the situation. This action is intended to help the individual and to protect other churches (Matt. 18:12-14; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 3 John 1:9-10).

Loving restoration always stands at the heart of the disciplinary process. If an individual turns back, we will rejoice together and gladly imitate God's forgiveness by restoring the person to fellowship within the body (Matt. 18:13; Luke 15:3-7, 11-32; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; Col. 3:12-14).

People who were involved in an open disciplinary issue at another church may not be allowed to become members at Jericho Congregational Church until this situation has been satisfactorily resolved.

As we pursue the blessings of accountability and church Discipline, we will hold fast to the promise of Scripture: "God Disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No Discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Heb. 12:10-11).

Church Covenant

By the Members of the Jericho Congregational Church
Our Commitments to One Another in the Sight of God

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and to publicly profess our faith, and having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

1. We give ourselves unreservedly to God's service and take this to be our church. Ever mindful of the welfare of our fellow members, we promise to walk with them in faithfulness and Christian love. We promise that, so far as we are able, we will attend the services of this church, observe its sacraments, share in its work, support and benevolences and endeavor to make it a fruitful body of Christians
2. We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to educate our children in the Christian faith; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our conduct.
3. We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; and to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay. Whenever legitimate criticism or charges against anyone arise, we will follow Scriptural direction for church Biblical Discipline, always with a desire for reconciliation and restoration and always making use of the cloak of love.
4. We acknowledge that we have received and read the Relational Commitments of this church and agree to live by them.⁷

Signature

Date

Print Name

Pastor's Signature

Date

⁷ See footnote #4 on page 31.

Appendix A

A Tale of Two Families

Two boys, John and Luke, lost their mother at a young age. When they were in their teens, their father was reported to have died when his plane crashed into the ocean. The boys had no other relatives, so two neighboring families took them in.

The Friendly family did all they could to make John feel welcome in their home. They gave him his own bedroom, provided his meals, and encouraged him to join in family activities. Not wanting him to feel any pressure, they did not explain to him any of the family rules. Instead they hoped that he would notice how their other children behaved and decide on his own to act the same way.

Not knowing exactly what was expected of him, John frequently disappointed the family by violating unspoken rules. Feeling judged and unconnected to the family, he became increasingly independent. He came and went at any hour, played loud music, and spent long hours in his room with a variety of friends. When Mr. Friendly finally tried to talk with him about his behavior, John said, "I'm not your son, so you have no right to tell me how to live my life. I like having a bedroom and meals whenever I decide to be here, but I'll still do whatever seems right to me."

Tensions continued to build, and finally Mr. Friendly asked John to leave. Fortunately for John, there was another Friendly family in town, and they were happy to take him in. But there the cycle started all over again.

John's brother had an entirely different experience. Luke was taken in by the Loving family. They wanted him to feel welcome, so they gave him a room, provided meals, and encouraged him to join in family activities. But they also wanted to avoid misunderstandings and conflict. So shortly after Luke arrived, Mr. Loving explained the family rules to Luke, so he would know how to get along with the rest of the family. He said, "Even though you are not my son, I will be glad to look out for you the best I can. But as long as you are in my home, I also will expect you to behave as my other children do."

Like any normal teenager, Luke sometimes broke the rules. When he did, Mr. Loving sat down with him, pointed out what he'd done wrong, and held him accountable to the same standards he had established for his other children. Luke sometimes resented this Biblical Discipline, but he eventually realized it was always done in love, and it kept him out of a lot of trouble.

After a few months, Mr. Loving approached Luke and said, "Since you are living here like part of the family, we would like to make it official. If you feel this is where you'd like to stay, we'd like to adopt you and make you our son."

Luke gladly accepted and formally committed himself to the family. In doing so, he changed from being an orphan who merely resided in the home to being a son who willingly accepted and enjoyed all of the same responsibilities and privileges of his new brothers and sisters.

Suppose that John and Luke's father is rescued from an island two years later. When he is reunited with his sons and hears what has happened to them, which family will he thank the most? The Friendly family, who were kind enough to give John a place to hang out, but could not bring themselves to give him any boundaries? Or the Loving family, who welcomed Luke in, held him accountable to the same rules as the rest of the family, and invited him to be a son?

The answer is obvious. And there is a real Father who one day will evaluate the way we care for the people who come into our church family. Therefore, we are glad to welcome people and give them a place to worship, grow and serve. But being "friendly" is not good enough. We want to be loving, as God defines loving (Heb. 12:5-6; 10:24). Therefore, we will encourage and expect everyone in our church to live out the biblical principles that are summarized in these Relational Commitments.

And when people have lived like part of our family for a while, we will encourage them to “make it official.” Living like an orphan, with its illusion of independence and self-determination, may seem appealing to some. But it cannot compare to the security, privileges, and sense of belonging that come from joining a biblical church and living as truly committed brothers and sisters in the family of God.

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