

To the Members of the First Congregational Church:

“We believe that FCCB’s system of governance should be a reflection of the Spirit that animates our congregation – living, growing, and changing us in ways we have yet to imagine. A church has some institutional similarities to a corporation or a political system, but ultimately, we are not a corporation or a political body. We are a community of faith, bound in love, trusting one another, caring for one another, listening for God’s still speaking voice.” From the Restructure (RTF2) document Voted on 2013.

Revising our Constitution –

History: Our constitution has been updated in a piecemeal fashion over the years and that leaves some gaping holes. People reported to RTF2 that it was out of date as to what the boards actually do. The Council was interested in updating and adding Bylaws that are more easily modified and can be put into immediate practice until the annual meeting votes on them. The people who wrote the original constitution made some presumptions and assumptions that were not spelled out clearly for new generations.

The executive function of changing the constitution:

Bring it up to date with our current practices

Update archaic language

Weed out inconsistencies – especially making the document “of a piece”

Include our present core values. This changes over the years with new purpose statements and new resolutions.

Look at the need for Bylaws and what they accomplish

Make sure the language reflects that all changes are subject to ultimate congregational authority as a core value of the UCC.

Sometimes change evolves – adding a mid-year annual meeting, revising board responsibilities, or creating new boards

Changing our practices is a larger task than updating a constitution – it takes a great deal more time and thought – the restructure took almost 10 years to accomplish and wore out two committees. All of the major changes in our church took years to accomplish.

The change in the constitution and adding Bylaws is simply an attempt to make who we are more clearly defined, to make the process of future changes clear and to be a guideline for decision making and best practice for the moment.

IMPORTANT: What it means to be voting on the new Constitution/Bylaws

Although the changes in the constitution are fairly small and often indicate areas that have already changed in practice, the whole document has been reformatted and the language has been updated. The addition of the Bylaws is the main change. The arrangement of sections in both documents is intentional in order to reflect the polity of our denomination. Any changes or new additions are listed on a separate sheet for both the Constitution and the Bylaws. Reasons for the changes have been documented.

Because of the length and complexity of the document, we are giving the congregation a month's time to address any concerns or issues before the day of the vote. It will be posted on our FCCB website and a printed copy is available (by request to the church office) to any person who does not have computer access. We want to give the congregation time to address any concerns before the day of the vote to avoid spending the meeting time on issues that could have been resolved earlier. With that in mind, we have given members a month to read and report any concerns. In addition, we are planning three Sundays to be available to the congregation for further discussions. The deadline for feedback is **June 2**. We have allowed a week for us to take suggestions into account and to make adjustments to the document. We have been most grateful for those who have read the drafts and given helpful feedback along the way.

The motion you will be voting on at the June Annual meeting will say, "I move that we accept this Constitution and Bylaws of the First Congregational Church of Bellingham as revised on **June 9, 2019**, by 2/3 vote of people present as according to our current constitution."

Yours in faith,

Marilyn McClellan and Barbara Storms

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Dates for question and answer sessions in the church library:

- **May 12, 9:00 am**
- **May 26, 11:30 am**
- **June 2, 11:30 am**