

**BY-LAWS OF THE NORTH COUNTRY ASSOCIATION**  
**of the NEW YORK CONFERENCE of the UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

Effective October 1, 2023

**ARTICLE I**

**NAME:**

010. The name of this Association is the North Country Association of the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ.

**ARTICLE II**

**PURPOSES AND POWERS:**

020. To express the oneness in Christ of the churches composing it and to make more effective their Christian witness and service.

030. To continue without break the ecclesiastical and legal identity of the Black River-St Lawrence and Essex Associations of the Congregational-Christian Churches, and those local churches within its boundaries which are not part of the United Church of Christ.

040. To determine, confer and certify to the standing local churches of the United Church of Christ within its boundaries.

050. To determine, confer or remove, and certify to the standing of authorized ministers of the United Church of Christ.

060. To exercise the powers and perform the functions of an ecclesiastical council on request of a church or other parties concerned.

070. To stimulate the spiritual and missionary interests of the churches; to cooperate with the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ and through the Conference with the United Church of Christ and its boards, agencies and instrumentalities.

080. To do everything which an Association of the United Church of Christ may do in the Spirit of Christ to extend the Gospel, advance true religion, promote education and encourage Christian charity.

090. Any adjustment of Association boundaries or transfer of membership of churches between Associations shall be done in consultation with and by approval of the Association concerned and the New York Conference.

100. The Association shall be guided by the most recent *Constitution and By-laws of the United Church of Christ* and its *Manual on Ministry*.

**ARTICLE III**

**FAITH:**

110. This Association accepts as its own the faith of the historic Church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers, particularly as that faith is expressed in the Preamble of the most recent approved edition of the *Constitution of the United Church of Christ* and in the Statement of Faith adopted by the General Synod of the United Church of Christ, July 8, 1959.

## ARTICLE IV

### **MEMBERSHIP:**

#### **120. Churches**

120.1 The United Church of Christ churches, and Congregational Christian Churches, located within its boundaries. Any local church whose articles or statement of faith are in essential agreement with that of this Association, and which, having covenanted with the Association to assume and fulfill faithfully the obligations of a member church as hereinafter set forth and has been recommended by the Committee on Church and Ministry of the Association, is received into membership by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting at a duly called meeting of the Association.

#### **130. Authorized Ministers**

130.1 Ordained ministers who, as of the date of adoption of these By-Laws, hold their ministerial standing in the North Country Association.

130.2 Any person upon whom full ministerial standing is conferred through ordination by this Association in cooperation with a local church.

130.3 An ordained minister who, having been examined by the Committee on Church and Ministry and found to be qualified by virtue of their educational and theological attainments, knowledge of the history, polity and practices of the United Church of Christ, Christian faith and experience, and having been recommended by the Committee.

130.4 A minister licensed or commissioned by the Association to serve a local church or a particular calling.

130.5 The Association shall also recognize the most recent edition of the Manual on Ministry's definition of authorized ministers.

#### **140. Honorary and Affiliated Members**

140.1 The Conference Minister, other members of the Conference staff, official representatives of the General Synod, national boards, agencies and instrumentalities of the United Church of Christ in attendance are Associate Delegates with voice but without vote.

140.2 An authorized minister of another denomination, serving a local church in North Country Association, who has requested and been granted dual standing by the Committee on Church and Ministry, may have the rights and privileges of such membership during the duration of the pastorate.

140.3 If their dual standing ceases, such persons shall not be elected officers nor continue to serve as officers of the Association, Conference, General Synod, nor delegates to General Synod.

#### **150. Voting Credentials**

150.1 All authorized ministers shall have voice and one vote at all duly called meetings of the Association. The standing of the authorized minister shall remain regardless of the standing of the current church served.

150.2 Each member church is entitled to be represented at meetings of the Association by four lay delegates. Such lay delegates shall have voice and vote at all duly called meetings of the Association.

150.3 Lay members of the Association Executive Council who are not delegates from their churches shall have voice and vote at all duly called meetings of the Association.

## ARTICLE V

### **PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBER CHURCHES:**

160. A church holding membership in this Association has, in covenant, a God-given responsibility to the Association, its labors and its witness, even as the Association has, in covenant, a God-given responsibility to the well-being and aspirations of each member church. In mutual Christian concern and in dedication to Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, the one and the many share in common Christian experience and responsibility.

160.1 A church in good standing is one that accepts the responsibilities of the member churches through its active participation in the Semi-Annual meetings of the Association and strives to support the Association financially or through per capita assessments.

160.2 Per capita assessment payments are due from the date the churches are billed through December 31st.

170. The autonomy of the local church is inherent and modifiable only by its own action. (See #18 of the UCC Constitution.)

180. No church may be removed from the roster of the Association of Member Churches except upon recommendation of the Committee on Church and Ministry and by two-thirds vote of credentialed voters present and voting at a duly called meeting of the Association, due notice of the proposed action having been given to the parties concerned.

190. A church which votes to leave the Association is removed from the Association rolls if such action and vote was done in accordance with the New York State Religious Corporation Law and the local by-laws.

## ARTICLE VI

### **PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF AUTHORIZED MINISTERS:**

200. Just as Member Churches and the Association have, in covenant, mutual responsibility laid upon them by God for each other's well-being and aspirations, so have authorized ministers and the Association. All authorized ministers serving in the Association agree to be faithful in attendance at meetings of the Association and in participation in its work.

210. Any authorized ministerial members failing for two years to report either in person or by letter to the Registrar and/or the Committee on Church and Ministry shall forfeit their membership and standing in the Association, but such membership and standing may be restored on their application to the Committee on Church and Ministry and approval by that body and a two-thirds vote at any regular meeting of the Association.

220. The privilege and responsibility of witnessing to the Gospel belongs to every member of each local church. The Association diligently seeks, therefore, in concert with the New York Conference and the United Church of Christ, to provide opportunities for the members of its churches to exercise such gifts of teaching, evangelizing, healing, preaching, and administration as God has bestowed upon them.

230. The Association recognizes that God calls certain persons to service for various forms of ministry in the Church. This calling is recognized by ordination, licensure, commissioning, or other, appropriate categories and services of dedication.

240. An authorized minister under fifty-five years of age who withdraws from active service in the ministry may apply to the Association through the Committee on Church and Ministry for a Leave of Absence. The Association may grant said person Leave of Absence for one year at a time. Except in special circumstances, such Leave of Absence is not granted for more than five successive years.

250. Authorized ministers retiring from active ministry by reason of age or sickness shall not forfeit ministerial standing in this Association or their vote.

260. Ordained ministers who are in good and regular standing in this Association may receive a transfer to the ecclesiastical body of their choice upon written request to the Registrar and provided that such request does not violate the most recently approved By-laws of the United Church of Christ.

## **ARTICLE VII**

### **MEETINGS OF THE ASSOCIATION:**

270. Regular meetings of the Association shall be held in the spring and autumn at such time and place as the Association may designate or, lacking such designation, as may be determined by the Moderator and Registrar. Any or all delegates may participate in a meeting of the Association by means of a telephone or video conference or similar communications equipment allowing all persons participating in the meeting to hear each other at the same time.

280. Special meetings may be called by the Registrar upon request of the Association Executive Council, or upon the written request of at least four churches in the Association.

290. Ecclesiastical Councils may be called by the Registrar at the request of the Committee on Church and Ministry.

300. Notice of all meetings of the Association shall be made in writing by the Registrar to all churches and authorized ministers prior to the second Sunday preceding the date of the meeting.

310. Sixteen persons from not less than seven member churches of the Association, including four authorized ministers of the Association shall constitute a quorum except for Ecclesiastical Councils when four ordained ministers are required.

## **ARTICLE VIII**

### **OFFICERS AND DUTIES:**

320. The officers of this Association shall be a Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Registrar (who may also serve as Treasurer), Treasurer and Ecumenical Officer.

320.1 Terms of officers shall begin with their election at the Spring Association meeting and shall be for one year.

320.2 The Moderator and Vice-Moderator shall serve no more than two consecutive terms.

320.3 Following the completion of two terms, the Moderator and Vice-Moderator may be eligible for re-election only after the lapse of one term.

320.3 The Registrar and Treasurer may serve additional terms upon the recommendation of the Association Executive Council.

### **330. Moderator and Vice-Moderator**

330.1 The Moderator shall preside at all meetings of the Association and the Association Executive Council and shall be the Chairperson of the Association Executive Council.

330.2 The Vice-Moderator shall perform the duties of the Moderator in cases of his or her absence or inability to act, or by request of the Moderator.

330.3 When possible, the office of Moderator shall alternate between an authorized minister and a layperson.

330.4 When possible, the Vice-Moderator shall succeed to the office of Moderator.

### **340. Registrar and Treasurer**

340.1 The Registrar shall keep the roll of the churches and ministers of the Association and the recorded minutes of its meetings and shall issue calls for meetings.

340.2 The Registrar shall conduct correspondence and render such other services as pertains to the duties of this office.

340.3 The Treasurer shall receive and disburse all money of the Association.

340.4 The Treasurer shall present a detailed report of all income/disbursements at each meeting.

340.5 The Auditor will serve at the direction of the Executive Council and shall examine assets, receipts, disbursements, supporting accounts and disclosures, as well as the accounting principles and practices being used by the Treasurer. The Auditor shall report yearly to the Association at the Spring Association meeting and advise the Executive Council.

## ARTICLE IX

### **ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE COUNCIL:**

350. The Association Executive Council shall consist of the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Registrar, Treasurer, Ecumenical Officer, and the Chair or a representative of the Committee on Church and Ministry and the Nominating Committee. If a program or fellowship is recognized by the Association or Executive Council for a particular event or time period, their chair or representative will attend and provide a report as appropriate. At least five Association member churches must be represented on the Executive Council, otherwise up to two at large members will be elected for a one-year term to ensure better representation of the Association.

350.1 Association Executive Council members are expected to attend Association Executive Council and Semi-Annual Association meetings.

350.2 The Moderator shall inquire regarding an Association Executive Council member's ability to serve if that Council member is absent for three of the five Association meetings in one year. If the member in question is deemed inactive, that person may be asked to resign from the position.

350.3 The Nominating Committee shall seek candidates to fill vacancies annually and the Association Executive Council may appoint individuals to fill vacancies created by the unexpired terms to be voted upon at the following Association meeting.

360. Ex officio members shall include the New York Conference staff representative and the member of the New York Conference Board from the North Country Association with whom the Executive Council shall work in close cooperation with on all applicable matters.

370. The standing committees of the Association shall be:

370.1 Committee on Church and Ministry

370.2 Nominating Committee

380. The Association Executive Council may recognize certain programs or community interest groups which shall be groups having a written and common purpose contributing to the life of the Association, its Member Churches, or its authorized ministers. Each shall possess a set of rules governing its operation and may request funds through the Executive Council from the annual budget.

380.1 The Association at its meetings or through the Association Executive Council may establish an Ad Hoc committee or appoint people to special programs or groups as it may determine necessary to accomplish and perform specific projects or to deal with particular areas of responsibility or concern.

380.2 Such examples include: Spiritual Life, Youth, Social Justice, Missions, Outreach, Stewardship, Creation Justice, Poverty & Homelessness and such others as the Association may authorize.

390. The Association Executive Council shall:

- 390.1 Carry out the stated goals of the Association reviewing and coordinating its work and promoting in every way the well-being of churches.
- 390.2 Represent the Association in emergencies that may arise between meetings of the Association.
- 390.3 Prepare the programs of such meetings.
- 390.4 Prepare the budget with the methods of raising needed revenue for presentation at the Fall Association meeting.
- 390.5 Have general oversight of all expenditures.
- 390.6 Fill vacancies on standing committees between Association meetings and approved at the next Association meeting.
- 390.7 Transact such business as may be necessary.
400. The Association Executive Council shall meet at least three times each year.
- 400.1 Five members of the Association Executive Council shall constitute a quorum, and the vote of a majority of the members present shall decide any question, except as noted elsewhere in these by-laws.
410. The Association Executive Council shall secure an Auditor who shall report at the Spring meeting.

## **ARTICLE X**

### **COMMITTEE ON CHURCH AND MINISTRY:**

420. There shall be a Committee on Church and Ministry consisting of nine persons elected for a term of three years each and arranged so that three shall be elected annually.
- 420.1 No less than five of the nine members shall be authorized ministers holding standing in the Association. It is strongly suggested that no less than three of the nine members are laypersons to allow for a different perspective and representation.
- 420.2 The Committee on Church and Ministry shall elect its own Chairperson.
- 420.3 The Committee may appoint ex officio members to the Committee as deemed necessary. Ex officio members will have voice without vote.
- 420.4 The Committee will notify the Association Executive Council of all ex officio appointments, purpose and terms.
430. The Committee shall maintain and preserve confidential records of its proceedings. These records shall be in the custody of the Committee chair.
- 430.1 The Committee shall appoint a scribe from among their members, who will be responsible for communicating information to the Registrar as applicable.
440. The Committee shall be guided by the most recent Constitution of the United Church of Christ and the Manual on Ministry of the United Church of Christ.
450. The Committee shall review the credentials of local churches applying for membership in the Association and shall recommend to the Association those which it deems to be qualified.
460. The Committee shall act upon the credentials of persons applying for ordination to the ministry in the United Church of Christ and authorized ministerial standing in the Association and shall recommend to the Association those whom it deems qualified.

470. The Committee shall have full authority to confer and remove standing for all authorized ministers. Appeal for review of the process may be made to the Association Executive Council.

470.1 The Committee shall have authority to confer and remove a candidate's status as a Member in Discernment.

480. The Association holds ministerial misconduct to be a violation of pastoral ethics. When a concern about a minister's fitness for ministry is raised, the Committee on Church and Ministry will follow the most current procedures outlined in the most recent edition of the Manual on Ministry, the NY Conference's Unified Fitness Review Board process, and other supplemental documents and resources provided by the UCC.

490. The Committee shall evaluate the support given to all authorized ministers and recommend or initiate ways to improve support. The Committee shall assist in church/pastor relations when called upon, or as necessary.

## **ARTICLE XI**

### **NOMINATING COMMITTEE:**

500. The Nominating Committee shall conduct its business as a committee. The senior member of the Committee shall serve as the Chair. The Committee shall appoint a Recorder who will be responsible for transmitting records to the Registrar. The Chair may also serve as Recorder.

500.1 The Committee shall consist of four members appointed by the Association Executive Council to serve terms of three years each, so that at least one new member is appointed each year. Members completing a term shall be eligible for reappointment after a lapse of one year.

500.2 The Association Registrar may serve as an ex officio member of the Committee, maintaining a database of members' past services, job descriptions for each position, and contact information for pastors of Association churches.

510. The Committee shall submit a slate of potential nominees and alternates to the Association Executive Council no later than final Association Executive Council meeting before the Spring Association meeting each year. At the Spring Association meeting, the Committee shall present a slate of nominations for Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Registrar, Treasurer, Ecumenical Officer, and when applicable Association Executive Council at large members, candidates for the New York Conference Board Representative (every third year) and candidates for General Synod Delegate (every fourth year) as well as candidates to fill vacant positions.

520. The Committee shall be committed to the goals and objectives of the mission of the Association in making nominations, giving due consideration whenever possible, to equitable representation by geographical area, age, gender, race, laity, and clergy, and shall take into consideration the respective strengths of the local churches within the Association.

530. The Committee shall take into consideration the gifts, skills, and experiences of candidates to match them with positions for which they are best suited whenever possible. Prospective candidates shall not be contacted by a member of the Nominating Committee until discussed and approved by the Committee.

540. Nominations for all positions may be made from the floor at the Association meeting when elections are held.

## **ARTICLE XII**

### **FISCAL YEAR**

550. The fiscal year of the Association shall begin January 1st and end on December 31st and shall begin on January 1st of the first calendar year following adoption of these by-laws.

## **ARTICLE XIII**

### **AMENDMENTS**

560. These by-laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of credentialed voters present and voting at any regular meeting of the Association, or at a special meeting called for that purpose, provided that the notice of proposed amendment(s) is sent in writing to the churches and authorized ministers at least four weeks before the proposed amendment is acted upon.

#### **ARTICLE XIV**

##### **TERM LIMITS**

570. All persons elected or appointed to positions can serve two terms in any given function, unless defined elsewhere in these by-laws, and cannot be re-elected or re-appointed without at least one year intervening.

570.1 The Executive Council may appoint extended terms or members to special groups or committees by special vote when required to do so in order to complete the work of the Association.

#### **ARTICLE XV**

##### **RULE OF ORDER**

580. Business shall be transacted by a majority of credentialed voters present and voting at any duly called meeting of the Association, a quorum being present, except as otherwise provided in these by-laws.

590. The order of business shall be in accordance with the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order, unless otherwise provided in these by-laws.