**By-Laws of the Covenant Association of**

**The Pennsylvania Southeast Conference of**

**The United Church of Christ**

**October 30, 2016**

**Revision April 30, 2017**

**Revision April 29, 2018**

**Revision October 27, 2019**

ARTICLE I PREAMBLE

The Covenant Association, embodying the Holy Spirit of God present in its member congregations, exists to make a unified witness to Jesus Christ and to enliven individual congregations in their efforts to be faithful in discipleship.

ARTICLE II NAME

The name of this Association is the Covenant Association, hereafter referred to as the Association, of the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference, hereafter referred to as the Conference, of the United Church of Christ, hereafter referred to as the UCC. This Association has its origination in the congregations that were formerly members of the East Berks, Reading, and Heidelberg Associations.

ARTICLE III MISSION

In accordance with its faith and practice, the Association claims as its own the historic mission of the church of Jesus Christ, which includes but is not limited to:

1. The proclamation and teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. Living and acting in covenant with its member congregations, the Conference and the national setting of the UCC, its Boards, Agencies and Covenanted Ministries.
3. Being in mutual relationship and mission with other Christian churches as well as ecumenical and interfaith partners.
4. Being a community of faith which works for justice, peace, diversity, inclusiveness, and reconciliation by means of Christian witness and service.

ARTICLE IV MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Association includes:

1. Member congregations as defined by the geographical area of the Association include those of the former East Berks, Heidelberg, and Reading Associations, as it is recognized by the Conference.
2. Authorized ministers with standing as defined by the UCC Manual on Ministry who have been granted voting membership by the Association.
3. Churches may be received by the Association upon request of the local church, provided said local church is within the geographical area of the Association. Requests shall be made to the Association Executive Committee, who in consultation with the Conference, will make a recommendation to the Association. A two-thirds (2/3) vote of authorized delegates present at a regular or special meeting of the Association is needed to receive a local church into membership with the Association.

ARTICLE V ORGANIZATION

1. The officers of the Association shall be Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Secretary, and Treasurer. Officers shall be elected every two (2) years at the regular Spring Meeting of the Association. Moderator and Vice-Moderator may not serve two (2) consecutive full terms in the same office. Secretary and Treasurer may serve no more than two (2) consecutive full terms in office. Secretary and Treasurer shall be elected in alternate years from election of the Moderator and Vice-Moderator. The offices of Moderator and Vice-Moderator shall be filled alternately by authorized ministers and lay persons. Terms of office shall begin at the conclusion of the Spring Meeting when officers are elected and installed, terminating at the conclusion of the Spring Meeting when their successors are elected. Tenure of office shall terminate when an officer ceases to be an active member of a member church of the Association. When an officer resigns or becomes unable or ineligible to serve, the Nominating Committee shall submit a successor to be approved and appointed by the Executive Committee until the next Spring or Fall Meeting of the Association, at which time the unexpired term shall be filled by election.
   1. The Moderator shall preside at all meetings of the Association and at all meetings of the Executive Committee. The Moderator, or designee, shall be an *ex-officio* member of all Association committees, teams, and task forces.
   2. The Vice-Moderator shall assist the Moderator in the Moderator’s duties in the Association and shall preside at meetings in the absence of the Moderator. The Vice-Moderator, with the affirmation of the Association, will assume the position of Moderator at the end of the Moderator’s term.
   3. The Secretary shall keep minutes of all Association and Executive Committee meetings; see to the submission of appropriate records of all standing committees of the Association at its regularly called meetings; and carry on such correspondence as is pertinent to this office. The Secretary shall be the second signatory for the checking account and be bonded through the Conference.
   4. The Treasurer shall receive, hold, and disburse funds of the Association subject to the direction of the Executive Committee; be one (1) of two (2) signatories of checks issued by the Association; keep accurate accounts of all monies, funds and properties of the Association; and make regular financial reports to the Executive Committee and regular meetings of the Association, including records of all transactions. The Treasurer shall be bonded through the Conference.
2. The standing committees of the Association shall be the Executive Committee, the Committee on Ministry, the Congregational Collaboration Committee, and the Nominating Committee.
   1. The Executive Committee shall consist of the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Secretary, Treasurer, and representatives from all committees and sub-committees including the COM, the Nominating Committee, and the CCC, and one (1) Conference Consistory representative. The Executive Committee shall plan all Association meetings and act on behalf of the Association when the Association is not in session. Actions of the Executive Committee between regularly scheduled Association meetings shall be reported to the Association. All committees and teams will report to the Executive Committee regularly.
   2. The Committee on Ministry, hereafter called the COM, shall consist of eighteen (18) to twenty-four (24) persons elected by the Association, each serving for a term of three (3) years (no more than two (2) consecutive terms) with no more than twelve (12) members being elected each year except to fill vacancies. At least one-third of the COM will consist of lay members and at least one-half will consist of authorized clergy.

The COM will be able to organize itself as needed and select from its members Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons, and Secretaries to address the areas of responsibility defined below. If a sub-committee divides to address an area of responsibility, that team will be led by a Liaison and Co-Liaison from the COM who report back to the appropriate committee or sub-committee. The COM officers shall keep the records of the COM meetings in such a manner that the records are secure and confidential. The officers of the COM shall have the authority to call for an ecclesiastical council with the approval of the COM. The Secretaries shall carry on such correspondence as is pertinent to the COM. The Committee shall work in covenant with Conference staff and in accordance with the guidelines set by the UCC Manual on Ministry. The Chairperson(s) and Vice-chairpersons(s) of the COM will be elected by the COM members. The COM Chairperson(s) and Vice-chairperson(s) should be proficient in COM processes and procedures and be knowledgeable about the UCC Manual on Ministry (2018 Revision or most current update/revision going forward). The COM’s areas of responsibility include:

* + - 1. Clergy Standing. This area deals with clergy transfer of standing, installation, ecclesiastical endorsement, dual standing, ordained ministerial partner standing, annual reviews, periodic and situational support consultation, fitness review, boundary awareness training, and privilege of call.
      2. Church Standing and Relationship Building. This area focuses on building relationship between the churches and the association. They will be charged with visiting local churches on a Sunday morning and may assist during times of crisis in a local congregation. They will also develop a list of shared expectations between local churches and the Covenant Association.
      3. Formation. This area works with Members in Discernment (MID), mentors for MIDs, and authorized clergy who are providing oversight in field education settings (ordained, licensed, commissioned). It shall determine eligibility for ordination and what may be deemed an ordainable call. This sub-committee shall oversee scholarship funds designated for MIDs.
      4. Retired/Non-Active/Exempt Ministers. This area oversees all authorized ministers who are not actively serving in a called setting, including those clergy who are retired from active ministry, those who have requested Exempt Status, and those who have taken a leave of absence from active ministry. This Committee will provide support and accountability for these clergy, conduct periodic vocation support consultations, and ask for annual informational reviews.
  1. The Congregational Collaboration Committee (CCC) shall consist of a minimum of six (6) members serving two (2) year terms, with the option of one additional term. Further terms may be allowed after a two-year (2) absence from the committee. The CCC shall facilitate communication between the member congregations, providing networking opportunities through teams, such as visioning, service, mission, stewardship, justice & witness, and evangelism. The CCC will also organize regular ministerial gatherings and occasional retreats for clergy and/or laity.
  2. The Nominating Committee (NC) shall consist of four (4) to six (6) members elected by the Association, each serving for a term of two (2) years, with no more than two (2) being elected each year except to fill vacancies. Each member may serve a second two (2) year term with a two (2) year absence from the committee before serving again. One (1) person elected each year will also be elected to serve a two (2) year term on the Conference Nominating Committee. The NC will organize itself, selecting a Chairperson each year. It shall present a slate of one (1) or two (2) nominees per office to be filled at the Spring Association meeting. The NC shall also submit nominees to fill vacancies in the offices of the Association when such occur between elections.
  3. Ad Hoc Teams may be established by the Executive Committee for purposes of carrying forward the work of the Association. Such Ad Hoc Teams shall be appointed for one (1) year at a time, subject to reappointment so long as their work is needed. The Executive Committee shall appoint the members of all such non-standing Ad Hoc Teams.

ARTICLE VI MEETINGS

1. The Association shall meet at least twice (2) annually to conduct business and to promote its mission. Other meetings may be called by the Executive Committee or upon request by the governing bodies of ten (10) percent of the member churches. Meetings shall be publicized at least one (1) month before their scheduled date. For special and regular meetings, the content of business shall be stated with the publication of the meeting.
2. Every church in the Association is expected to send its pastor(s) and lay delegates as voting members to Association meetings. The number of lay delegates from each congregation will be equal to the number of delegates which each congregation is permitted at regular meetings of the Conference. All authorized ministers holding standing in the Association are voting members of the Association, as are officers of the Association who may not be representatives of their respective churches. Non-voting visitors shall also be welcome.
3. All records of the Association shall remain the property of the Association.
4. The consensus of the body shall be sought through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Use of Robert’s Rules of Order may be requested by any delegate from any congregation.
5. A quorum shall consist of the number of voting delegates that is equal to the number of congregations in the Association. Once the quorum is established it shall exist for the duration of the meeting.

ARTICLE VII STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCES

The Association retains the right to maintain a treasury. Congregations are encouraged to prayerfully consider what level of financial support for the work of the Association shall be provided by voluntary contributions. Living and acting in covenant with one another as member congregations of the Association, each member congregation is encouraged to create a line item in their annual budget to support the Association. It is suggested that the amount be calculated based either by membership or as a percentage of the budget. The Treasurer’s records shall be reviewed annually, and accounts shall receive an external financial review by a qualified body every five (5) years. The work of the Association is varied, and the purpose of the treasury is to further the mission of the Church, including, but not limited to the following:

1. To live out our common mission of authorizing individuals in the call to Christian ministry, while ensuring adequate financial, professional, and spiritual support for their journey.
2. To create opportunities for communal celebrations that enrich our covenantal relationships and shared ministries.
3. To work together in mission, education, and other forms of ministry that celebrate and reveal the reign of Christ in and beyond the Covenant Association.

ARTICLE VIII AMENDMENTS

The By-Laws may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of authorized delegates present at a regular or special meeting of the Association. All amendments must be published to the Association churches and authorized clergy no later than one (1) month prior to a meeting in which the vote will take place.