

# **The Proposed ByLaws of Common Thread Church**

## **Preamble:**

NRCC is an open community, organized to help one another awaken to the Interior Divine. We embrace both the ancient wisdom of the Christian tradition, and the contemporary wisdom of humanities and science. We encourage one another on the spiritual journey using four kinds of spiritual practice; communal, contemplative, learning, and serving.

## **Article I: Core Community Values and Propositions:**

To be added when Doug and Julie finish their work.

## **Article II: Congregational Representation and Power**

### **Section 1: The Congregational Assembly**

Clause 1: Rationale for having a Congregational Assembly

Mutuality:

- the church needs people and people need the church,
- this is a private organization and people “vote with their feet”
- we must be responsive to the needs and perspectives of our collective membership

Clause 2: Focus

Processes devised by the Congregational Assembly should

- focus more on discernment than voting
- allow time for contemplation, meditation
- seek more qualitative feedback than quantitative

Clause 3: Tools for Congregational Input

- Can include:
  - In person and online meetings
  - Surveys / polling
- Must be accessible
- Should be timely
- Should not allow for anonymous participation

Clause 4: Who can participate in input processes

- Adults and invested teens
- Investment is defined as being concerned with the collective and long term wellbeing of the church
- Investment is determined internally by the individual

Clause 5: Qualifying Issues that require community input

- Time and place of weekly services change
- Change in governing structure
- Competing claims of legitimacy in leadership or governing bodies
- Petition from 10% of # of persons in the church directory

Clause 6: Recommendations of the Congressional Assembly are non-binding.

- Will be reported to the Congregational Elders & Board

**Section 2: The Congregational Elders**

Clause 1: Composition:

- by invitation but no coercion to participate
- all former board members
- all currently paid staff
- all core team leaders past and present

Clause 2: Rationale for Elders

- These persons have demonstrated significant investment in the organization over time
- These persons have knowledge of the institutional values, history, people, and finances of the organization

Clause 3: Process for Debate and Deliberation on a Qualifying Issue

- The process will be determined by an elder leader selected by vote of the participating elders.
- An elder leader will be selected in January of each year and they will serve for one calendar year. After January 1st of each year, a call for nominations must be made to the Congregation to fill available positions (including elder leader). Self nominations are allowed. Paid staff cannot be nominated or selected for the position of elder leader.
- Selection of the elder leader will take place by popular vote of the Congregational Assembly. Selection can take place by plurality if more than 2 people express interest / are nominated. However, they must have 10% support of the total number voting or a runoff is required. If a runoff is required the assembly will choose among the top three vote recipients in the initial vote.
- Board members cannot be elder leaders simultaneously.
- If there is a vacancy in the role of elder leader it will be filled by the operational leader. If an operational leader does not exist it will be filled by the person on staff that receives the highest compensation at the time of the vacancy. If no one is being compensated it will be filled by the Board chair.
- Participating elders must(1) publicly state or, (2) provide in writing their qualifications for being an elder each time they meet or vote.
- The process for elder input can include online meetings, in person meetings, surveys, polls or some combination of the above.

- If a person claims to be an elder but there is cause for other elders to lack confidence that they have the longterm best interests of the church in mind, a motion can be made and seconded for removal. The elder leader will create a process by which the majority of elders can weigh in on that question and based on that feedback the elder leader will decide on the removal motion. This is the only decision of the elders that is binding and does not need board approval to execute. That decision can be appealed to the Board of Appeals.

Clause 4: Recommendations of the Elders are non-binding.

- Decisions and recommendations by the elders will be reported to the Board of Directors for their deliberation

### **Article 3: The Board of Directors / Executive Authority**

Clause 1: Composition - There will be five board members.`

Clause 2: Terms

- They will serve 2 year terms staggered into 2 cohorts.
- Three board members will begin and end their term on odd years, two board members will begin and end their terms on even years.
- There are not term limits but each board position must re-open for nominations at the end of the term and sitting board members are considered like all other nominees.

Clause 3: Removal

- Any board member can be removed if there is a majority vote by participating elders and a majority vote of the board.

Clause 4: Vacancies

- Vacancies on the board will be filled by a process determined by the elder leader. The person selected will serve out the remainder of the term of the original board member.

Clause 5: Officers

- There will be four officers elected by the board: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer

Clause 6: Nomination / Selection of Board Members

- After January 1st of each year, a call for nominations must be made to the Congregation to fill available positions. Self nominations are allowed.
- After March 1st elders can provide input on nominations. Once elders have started providing input no further nominations may occur.
- After April 1st the board will select board members from the nominees.
- They will be installed the first Sunday after June 1st.

Clause 7: Authority / duties

- The board guards the core values of the organization and makes sure they are expressed in the actions, activities and financial actions of the church.
- The board determines the budget for the church.
- The board oversees all hiring / staffing. They may organize a subcommittee to carry out this process but all hiring decisions are contingent upon board approval.

- The board may reconfigure the organizational roles and supervision structure of the organization.
- The board is responsible for properly administering the financial resources of the organization.
- The board is responsible for maintaining all necessary records to properly administer the organization.
- The board determines what organizations we will affiliate with.

Clause 8: Decisions Binding by default

- The decisions of the board are binding until overturned by appeal.

Clause 9: Agenda setting

- Items can be placed on the agenda of the board meetings by a board member, the elder leader or the two persons on staff receiving the highest compensation.

**Article 4: The Board of Appeals**

Clause 1: Rationale

- It is assumed the board could make a poor decision and so all decisions can be appealed by a petition of 10% of the # of persons in the church directory or by request of a staff member, elder or board member.

Clause 2: Composition of Appeals Board

- Appeals will be considered by three emeritus elders selected by a majority vote of participating elders. The elder leader should assemble said board with all deliberate speed.
- Sitting board members cannot be nominated or selected.

Clause 3: Limitations of Decisions

- The appeals process will sustain or overturn a decision made by the board and, in the latter case, initiate the process for consideration of a new remedy.

Clause 4: Timing of Decisions

- The petitioner shall determine the time provided for a decision but that time shall not be less than 2 weeks without consensus of the Board of Appeals once seated.

**Article 5: To Amend This Constitution**

Clause 1: Amendments can be proposed by the following persons:

- By a board member
- By an elder
- By petition of the congregation = 10% of directory

Clause 2: Precise language of the amendment must be provided and cannot be changed by the board.

Clause 3: Amendments are approved or rejected by the board following opportunities for input by the Congregation Assembly and Elders

**Article 6: Relations with Other Religious and non-religious organizations**

Clause 1: We are open to working with anyone

Clause 2: Our orientation is power with versus power over others

Clause 3: We align with other organizations over shared values as opposed to shared beliefs. The key value is that we are all carriers of the divine.

Clause 4: We prefer to support existing organizations - “we support the wheel being created” not “recreate the wheel”

Clause 5: Our values should be reflected in our budget

Clause 6: Financial support of any other organization requires board approval and needs to be revisited yearly in the budget process.

## **Article 7: Ratification Process**

Ratification of the Constitution will occur when:

- The Congregation Assembly provides input
- The Elders provide input / recommendation
- There is a round of revisions and both bodies have an additional opportunity for feedback.
- The majority of the Board of Directors votes to ratify it