

GOVERNANCE MANUAL OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SAN MATEO

~ Preamble ~

The Board of Directors of the Congregational Church of San Mateo (CCSM) adopts this statement of governance policies. This Governance Document is subordinate to California state law and to the Church's Bylaws. Its purpose is to: affirm essential values of CCSM; establish consistent policies and procedures of church governance; provide guidance to all constituencies of CCSM about its governance; and educate and inform new participants in church governance processes.

I. CCSM Identity

A. Mission Statement

The mission of the Congregational Church of San Mateo is to be a Spiritual Hub on the San Francisco Peninsula.

B. Vision Statement

The Congregational Church of San Mateo is a strong voice for Progressive Christianity; a beloved community; and a leader of social justice.

C. Guiding Principles

Our Guiding Principles describe the spirit and nature of our congregation as well as Progressive Christianity. We seek to hold ourselves accountable to live them in community together.

We are a Spiritual Community

We welcome the full participation of believers, agnostics, and skeptics from all faith traditions. We are all at different places on our spiritual journeys, and we come together to support each other as we seek connection with God through ritual, artistic expression, nature, study, and fellowship.

We are Christian

We follow Jesus's example as a way of life and a way of love. Following Jesus is rooted in our identity as Christians, and we cherish our tradition's

sacred book, the Bible, for its spiritual wisdom contained in symbol, metaphor, and history. We also explore other faith traditions and learn from other sacred texts as we seek to answer Jesus' call to love.

We are God's Hands, Feet and Face

We work together to feed the hungry, care for the sick, house the homeless, and advocate for a more just society. We do this knowing that God has no hands but our hands, no feet but our feet and no face but our face.

We are Inclusive

We celebrate Jesus' teachings of radical equality and the differences among us including, but not limited to: race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, age, and mental and physical ability. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

We are Open-Minded

We recognize the inherent worth of each of us, and we listen to different points of view in order to learn and grow. We strive to practice empathy and compassion, and we seek to understand one another.

We are Evolving

We experience faith as a quest, not a set of absolute truths. We welcome change, seek transformation, and explore new ways of being faithful because we know that God is still speaking.

D. Open and Affirming Statement

1. We the members of the United Church of Christ, declare ourselves to be and Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation of the United Church of Christ.

By this declaration we welcome all people without regard to sexual orientation, race; nationality; ethnicity; age; marital status; gender; economic status; immigration status; or mental, emotional, or physical challenges. We invite all who seek God's guidance to join our open and affirming faith community and to share fully in our church's life and opportunities for ministry.

This declaration is a covenant we make with one another in response to Jesus' call to love God with all of our hearts, souls and minds and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

2. With this covenant:

- a. We intend to grow in faith, hope and love as we journey together;
- b. We appreciate and affirm all people as loved children of God:
- c. We recognize the diversity of human nature and families founded on mutual love and commitment;
- d. We affirm relationships, unions and families founded on mutual love and commitment;
- e. We commit to work for human rights, justice and equality in our church and community.

(By congregational vote: May 2002)

E. Sanctuary Church Resolution

Whereas, As a faith community, we are called to accompany our community members, congregants and neighbors facing deportation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That The Congregational Church of San Mateo declares itself a Sanctuary Church and as such will open our doors to welcome into Sanctuary undocumented individuals who are facing deportation and in need of safe refuge.

(By congregational vote: February 2017)

F. United Church of Christ Identity

We believe in the triune God: Creator, resurrected Christ, the sole Head of the church, and the Holy Spirit, who guides and brings about the creative and redemptive work of God in the world.

We believe that each person is unique and valuable. It is the will of God that every person belongs to a family of faith where they have a strong sense of being valued and loved.

We believe that each person is on a spiritual journey and that each of us is at a different stage of that journey.

We believe that the persistent search for God produces an authentic relationship with God, engendering love, strengthening faith, dissolving guilt, and giving life purpose and direction.

We believe that all of the baptized 'belong body and soul to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.' No matter who – no matter what – no matter where we are on life's journey – notwithstanding race, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, class or creed – we all belong to God and to one worldwide community of faith. All persons baptized – past, present and future – are connected to each other and to God through the sacrament of baptism. We baptize during worship when the community is present because baptism includes the community's promise of 'love, support and care' for the baptized – and we promise that we won't take it back – no matter where your journey leads you.

We believe that all people of faith are invited to join Christ at Christ's table for the sacrament of Communion. Just as many grains of wheat are gathered to make one loaf of bread and many grapes are gathered to make one cup of wine, we, the many people of God, are made one in the body of Christ, the church. The breaking of bread and the pouring of wine reminds us of the costliness of Christ's sacrifice and the discipleship to which we are all called. In the breaking of bread, we remember and celebrate Christ's presence among us along with a 'cloud of witnesses' – our ancestors, family and friends who have gone before us. It is a great mystery; we claim it by faith.

We believe the UCC is called to be a united and uniting church. "That they may all be one." (John 17:21) "In essentials–unity, in nonessentials–diversity, in all things–charity," These UCC mottos survive because they touch core values deep within us. The UCC has no rigid formulation of doctrine or attachment to creeds or structures. Its overarching creed is love. UCC pastors and teachers are known for their commitment to excellence in theological preparation, interpretation of the scripture and justice advocacy. Even so, love and unity in the midst of our diversity are our greatest assets.

We believe that God calls us to be servants in the service of others and to be good stewards of the earth's resources. 'To believe is to care; to care is to do.'

We believe that the UCC is called to be a prophetic church. As in the tradition of the prophets and apostles, God calls the church to speak truth to power, liberate the oppressed, care for the poor and comfort the afflicted.

We believe in the power of peace, and work for nonviolent solutions to local, national, and international problems.

We are a people of possibility. In the UCC, members, congregations and structures have the breathing room to explore and to hear ... for after all, God is still speaking, ...

(From the United Church of Christ "What We Believe")