

BY-LAWS OF THE FIRST PARISH OF WATERTOWN

Article I – Name

1. This religious corporation is a Unitarian Universalist Society and its name shall be The First Parish of Watertown.

Article II – Purpose

1. **Mission:** We the members of the First Parish of Watertown seek to honor our religious heritage by providing a spiritual home for reflection and growth in a diverse, intergenerational, caring community for all. We commit to being a force for social change by working with others in the larger community to promote justice, equity and compassion.

2. **Affirmation:** Love is the spirit of this church
and service is its law.
This is our great covenant:
to dwell together in peace,
to seek the truth in love,
and to help one another.

3. Covenant:

We, members and friends of First Parish Watertown, affirm this, our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

We draw strength from our history and our traditions, while seeking new ways to adapt and grow for the future.

We are multigenerational, including children, youth, adults, and elders in our worship and activities.

We are welcoming of diversity of race, social class, gender identity, sexual orientation, belief, and opinion.

We support each other in times of sorrow and celebrate each other in times of joy.

To seek the truth in love,

We share a broad understanding of our common Unitarian Universalist principles and values.

We are open to doubt and questioning, trusting each other to share the journey in the search for spiritual answers.

We listen to each other with respect and seek to understand different perspectives.

We all have a voice in conversations and in the governance of the church.

To help one another,

We care for the spiritual and material well-being of our church community and our local community of Watertown.

We promote social justice locally, nationally, and around the world.

We care for our home, the earth, and work to preserve it for future generations.

We are part of a world community with the goal of peace, liberty, and justice for all. As Love is the spirit of this church and service is its law, we so covenant to walk together.

Article III – Non-Discrimination

This congregation affirms and promotes the full participation of persons in all our activities and endeavors including membership, programming, hiring practices, and the calling of religious professionals, without regard to race, color, gender, physical or mental challenge, affectional or sexual orientation, class or national origin.

Article IV - Membership

1. Any person fifteen years of age or older, or having completed the Coming of Age program, in sympathy with the purpose of this organization may become a Member of the Parish by receiving written acknowledgement from the Parish Committee and signing the Membership Book. A Member is thereby entitled to share in the fellowship of the church and to participate in its business Meetings, except as provided in paragraph 3 of this Article. The Clerk shall maintain a written record of all acknowledged Members.
2. Because the church is sustained primarily through the contributions of its members, membership carries the expectation that all members will pledge annual financial support as stewards of our church community and be active in the congregation. Because the church recognizes that people's financial situations may fluctuate, no fixed giving level is established by the church and no members will be excluded from the church because of financial hardship.
3. The right to vote at Annual and Special Meetings of the Church may be exercised by all Members who shall have been acknowledged Members for at least sixty days prior to the meeting.
4. The Parish Committee may remove a person from membership on that person's written request, for cause, or when the person has died, moved away, or cannot be located.

Article V – Meetings

1. The Annual Meeting of the Parish shall be held each year in the month of April at such time and place as shall be fixed by the Parish Committee. The Annual Meeting may be opened by prayer.
2. Special Meetings of the Parish may be called by the Parish Committee or shall be called by it upon written request of five or more Voting Members of the Parish. Alternatively, a Special Meeting of the Parish shall be called and shall be warned by the Clerk upon written request of twenty Voting Members of the Parish to the Clerk.
3. All Parish Meetings shall be warned by the Clerk of the Parish, or in his or her absence or inability to perform by such Member of the Parish as the Parish Committee may name, by

causing a true copy of a Warrant to be posted in the Meeting House eight days at least (including two Sundays) before the day of holding the Meeting, and by mailing and/or emailing such notice to every Member of the Parish at his or her address as it appears upon the records of the Parish seven days at least before the day of holding the Meeting.

4. The business to be transacted at any Meeting of the Parish shall be specified in the Warrant for the Meeting. The Warrant for the Annual Meeting shall include an article submitting the annual Parish budget for the approval of the Parish. The Clerk shall insert in the Warrant for a Meeting any matter the insertion of which five or more Members of the Parish may in writing request.

5. The quorum for Parish Meetings is provided in Article XIII below. Any Meeting adjourned for lack of a quorum may reconvene without further Warrant after at least seven but not more than fourteen days and may transact the business announced in the Warrant for the Meeting with whatever number of Voting Members are present.

6. The most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall determine methods of procedure on points not covered by these By-Laws.

7. No absentee ballots shall be counted at any Parish Meeting.

Article VI - Officers and Parish Committee

1. **Officers.** At each Annual Meeting there shall be elected by ballot a Moderator, a Clerk, a Treasurer, an Assistant Treasurer, and an Historian, each of whom shall hold office for one year and or until his or her successor shall have been elected and qualified. They shall perform the duties usually required of such officers. No one shall be nominated to serve as Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, or Assistant Treasurer who is not an acknowledged Member of the Parish.

2. **Parish Committee.** There shall be a Parish Committee consisting of seven members, each with a vote, of whom two shall be elected at each Annual Meeting to serve three years. No member of the Parish Committee who has served two full three-year terms shall be re-elected until after the expiration of one year. The Minister, the Moderator, the Clerk, and the Treasurer shall be ex-officio members of the Parish Committee without vote. No one shall be nominated to serve as a voting member of the Parish Committee who is not an acknowledged Member of the Parish.

3. The Parish Committee shall have general charge of the property of the Parish, the conduct of all its business affairs, and the control of its administration, except as provided in the documents entitled "An Act to Incorporate the Trustees of the Ministerial Fund in the Town of Watertown" and "Indenture of Trust" of the Perpetuity Fund, as amended from time to time. The Parish Committee may appoint such committees as it deems necessary. All Parish Committee meetings shall be open to all acknowledged Members of the Parish. No contract involving the expenditure of money exceeding 2% of total budgeted expenses shall be made without a vote of the Parish. From time to time, the Parish Committee shall cause to be made an internal review or an independent audit of the finances of the Parish.

4. The Clerk, the Treasurer, and the members of the Parish Committee shall be sworn to the faithful performance of their duties in the manner provided by law. A form of oath that may be used is:

"I (name) do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent on me as (title) according to the best of my abilities and understanding, agreeably to the rules and regulations of the Constitution, the laws of the Commonwealth, and the By-Laws of this society. This I do under the pains and penalties of perjury. (Or, So help me, God.)"

5. Vacancies among the offices of Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and Historian, and vacancies in the Parish Committee may be filled at any legal Meeting of the Parish. Vacancies among the Trustees of the Perpetuity and Ministerial Funds shall be filled as provided in Article VIII herein. Any other vacancies may be filled by the Parish Committee.

Article VII - Standing Committees

A. Governance Committees

1. No one shall be nominated to serve as a voting member of a governance committee who is not an acknowledged Member of the Parish.

2. **Nominating Committee.** There shall be a Nominating Committee consisting of three members elected at the Annual Parish Meeting each year to serve for a one-year term. The committee will recruit members of standing committees and prepare a slate for election by the Parish at the Annual Meeting.

3. **Finance Committee.** There shall be a Finance Committee consisting of no fewer than three members of whom an appropriate number shall be elected at the Annual Parish Meeting each year to serve for a three-year term, to provide staggered terms. The Treasurer of the Parish shall be a member of the Finance Committee ex-officio, in addition to the members to be elected. The duties of this Committee shall be to consult with the Treasurer, to monitor current expenditures by the Parish from its budget for the current year, to draft a proposed budget for the next fiscal year for presentation to the Parish Committee, and to consider the long-range fiscal situation of the Parish and to recommend to the Parish Committee measures for assuring the fiscal stability of the Parish. The duties shall also include conducting and supervising financial appeals amongst Parish Members and Friends, including the annual pledge drive appeal, for pledges of contributions to the Parish expenses. The Finance Committee shall have charge of expenditures of all sums appropriated for its own activities. Upon request of the Parish Committee, the Finance Committee shall report the statistics and status of its activities and the disbursements and unexpended balance allotted under the budgetary appropriation.

4. **Safe Congregation Committee.** There shall be a Safe Congregation Committee of no fewer than three members of whom an appropriate number shall be elected at the Annual Parish Meeting each year for a three-year term, to provide staggered terms. This Committee shall work to ensure that this religious community is a place where there is maximum possible safety –

physical safety, safety in our interactions, and spiritual safety. The Safe Congregation Committee shall have charge of expenditures of all sums appropriated for its own activities. Upon request of the Parish Committee, the Safe Congregation Committee shall report the statistics and status of its activities and the disbursements and unexpended balance allotted under the budgetary appropriation.

5. Helen Robinson Wright Fund Distribution Committee. As provided in the Indenture of Trust for the Helen Robinson Wright Charitable Fund in 1995, there shall be a Helen Robinson Wright Fund Distribution Committee of no fewer than three and no more than five members, of whom an appropriate number shall be appointed by the Parish Committee to serve three-year terms, to provide staggered terms. The date of term shall coincide with the date of the Annual Meeting. The Committee shall make decisions on appropriations of grants to local charities and Watertown residents in financial need from the income generated by the Helen Robinson Wright Charitable Fund at the First Parish of Watertown. No one shall serve as a voting member of the Wright Fund Distribution Committee who has not been an acknowledged Member of the Parish for the prior two year period.

B. Program Committees

1. Any Friend or Member of the Parish may serve on a standing Program Committee.

2. Religious Education Committee. There shall be a Religious Education Committee of no fewer than four members of whom an appropriate number shall be elected at the Annual Parish Meeting each year for a three-year term, to provide staggered terms. This Committee shall have control of all matters relating to religious education and shall direct the expenditure of all sums appropriated for that purpose. Upon request of the Parish Committee it shall report the statistics and unexpended balance allotted under the budgetary appropriation.

3. A Director of Religious Education may be hired or dismissed by the Parish Committee on the recommendation of the Religious Education Committee. The compensation of the Director of Religious Education shall be set by the Parish in its Annual Budget.

4. Worship Committee. There shall be a Worship Committee of no fewer than three members of whom an appropriate number shall be elected at the Annual Parish Meeting each year for a three-year term, to provide staggered terms. This Committee shall consult with the Minister in matters pertaining to worship services. The Committee shall have charge of the expenditure of all sums appropriated for worship services. Upon request of the Parish Committee it shall report the statistics and status of its activities and the disbursements and unexpended balance allotted under the budgetary appropriation.

5. A Music Director may be hired or dismissed by the Parish Committee on the recommendation of the Worship Committee. The compensation of the Music Director shall be set by the Parish in its Annual Budget.

6. Fellowship Committee. There shall be a Fellowship Committee consisting of no fewer than four members of whom an appropriate number shall be elected at the Annual Parish Meeting

each year to serve for a three-year term, to provide staggered terms. The duties of the Fellowship Committee shall be to see that a cordial welcome is extended to all persons attending church activities, to provide that at least two people greet all persons attending religious services, and to organize social events for the Parish. The Fellowship Committee shall have charge of the expenditure of all sums appropriated for such purposes. Upon request of the Parish Committee it shall report the statistics and status of its activities and the disbursements and unexpended balance allotted under the budgetary appropriation.

7. Buildings and Grounds Committee. There shall be a Buildings and Grounds Committee consisting of no fewer than three members of whom an appropriate number shall be elected at the Annual Parish Meeting each year to serve for a three-year term, to provide staggered terms. The duties of this Committee shall be to arrange for the routine maintenance of all Parish property in consultation with the Sexton, and to advise the Parish Committee concerning other maintenance, and the Committee shall have such further responsibility concerning the use of Parish property as the Parish Committee shall from time to time assign to it. The Buildings and Grounds Committee shall each year prepare a plan for major maintenance of the Parish property during the following fiscal year, with the sums proposed to be spent for such work. This plan shall be submitted to the Parish Annual Meeting with the Committee's report, and the proposed expenditures shall be shown in the proposed budget for the following fiscal year.

8. A Sexton or Sextons may be hired or dismissed by the Parish Committee on the recommendation of the Buildings and Grounds Committee. The compensation of the Sexton or Sextons shall be set by the Parish in its Annual Budget.

9. Social Action Committee. There shall be a Social Action Committee consisting of no fewer than three members, of whom an appropriate number shall be elected at the Annual Parish Meeting each year for a three-year term, to provide staggered terms. The duties of the Social Action Committee are to organize activities that address social concerns and needs of local residents, parishioners, and the larger community, in the Unitarian Universalist tradition of service. The Social Action Committee shall have charge of expenditures of all sums appropriated for such purposes. Upon request of the Parish Committee, the Social Action Committee shall report the statistics and status of its activities and the disbursements and unexpended balance allotted under the budgetary appropriation. The name of the First Parish of Watertown will be used in support of any issue or action only upon a vote of approval at a legally called and warned Meeting of the Parish. The Social Action Committee shall communicate regularly with the Parish about contemplated stands and actions.

10. Green Sanctuary Committee. There shall be a Green Sanctuary Committee consisting of no fewer than three members of whom an appropriate number shall be elected at the Annual Parish Meeting each year, to serve for a three-year term, to provide staggered terms. The duties of the Green Sanctuary Committee shall be to encourage the congregation and its members to live lifestyles that make our human communities more environmentally sustainable, and it shall provide educational programs, worship services, social change events, and building projects which shall encourage this goal. The Green Sanctuary Committee shall have charge of the expenditure of all sums appropriated for such purposes. Upon request of the Parish Committee it

shall report the statistics and status of its activities and the disbursements and unexpended balance allotted under the budgetary appropriation.

11. Communications Committee. There shall be a Communications Committee consisting of no fewer than three members of whom an appropriate number shall be elected at the Annual Parish Meeting each year, to serve for a three-year term, to provide staggered terms. The duties of this Committee shall be to facilitate external and internal outreach and communications through production and publication of content in print, audio-visual, and electronic form. The Communications Committee shall have charge of the expenditure of all sums appropriated for such purposes. Upon request of the Parish Committee it shall report the statistics and status of its activities and the disbursements and unexpended balance allotted under the budgetary appropriation.

12. Membership Committee. There shall be a Membership Committee consisting of no fewer than 3 members of whom an appropriate number shall be elected at the Annual Parish Meeting each year to serve for a three-year term, to provide staggered terms. The duties of the Membership Committee shall be to facilitate the process of becoming a member. The committee ensures that visitors have information about the church, coordinates official welcome ceremonies, and tracks the growth of our congregation. The committee also organizes events that promote and support membership. Upon request of the Parish Committee it shall report the statistics and income and expenses incurred.

13. Memorial Committee. There shall be a Memorial Committee consisting of no fewer than 3 members who will serve without term limit. The committee will be responsible for arranging for all engravings and overseeing all interments in our Memorial Garden in accordance with church policies and for keeping a permanent record of all such engravings and interments. Upon request of the Parish Committee it shall report the statistics and income and expenses incurred.

C. Committee Meetings and Vacancies

1. All meetings of all Committees (except the Ministerial Search Committee of Article XI and the Committee on Ministry) shall be open, but only Committee members shall vote.

2. To enable the Parish Committee to support the work of committees of the Parish by promptly appointing new members to committees when vacancies occur between Annual Meetings, a committee member who at any time is unable to serve should give a formal resignation to the committee chair. Any member of a standing committee or an appointed committee who has not given such resignation, but who without prior notice or without reason acceptable to the chair of such committee is absent from two regularly scheduled and noticed meetings of the committee during any church year, may be deemed to have resigned. Such member may be replaced by the Parish Committee as provided in Article VI, paragraph 5. The Parish Committee shall give notice of such replacement to the replaced member. This provision shall apply to any Standing Committee under this Article, or to any committee appointed under Article VI paragraph 3.

3. A chair of a Standing Committee or of an appointed committee who without reason acceptable to the Parish Committee does not call a meeting of his committee during any period

of two months in a church year shall be deemed to have resigned as a member of the committee and may be replaced by the Parish Committee as provided in Article VI, paragraph 5. The Parish Committee shall give notice of such replacement to the replaced member.

Article VIII - Trustees of the Perpetuity Fund, Ministerial Fund, and Helen Robinson Wright Charitable Fund

1. As provided in the Indenture of Trust of the Perpetuity Fund, as amended, five to seven trustees of the Perpetuity Fund shall be elected at each Annual Meeting of the Parish to serve for one year. The trustees shall administer said Fund in accordance with the Indenture of Trust dated April 16, 1929, recorded with Middlesex South District Deeds, Book 6180, page 86, as amended by supplemental indenture dated April 29, 1938, recorded with said Deeds, Book 6211, page 515, and any further amendments that may be made thereto. In case of the death, resignation or inability to act of any trustee, the remaining trustees shall fill the vacancy until the next Annual Meeting of the Parish.
2. As provided in the Indenture of Trust of the Perpetuity Fund, as amended, no one shall be nominated to serve as trustee of the Perpetuity Fund who has not been an acknowledged Member of the Parish for at least two fiscal years.
3. As provided in "An Act to Incorporate the Trustees of the Ministerial Fund in the Town of Watertown" of 1812, there shall be not less than five and not more than seven trustees of the Ministerial Fund. The trustees shall fill any vacancies in their number and shall elect successor trustees.
4. As provided in the Indenture of Trust in 1995, the Trustees of the Helen Robinson Wright Charitable Fund shall be the same persons as the Trustees of the Perpetuity Fund with the same privileges and restrictions.

Article IX - Parish Council

1. The Minister, the chair of the Parish Committee, and the heads of all affiliated church organizations and committees shall constitute the Parish Council. The Council shall meet at such regular times as it shall itself determine to consider the general welfare of the Parish and make such recommendations to the Parish Committee as it may deem advisable. The Minister shall be chair of the Parish Council.

Article X - Fiscal Year

1. The Fiscal Year shall end March 31st.

Article XI - The Minister

1. When needed, a Ministerial Search Committee shall be created composed of four acknowledged Members elected by the Parish at a Special Meeting called for that purpose, from a slate prepared by the Nominating Committee, and three members appointed by the Parish Committee. The Ministerial Search Committee shall unanimously recommend to the Parish a

candidate for the pulpit and shall negotiate with the recommended candidate the terms of a written Agreement proposed to be made between the Minister and the Parish.

2. The Minister shall be called upon recommendation of the Ministerial Search Committee by a ninety percent majority of the Voting Members of the Parish present at a Parish Meeting legally called for the purpose. The quorum for such a Meeting is provided in Article XIII below. The Minister when called shall be in fellowship with the Unitarian Universalist Association.

3. A written Agreement consistent with these By-Laws and based on the terms negotiated by the Ministerial Search Committee shall be made between the Minister and the Parish, providing the terms of the Minister's employment. After the Minister has been called, and the terms of the Agreement approved by the Parish, the Agreement shall be signed on behalf of the Parish by the Chair of the Parish Committee. The Minister may terminate this Agreement by giving three months' notice to the Parish Committee; the Minister may be dismissed by a vote of the Parish as provided in paragraph 4 below; or the Agreement may be terminated by mutual consent. In all cases, the Minister's salary and other compensation shall continue for three months from the date of notice of termination.

4. The Minister may be dismissed by a four-fifths majority vote of the Voting Members of the Parish present at a Parish meeting legally called for the purpose. The quorum for such a meeting is provided in Article XIII below.

5. The Minister shall be in charge of all services held in the church proper, but no meeting other than stated services for worship, marriages, baptisms, dedications of children, and funerals shall be held in the church without permission of the Parish Committee. The Minister shall have freedom of the pulpit as well as freedom to express his or her opinion outside the pulpit.

6. It shall be a duty of the Minister to bring to the attention of the Parish Committee any matters which seem pertinent to the general interests of the church and to make such recommendations as seem proper; but the final decisions in matter of policy and procedure shall remain with the Parish Committee or a legal Meeting of the Parish.

7. In consultation with the Parish Committee, the minister shall nominate three Members of the Parish to serve on a Committee on Ministry. This Committee shall meet regularly with the minister to assess the ministry of the church.

Article XII - Amendments

1. These By-Laws so far as allowed by law may be amended or repealed at any Meeting of the Parish by a two-thirds vote of those acknowledged Members present and voting. Notice of any proposed change shall be contained in the notice of the Meeting.

Article XIII - Quorum

1. For Parish Meetings other than those called under Article XI hereof, a quorum shall be twenty Voting Members of the Parish.

2. For Parish Meeting called under Article XI hereof, a quorum shall be the larger of twenty Voting Members or forty percent of the Voting Members of the Parish.

3. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Article, if at any time there should be a total of thirty or fewer Voting Members of the Parish recorded under Article IV hereof, a quorum for any Parish Meeting, under Article XI or otherwise, shall be two-thirds of the Voting Members of the Parish.

Article XIV - Major Maintenance and Capital Depreciation Fund

1. A First Parish of Watertown Major Maintenance and Capital Depreciation Fund shall be constituted. In the 1992-93 budget, the sum of \$1000 shall be appropriated for each month to follow the final payment on the Parish's mortgage to Watertown Savings Bank, and the total amount shall be paid into this fund. In each subsequent fiscal year, the sum of \$12,000 shall be paid into this fund. The money in this fund shall be spent solely on major expenses for the maintenance and improvement of Parish property, in excess of those payable from the sums customarily appropriated for repairs and maintenance of Parish property.

2. No money from this fund shall be expended for purposes other than those stated in this Article without the consent of two-thirds of Parish Members present and voting at a Parish meeting, notice of such proposed expenditure being given in the Warrant for such meeting.

3. The Parish Committee shall have authority to expend money from this fund in accordance with Article VI, paragraph 3 of these By-Laws.

Changes

Adopted May 16, 1949

Amended April 25, 1971

Comprehensive revision adopted April 24, 1983

Amended April 29, 1984

Amended April 28, 1985

Amended April 26, 1987 (standing committee membership)

Amended April 24, 1988 (standing committee membership)

Amended April 26, 1992 (Art. VI par. 8; Art. X par. 1; adding Art. XIII)

Amended April 24, 1994 (Art. VI, adding to par. 10)

Amended April 25, 1999 (Art. III pars. 2, 3; Art.V par. 3; Art.VI generally)

Amended April 30, 2000 (Art. VI par. 9)

Amended April 30, 2006 (Art. II, Purpose, Art. IV, section 3, Art.V, section 2, line 2, Art. VI, section 10, line 14, section 11 (deleted), section 12, line 3, Art. X, section 8.)

Amended April 10, 2009 (Article VI, section 11 change to section 12, and each subsequent numbered section to be increased by one. A new section 11 to be added.)

Amended April 25, 2010 (added an amendment to Art. VI, section 10)

Amended April 17, 2011 (changed wording of Art.V, section 3)

Amended April 24, 2016 (added Covenant text into Art. II) (Art. VI, section 12 change to section 13, and each subsequent numbered section to be increased by one. A new section 12 to be added.)

Amended April 2018 (establishing Safe Congregation Committee)

Amended April 28, 2019 (comprehensive revision)

Amended April 26, 2020 (revising membership procedure, establishing Memorial Committee, Membership Committee)

Prepared January 6, 1996, by Sylvia L. Boyd, Clerk.

Updated November 5, 2001, by Nancy Dutton, Administrator

Updated May 19, 2006, by Nancy Dutton, Administrator

Updated June 4, 2010, by Nancy Dutton, Administrator

Updated March 13, 2012 by Nancy Dutton, Administrator

Updated April 10, 2018 by Nancy Dutton, Administrator

Updated April 29, 2019 by Kate Hanson Plass, Parish Committee member

Updated April 29, 2019 by Kate Hanson Plass, Parish Committee member

Updated April 26, 2020 by Kate Hanson Plass, Parish Committee member