

“Building the Body of Christ”



Constitution of Westminster United Church

Adopted by the Congregation, June 10, 2018

I. Mission & Vision

A. Our Mission

Making Connexions – with God, with each other, and with our community.

B. Our Vision

We strive to show God’s love with creativity, excellence & openness:

With creative, musical & engaging worship –

Our family has fun Making Connexions together!

With excellent ministry for all ages

and a focus on children, youth and young families –

For our future and our present too!

With open hearts, open minds, and open arms –

We are Open for Discussion!

II. Guiding Principals

A. **Scripture** – Four biblical references shape our gathering together as a Community of Faith:

1. **Ezekiel 37:1-14** – a vision in which dry bones are brought back together, covered with sinews and flesh, and breathed back to new life by the Holy Spirit
2. **1 Corinthians 12:4-31** – concerning spiritual gifts, service & works, and the unity & diversity of the Body of Christ
3. **Romans 12:4-8** – about service and leadership in the Body of Christ
4. **John 13:34-35** – Jesus' call for us to "love one another"

B. **History** – Two founding denominations of the United Church of Canada shape our understanding of who we have been called to be:

1. **Methodist** – From our Methodist roots, we gain a strong sense of passion, creativity, stirring music, heart-warming worship and social justice. As our forerunner, Wesley Methodist, was a former congregation of the New Methodist Connexion, we are all about "Making Connexions."
2. **Presbyterian** – From our Presbyterian roots, we gain the importance of education, good order, pastoral care, hymnody, and a strong work ethic. Our sanctuary reflects our Presbyterian background, including the beams and stained glass that came from our forerunner, St. Andrew's Presbyterian, across the river.

C. **Context** – Our context matters, informing us as we find new ways forward to be the Body of Christ at this particular time and in our part of God's world:

1. **Time** – We are currently facing a time of suspicion towards organized religion and institutions, and when the fastest growing segment on the census is the 'spiritual but not religious.' 'Millennials' are looking for deep meaning in their lives, but are reluctant to believe that faith and the Church could be the answer. Like the first believers, we are challenged to be faithful, relevant, unashamed and inspiring.
2. **Place** – We are firmly rooted in our community of Thamesford – a small, rural, but growing village with a great deal of pride and commitment from the older homes and mostly a bedroom community in the newer subdivisions. Community involvement is still strong, but families are being drawn to larger centres for many of their needs, interests and entertainment choices, presenting challenges to us as a Community of Faith.

D. **Response** – We have discerned our mission and vision to answer the needs of our community by building relationships, offering relevant and helpful programming, being true to our call as Christians and doing so in an open, warm, inviting and inclusive way. We are "Building the Body of Christ" and breathing new life into old ways.

III. Relationships

- A. Westminster United Church, recognized as the Thamesford Pastoral Charge, is a community of faith within the United Church of Canada, and is in covenant relationship with the Region.
- B. Westminster United Church is free to associate with clusters and networks as would be beneficial.

IV. Accountability

- A. Westminster United Church is accountable to the covenant we share with the _____Region, and ultimately to the United Church of Canada through its Denominational Council and its various units and committees.
- B. The “Doctrine” and “By-Laws” of *The Manual* and all provisions of The United Church of Canada Act are to be respected in all matters. Under provisions provided in Sections B.7.1 (a) & B.7.2 of *The Manual*, this constitution aims to set forth a form of governance suitable to our community and context while fulfilling all the responsibilities and membership of a governing body. It is in no way meant to undermine the authority of *The Manual*.

V. Governance

A. Terms

1. **Church Year** – The church year of Westminster United Church will run from July 1 to June 30 of the following year. All elected positions will begin and end their service according to that timing as their term of office.
2. **Financial Year** – The financial year of Westminster United Church will run from January 1 to December 31 of any calendar year.
3. **Ordained Minister** – The minister taking the lead for the church and to whom the staff are accountable is known at this time as the Ordained Minister. This is not to preclude other members of the order of ministry or lay leadership from assuming this role in the future, at which point the necessary changes in language could be made.

B. The Congregation – *“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.” ~ 1 Corinthians 12:4-31 ~*

1. The Congregation of Westminster United Church is the collective body of all those members, full members, and adherents, along with members of the order of ministry who are on our membership roll.
2. **Congregational Meetings**
 - a) **Membership** – Full members will have voting privileges at all Congregational Meetings. Adherents can be given voting privileges by the full members on financial and administrative matters, as allowed by *The Manual*.
 - b) **AFM & AGM** – The Congregation will meet no less often than at an Annual Financial Meeting to be held on or about the last Sunday of February and an Annual General Meeting to be held on or about the second Sunday of June, to deliberate and make decisions as Westminster United Church.
 - c) **Other Meetings** – Other business, as it arises, can go to additional duly called meetings of the Congregation.
 - d) **Responsibilities** – The Congregation will be responsible for receiving the annual reports and financial statement of the previous year, adopting the annual budget for the current year, naming the banking institution & the financial reviewer, and any other business brought before it at the Annual Financial Meeting. The Congregation will be responsible for receiving the Ministers’ Accountability Report, reviewing the Constitution as necessary, electing the Connexions Council, Standing Positions, and Standing Committees (specifically reviewing the members of the Board of Trustees and appointing members as necessary,) and any other business brought before it at the Annual General Meeting.
 - e) **Officers** – Congregational Meetings will be chaired by the Chair of the Connexions Council. The Church Life Co-Ordinator (Staff) will serve as notetaker to the Secretary of the Connexions Council who also serves as Secretary to all Congregational Meetings.
 - f) **Term** – The Chair of the Connexions Council is elected to a two-year term and therefore will chair all Congregational Meetings for those two church years. Re-election is allowed twice for a total of six years and a required one-year sabbatical before being eligible to be elected again.
 - g) **Quorum** – 20 full members will be required to be in attendance for quorum along with the attendance of the Ordained Minister.
 - h) **Voting** – Voting will be by show of hands unless secret ballot is requested from the floor or chosen by the Chair.

C. **The Connexions Council** – *“There are different kinds of service,
but the same Lord.” ~ 1 Corinthians 12:5 ~*

1. The Connexions Council is the governing body of Westminster United Church.
 - a) **Membership** – The Connexions Council will include full members elected by the Congregation as follows:
 - (1) Chairperson
 - (2) Treasurer
 - (3) four members elected without portfolio
 - b) **Term** – Connexions Councillors are elected to a two-year term in accordance with the church year, staggering changes in leadership when possible. Councillors/Officers can be re-elected up to twice, and can move from one position to another on the Connexions Council from term to term, but the maximum total term on the Connexions Council is six years with a required one-year sabbatical before being eligible to be elected again.
 - c) **Ex Officio & Corresponding Members** – The Ordained Minister is *ex officio* to the Connexions Council and serves as a conduit between the Connexions Council and the Staff. The Chairs of Standing Committees or their alternates will serve as corresponding members to the Connexions Council as required. The Church Life Co-Ordinator (Staff,) serving as notetaker to the Secretary who will be elected from the Connexions Councillors, is also a corresponding member.
 - d) **Responsibilities** – The Connexions Council is the deliberating and decision-making court of Westminster United Church, responsible for vision, policy, accountability, assigning duties and encouraging good communication within the church. It is the official court of the church between the Congregation and other courts of the wider Church and is ultimately responsible in representing Westminster United Church.
 - e) **Accountability** – The Connexions Council is accountable to the Congregation through its Congregational Meetings.
 - f) **Frequency** – The Connexions Council will meet no less frequently than monthly except during the months of July and August which will be on an as-needed basis.
 - g) **Quorum** – Four elected voting members will be required for a quorum along with the attendance of the Ordained Minister.
 - h) **Vacancies** – The Connexions Council has the authority to fill vacancies on the Connexions Council, vacant Standing Positions, and vacancies on Standing Committees, except Trustees, as required between Annual General Meetings of the Congregation.

D. Standing Positions – “I will put my Spirit in you and you will live.” ~ Ezekiel 37:14a ~

1. Chair of the Connexions Council

- a) **Election** – The Chair of the Connexions Council will be a full member elected by the Congregation.
- b) **Term** – The Chair of the Connexions Council will serve a two-year term in accordance with the church year, with re-election allowed twice for a total of six church years and a required one-year sabbatical before being eligible to be elected again.
- c) **Responsibilities** – The Chair of the Connexions Council will assure the Connexions Council meets as required and fulfills its responsibilities. The Chair of the Connexions Council will represent the Congregation as required or will delegate an alternate.
- d) **Accountability** – The Chair of the Connexions Council is accountable to the Congregation through its Congregational Meetings.

2. Treasurer

- a) **Election** – The Treasurer will be a full member elected by the Congregation.
- b) **Term** – The Treasurer will serve a two-year term in accordance with the church year, with re-election allowed twice for a total of six years and a required one-year sabbatical before being eligible to be elected again.
- c) **Responsibilities** – The Treasurer will work with the Bookkeeper (Staff) to prepare reports and oversee the day-to-day and long term operations of church finances along with the Finance Committee. The Treasurer is also elected to the Connexions Council and is the Chair of the Finance Committee, assuring it meets as required and fulfills its requirements.
- d) **Accountability** – The Treasurer is accountable to the Connexions Council.

3. Chairs of Standing Committees

- a) **Election** – Each Standing Committee will have an individual elected as its Chair by the Congregation. (The Treasurer serves as the Chair of the Finance Committee – see above.)
- b) **Term** – Chairs of Standing Committees will serve a two-year term in accordance with the church year, with re-election allowed twice for a total of six years and a required one-year sabbatical before being eligible to be elected again.

c) **Responsibilities** – Chairs of Standing Committees will assure their particular Standing Committee meets as required and fulfills its responsibilities. Chairs of Standing Committees will represent their Standing Committee as corresponding members to the Connexions Council as required or will delegate an alternate.

d) **Accountability** – Chairs of Standing Committees are accountable to the Connexions Council.

4. **Regional Representative**

a) **Election** – A Regional Representative will be a full member elected by the Congregation.

b) **Term** – The Regional Representative will serve a two-year term in accordance with the church year, with re-election allowed twice for a total of six years and a required one-year sabbatical before being eligible to be elected again.

c) **Responsibilities** – The Regional Representative will attend meetings as required by the Region and will share communication between Westminster United Church and the _____ Region as a corresponding member to the Connexions Council as required. The Regional Representative is eligible to serve any of the committees of the Region.

d) **Accountability** – The Regional Representative is accountable to the Connexions Council.

E. **Standing Committees** – *“There are different kinds of working,*

but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.” ~ 1 Corinthians 4:6 ~

1. Standing Committees do specific work for and under the direction of the Connexions Council, allowing more time and attention to those details, and bringing recommendations back to the Connexions Council for decisions and setting policy.

2. Standing Committees will elect a Secretary from their membership to hold office for that church year. The Secretary will keep detailed minutes and make a report from each meeting, according to the provided template, to be forwarded to the Connexions Council through the Church Life Co-Ordinator (Staff.) Alternatively, the Chair of Standing Committees can take on that responsibility.

3. Three elected voting members of any Standing Committee will be required for a quorum along with the attendance of the Ordained Minister, unless the Ordained Minister has waived this requirement for any particular meeting.

4. To maintain at arm’s length, Connexions Councillors should not also serve on the Ministry & Personnel Committee or the Board of Trustees.

5. **Ministry & Personnel Committee**

- a) **Membership** – The Ministry & Personnel Committee will include the Chair of Ministry & Personnel and two to four more individuals, all elected by the Congregation.
- b) **Term** – Members of the Ministry & Personnel Committee will serve a two-year term in accordance with the church year, with re-election allowed twice for a total of six years and a required one-year sabbatical before being eligible to be elected again.
- c) **Corresponding Member** – The Ordained Minister is a corresponding member to the Ministry & Personnel Committee.
- d) **Responsibilities** – The Ministry & Personnel Committee is responsible for all Staff positions hired to Westminster United Church and helping to maintain good order between Staff and the Congregation, as outlined in *The Manual* and “The Ministry & Personnel Committee Handbook.”
- e) **Accountability** – All staffing and contract decisions made by the Ministry & Personnel Committee go as recommendations to the Connexions Council to whom it is accountable. The Chair of Ministry & Personnel or their alternate will be a corresponding member to the Connexions Council as required.
- f) **Frequency** – The Ministry & Personnel Committee will meet no less frequently than four times a church year.

6. **Board of Trustees**

- a) **Membership** – The Board of Trustees will include the Chair of Trustees and two to four more individuals, all duly elected by the Congregation.
- b) **Term** – Trustees will serve a six-year term in accordance with the church year, with immediate re-election allowed without any requirement for a sabbatical.
- c) **Ex Officio** – The Ordained Minister is *ex officio* to the Board of Trustees.
- d) **Responsibilities** – The Board of Trustees is entrusted with the investments, legal, and real property of Westminster United Church and the insurance thereon, on behalf of the Congregation for the United Church of Canada. The membership, processes, duties, and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees are outlined in *The Manual* and “The Board of Trustees Handbook.”
- e) **Accountability** – The Board of Trustees is accountable to the Connexions Council. The Chair of Trustees or their alternate will be a corresponding member to the Connexions Council as required.

- f) **Frequency** – The Board of Trustees will meet no less frequently than once a church year.
- g) **Authority** – The Board of Trustees can only act on the authority and direction of the Connexions Council.

7. **Finance Committee**

- a) **Membership** – The Finance Committee will include the Treasurer serving as Chair (elected by the Congregation to the Connexions Council,) a representative from the UCW (preferably the UCW Treasurer,) a Trustee, and two more individuals, all elected by the Congregation.
- b) **Term** – Members of the Finance Committee will serve a two-year term in accordance with the church year, with re-election allowed twice for a total of six years and a required one-year sabbatical before being eligible to be elected again.
- c) **Ex Officio & Corresponding Member** – The Ordained Minister is *ex officio* to the Finance Committee and the Bookkeeper (Staff) is a corresponding member as required.
- d) **Responsibilities** – The Finance Committee is responsible for good stewardship and oversight of the Congregation's finances, ensuring best accounting practices, monitoring expenditures, reporting patterns of giving and expenses, preparing reports and budgets, and suggesting policy for the finances of the church.
- e) **Accountability** – All decisions made by the Finance Committee go as recommendations to the Connexions Council to whom they are accountable. The Treasurer is also a Connexions Councillor, elected by the Congregation.
- f) **Frequency** – The Finance Committee will meet no less frequently than five times a church year, with other correspondence allowed between meetings to review monthly financial statements, etc. in order to send as recommendations to the Connexions Council.

8. **Property Committee**

- a) **Membership** – The Property Committee will include the Chair of Property and two to four more individuals, all elected by the Congregation.
- b) **Term** – Members of the Property Committee will serve a two-year term in accordance with the church year, with re-election allowed twice for a total of six years and a required one-year sabbatical before being eligible to be elected again.

- c) **Ex Officio & Corresponding Member** – The Ordained Minister is *ex officio* to the Property Committee and the Caretaker (Staff) can be called on as a corresponding member as required.
- d) **Responsibilities** – The Property Committee is responsible for the functioning, upkeep and improvement of the building and property held by Westminster United Church, keeping up-to-date on services performed, needs arising, planning for upcoming expenditures, and arranging necessary work to be done.
- e) **Accountability** – Capital decisions made by the Property Committee go as recommendations to the Connexions Council to whom they are accountable. The Chair of Property or their alternate will be a corresponding member to the Connexions Council as required.
- f) **Frequency** – The Property Committee will meet no less frequently than two times a church year.

9. Futures Committee

- a) **Membership** – The Futures Committee will include the Chair of Futures and two to four more individuals, all elected by the Congregation.
- b) **Term** – Members of the Futures Committee will serve a two-year term in accordance with the church year, with re-election allowed twice for a total of six years and a required one-year sabbatical before being eligible to be elected again.
- c) **Ex Officio** - The Ordained Minister is *ex officio* to the Futures Committee.
- d) **Responsibilities** – The Futures Committee dreams and visions for the future of Westminster United Church and discerns together where God might be calling us next.
- e) **Accountability** – The Futures Committee will make recommendations to the Connexions Council and/or Congregation according to the scope of the recommendation, as decided by the Connexions Council to which it is accountable. The Chair of Futures or their alternate will be a corresponding member to the Connexions Council as required.
- f) **Frequency** – The Futures Committee will meet no less than four times a church year.

F. Staff – *“We have different gifts according to the grace given to each of us; if it is to lead, do it diligently.”* ~ Romans 12:6a & 8b ~

1. Collectively all the employees and those holding contract positions of the church, with various duties as assigned in their contracts, are the Staff of Westminster United Church, promoting excellence in our ministry, worship, and programs.
2. The Ordained Minister takes leadership of the Staff, acting as a conduit between the Staff and the Connexions Council, and chairs all Staff Meetings.
3. Staff members can be assigned duties by the Connexions Council according to their contract, but still under the oversight of the Connexions Council through the Ordained Minister to whom they are accountable.
4. The Ministry & Personnel Committee is available for anything that might fall under the category of ‘human resources.’
5. **Staff Meetings**
 - a) Staff Meetings will be held for community building, education, training, policy discussion, visioning and communication.
 - b) Staff Meetings will be held no less than once a church year.
6. **HUB Meetings**
 - a) The ministry staff (Ordained Minister, Pastoral Care Minister and Child & Youth Minister) and the Church Life Co-Ordinator will attend HUB Meetings for prayer, discernment, visioning, communication, planning, and preparation.
 - b) HUB Meetings will be held approximately monthly.

G. Teams – *“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”* ~ Romans 12:4-5 ~

1. The Connexions Council, Standing Committees and Staff can bring together Teams of interested people for discussion, input, planning, and the giving of time and gifts to make ministry programs successful. A great deal of the work on ministry and programs of the church will be accomplished through these teams and their leadership.
2. Any number of Teams can be created as per the needs of the church.
3. Teams remain accountable to the body that formed them or as assigned by the Connexions Council.

H. Groups – “A new command I give you: Love one another.

As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples,
if you love one another.”*

~ John 13:34-35 ~

1. Groups can form in the church according to interests, needs, and solidarities (i.e. age, stage, gender, etc.)
2. Any number of Groups can be created as per the interest of individuals.
3. Groups will work within the jurisdiction of the Connexions Council, Standing Committees, Staff or Teams, and all are accountable to the Connexions Council.

I. “Open” Forum

1. An “Open” Forum will be established in order to engage a spirit of openness in our church and in the way we represent ourselves to our community.
2. “Open” Forum will be held three times a year for the engagement and encouragement of the leadership of the Teams, Groups and ministries of the church for collegiality, clarity of mission, education, training, community-building, and gratitude. While specific invitations will be made to those in leadership, an ‘open’ invitation will go to the whole Congregation.
3. “Open” Forum will be facilitated by the HUB under the direction of the Connexions Council.

VI. Addenda for Greater Clarity

- A. Working List of Responsibilities with Power to Change Given to the Connexions Council**
- B. Overview of Governance at Westminster United Church**
- C. Scriptures**
- D. Governance Flow Chart**

VII. Summary – This Constitution is approved in an effort to be clear about who we are, what we are called to do, and how we intend to do it. We hope it shows how we intend to work at “Making Connexions” through creativity, excellence and openness, while still maintaining clarity, good governance, responsibility and accountability. Like the visions and instructions sent and recorded so long ago, we intend to be active in “Building the Body of Christ.”

“Thanks be to God. We are not alone.” ~ A New Creed, United Church of Canada ~