WESTERN ASSOCIATION BYLAWS
MISSOURI MID-SOUTH CONFERENCE
Approved (Date)

Article I: Conformity, Purpose, Polity and Policy

Section 1: Conformity with the Articles of Incorporation:
The Western Association is a not-for-profit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Missouri
and registered as a not-for-profit corporation with the Secretary of State. These Bylaws are in conformity
with the Articles of Incorporation and nothing herein contained shall be construed as being in contradiction
of the Articles of Incorporation or to supersede the Articles of Incorporation in any manner whatsoever.

Section 2: Purpose of the Association
The Western Association shall fulfill the role of an Association of the United Church of Christ (UCC)
defined by the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ and the Bylaws of the Missouri
Mid-South Conference United Church of Christ. The Western Association shall fulfill the purposes for
which the corporation is established as given in the Articles of Incorporation, Article Eight (8).

Section 3: Polity of the Association
This Association is and shall remain an Association within the United Church of Christ and the Missouri
Mid-South Conference United Church of Christ, shall order its affairs and conduct its business in
 covenant, fellowship, and concert with the national settings of the United Church of Christ, the Missouri
Mid-South Conference United Church of Christ, other Associations of the UCC, and all other ministries,
organizations, and settings of the UCC. These Bylaws are intended to be consistent with the Constitution
and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ and of the Bylaws of the Missouri Mid-South Conference
United Church of Christ.

The autonomy of the Local Church is inherent, and modifiable only by its own action. Nothing in these
Bylaws shall destroy or limit the right of each Local Church to continue to operate in the way customary
to it; nor shall be construed as giving the Association now, or at any future time, the power to abridge or
impair the autonomy of any Local Church of the UCC in the management of its own affairs, which affairs
include, but are not limited to, the right to retain or adopt its own methods of organization, worship and
education; to retain or secure its own charter and name; to adopt its own constitution and Bylaws; to
formulate its own covenants and confessions of faith; to admit members in its own way and to provide for
their discipline or dismissal; to call or dismiss its pastor or pastors by such procedure as it shall determine;
to acquire, own, manage, and dispose of property and funds; to control its own benevolence; and to
withdraw by its own decision from the Association at any time without forfeiture of ownership or control
of any real or personal property owned by it or any rights therein, belonging to a Local Church of the
UCC.

Section 4: Policy of the Association
The principles, practices and procedures as outlined in the latest edition of the United Church of Christ
“Manual on Ministry” will be used as the primary guide for shaping the policy of the Association. Any
changes to the Manual on Ministry will be communicated to the Association at the next called Association
Meeting.
Article II: Membership

Section 1: Boundaries
The boundaries of the Association shall include United Church of Christ Congregations west of Highway 63 to the Western state line of Missouri, from the north to the south state lines of Missouri, and shall include churches in Fulton, Missouri and Western Arkansas, as well as online/virtual congregations whose legal/corporate address is within the geographical boundaries of the Association.

Section 2: Members
Members of the Association shall include Local churches holding standing in the Association (hereinafter referred to as “Local Church”); Authorized Ministers holding standing in the Association (hereinafter referred to as “Minister”) and other persons who are granted membership.

Section 3: Exclusivity of Membership
Local Churches holding membership in the Association shall not hold membership in another Association of the UCC or other connectional body which exercises the rights and responsibilities of an Association.

Ministers holding membership in the Association shall not hold ministerial standing in another Association of the UCC or another denomination, with the exception of ministers with Privilege of Call or Dual Standing; Ordained Ministerial Partners with Standing from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or the United Church of Canada; or persons serving Federated or Dually Aligned Churches.

Section 4: Local Church Membership, Admission and Participation
All churches within the geographical boundaries of the Association (as defined in Article II, Section #1) who hold standing in the Association according to the standards and practices as provided in these By-Laws, are members of the Association.

Churches seeking standing and membership in the Association may submit a request for standing to the Committee on Ministry. Such churches, following a period of discernment, having completed conversations with a Conference Minister and the Committee on Ministry, may be received into membership by an affirmative vote of 2/3 of the delegates present at an Annual Meeting of the Association, after first being approved by the Committee on Ministry and the Association Council. If the request for standing is approved by the Association, the church is welcomed into the covenantal family of the United Church of Christ and granted all the rights, privileges and responsibilities that such a relationship entails.

Each member church is entitled to be represented at meetings of the Association by two Delegates and two Youth Delegates (a communicant member who is less than 21 years old on July 1 of the year in which the meeting will be held) for the first 100 reported members, plus one additional Delegate for each additional 100 members or fraction thereof up to a maximum of seven Delegates. The number of members listed in the most recently published Yearbook of the United Church of Christ shall be the number of members used for determining the number of representatives which the Local Church may have at any meeting of the Association.

Local Churches are requested to live into their covenantal relationship as Association members by:
- Developing and nurturing the life and vitality of the Wider Church
- Participating in the work and worship of the Association
- Nurturing partnerships with other churches through clusters and other Wider Church activities
- Seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our partnership and mission
- Contributing a per-member dollar amount as voted by the Association at an Annual Meeting.

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The membership of a Local Church within the Association may come to an end in the following ways:

- A member church may, by its own request, be removed from the roll of members. Such a request must be submitted in writing to the Association Council by an officially recognized officer of the church, for purposes of notification and record. The written request must be accompanied by the official minutes of the Congregational Meeting at which a vote to withdraw was taken.

- When a church closes. A church considering closing is encouraged to contact the Association Council and the Conference Minister for purposes of counsel, guidance, notification and record.

- By action of 2/3 of the delegates present at the Annual Meeting of the Association, upon recommendation of the Association Council, after receiving such recommendation from the Committee on Ministry.

- All closings and withdrawals from membership are to be noted at the Annual Meeting of the Association and the Conference Office is to be notified immediately after the action is taken.

Section 5: Ministers

All Authorized Ministers holding standing within the Association are members of the Association and shall have voting rights in the Association. Standing shall be determined by the Committee on Ministry, using the guidelines of the UCC By-Laws and the United Church of Christ “Manual on Ministry.”

Membership of Authorized Ministers in the Association may be revoked in accordance with provisions stated in Article V, Section 5 of these By-Laws.

Section 6: Other Members

Persons who are Directors of Christian Education in Local Churches and who have been certified by the Worship and Education Ministry of Local Church Ministries of the UCC are members of the Association and shall have voice and vote at all meetings of the Association.

The Conference Minister, Associate Conference Ministers, and delegates to the General Synod of the UCC from the Missouri Mid-South Conference UCC and official representatives to the Association from other ministries and settings of the UCC are honorary members of the Association and shall have voice but no vote at any meeting of the Association.

Lay Members of the Association Council and the Committee on Ministry who are not named as voting delegates by the Local Churches of which they are members are members of the Association and have voice and vote at all meetings of the Association.

Any person having been granted standing as a Member in Discernment of the Association shall be a member of the Association and shall have voice and vote at all Association Meetings.

Article III: Association Meetings

Section 1: Annual Meetings

The Association shall meet annually at a time and place determined by the Association Council to elect members to the Association Council, to elect members to the Committee on Ministry, and to conduct any other business that shall properly come before the Association.
At each Annual Meeting, the Moderator of the Association shall report on the spiritual state of the Association, the Secretary and Treasurer of the Association shall report on the activities and financial condition of the Association since the last annual meeting, and the Chair of the Committee on Ministry shall report the actions it has taken since the last Annual Meeting.

At each Annual Meeting the Association shall elect a sufficient number of members to fill all vacancies on the Association Council and the Committee on Ministry.

The terms of all Council members and members of the Committee on Ministry shall begin immediately after the Annual Meeting at which they are elected.

Section 2: Special Meetings

A Special Meeting shall be convened at the Call of the Moderator of the Association upon the request of the Committee on Ministry or by written request of the Board or Council of ten (10) Local Churches of the Association and/or ten (10) ministers holding standing in the Association.

A Special Meeting will consist of representatives as defined in Article II, Section 4, Paragraph 2.

The Moderator of the Association shall preside at all Special Meetings.

Section 3: Quorum

A quorum for the Annual Meeting or any Special meeting shall consist of lay delegates from at least ten (10) Local Churches and at least ten (10) Ministers authorized by the Association, including at least one (1) person from at least three (3) of the four (4) Area Clusters.

Section 4: Parliamentary Authority

The rules contained in the latest edition of Robert’s Rules of Order shall govern all Association Meetings in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are consistent with these By-Laws, the Articles of Incorporation, or any special rules of order the Association may adopt.

Section 5: Notice of Meetings Required

Written notice of Annual Meetings and Special Meetings shall be given by the Association Council to the Members of the Association. Notice of Meeting shall include the time, date, and location at which the meeting is to be held. In case of Annual Meetings, Notice shall be mailed or electronically communicated ninety (90) days before the date of the meeting.

Notices for Special Meetings shall include a specific and detailed description of the matter or matters for which the Special Meeting is called. No item not described in the Notice shall be discussed or determined at any Special Meeting. In case of Special Meetings, Notice shall be mailed or electronically communicated thirty (30) days before the date of the meeting.

Notice of all meetings will also be conveyed utilizing social media.

Section 6: Other Meetings

The Association, or members of the Association, may gather at any other time or place for fellowship, worship, education, or other matters which shall further the purposes of the Association. Such gatherings may not take actions or make statements in the name of the Association.
Article IV: The Association Council

Section 1: Purpose
The Association Council shall be the governing body of the Association subject to the provisions of the Articles of Incorporation, these Bylaws and the actions or instructions of the Association Annual Meetings. They shall make all final decisions regarding Association policies and their interpretation.

Section 2: Meetings
The Association Council shall meet at least quarterly at a time and place of its choosing and at other times and places as it shall deem necessary for the carrying out of the business of the Association.

Section 3: Parliamentary Authority
The rules contained in the latest edition of Robert’s Rules of Order shall govern all Association Council Meetings in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are consistent with these By-Laws, the Articles of Incorporation, or any special rules of order the Association Council may adopt.

Section 4: Organization
The Association Council shall consist of the four Officers of the Association (Moderator, Vice Moderator, Secretary, Treasurer); a representative from the Committee on Ministry, representatives from the Association Standing Ministry Teams (Communications Ministry, Youth Ministry, Pastoral Care Ministry and Social Justice Ministry), and representatives from the four area clusters. All of these positions will be voting members of the Council. All terms of office will be for two years. After serving four consecutive years (two terms) no Council Member shall be eligible for re-election until a one-year period has passed. Any vacancies on Association Council or Committee on Ministry between elections shall be filled by the Association Council, in consultation with the ministry represented.

The Association Council shall be elected according to the following schedule:
Even Numbered Years: Moderator, Vice Moderator, and representatives from the Committee on Ministry, Communications Ministry Team, Youth Ministry Team, Lafayette Cluster and Ozark Cluster.
Odd Numbered Years: Secretary, Treasurer, and representatives from the Pastoral Care Ministry Team, Social Justice Ministry Team, Central Cluster and Kansas City/St. Joseph Cluster.

The Association Council shall strive to be as equitable as possible representing both clergy and lay members of the Association, and in regard to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Association Council shall appoint a Nominating Committee at least three months prior to the Annual Meeting of the Association to nominate a slate of candidates for election to the Association Council, the Committee on Ministry, and any other committees or task forces needed.

Section 5: Duties
The Duties of the Officers of the Association/Association Council shall be those which fall generally to their respective offices according to the latest edition of Robert’s Rules of Order. In addition, the Moderator of the Association shall be an ex-officio member of all Committees, Ministry Teams or Task Forces of the Association with voice but without vote.

Oversight of the Association Treasury is the responsibility of the duly-elected Treasurer and the Association Council. Treasury funds will be used to support the work of Association committees and programming, the theological training of pastors (including the required psychological testing for “Members in Discernment”), and other needs or new possibilities as identified by the Association Council.
Section 6: Quorum
A quorum for meetings of the Association Council shall consist of at least two (2) of the Officers and five (5) of the other Council members from at least two of the Area Clusters.

Section 7: Temporary Appointments
The Association Council may appoint any persons integral to the work of the Association Council as temporary members of the Association Council with full voice but not vote at all meetings of the Association Council.

Section 8: Task Forces/Ad Hoc Committees
The Association Council may form or organize such committees or task forces as deemed necessary and expedient for carrying out the business of the Association.

Article V: Committee on Ministry

Section 1: Purpose
The Committee on Ministry is that body which is responsible for maintaining the sacred covenant by which the United Church of Christ is held together in essential unity as the Body of Christ through its work on authorizing ministers and churches in the Western Association.

Section 2: Guidance
Pursuant to Article I, Section 4 and Article V, Section 1, the Committee on Ministry is to be guided in its work by all policies adopted by the Association Council relating to Committee on Ministry matters, and by the most recent edition of the Manual on Ministry of the United Church of Christ which is made a part of these bylaws.

Section 3: Organization
The Committee on Ministry shall consist of twelve (12) persons. Four (4) members shall be elected each year by the Association at its Annual Meeting and shall serve a term of three (3) years with eligibility for re-election to a second three (3) year term. No members of the Committee on Ministry shall serve for more than two (2) consecutive terms. Persons filling unexpired terms will be eligible for election to two (2) terms after filling the duration of the unexpired term. Every effort should be made to ensure geographic equity is represented; at least three (3) of the four (4) geographic areas of the Association shall be represented at any given time.

The Committee on Ministry shall strive to be as equitable as possible representing both clergy and lay members of the Association, and in regard to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity.

At the first meeting of the Committee on Ministry following each Annual Meeting of the Association, the Committee shall elect a Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary/Registrar. Members of the Committee may serve successive terms as Chair, Vice-Chair or Secretary/Registrar during their term on the Committee. The Chair and Vice-Chair shall perform the usual and customary duties associated with such offices. The Secretary/Registrar shall keep full and accurate minutes of all meetings and shall complete and submit official records of ordinations, transfers, and all other matters carried out by the Committee to the proper offices and settings within the Conference and the National UCC.

The Association Council Moderator or a designated representative shall be a member of the Committee on Ministry with full voice but shall not vote on any matters brought before the Committee on Ministry.

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Section 4: The Committee on Ministry and Local Churches

The Committee on Ministry is charged with the maintenance of the covenant bonds between Local Churches and between Local Churches and the Association and, through the Association, to other settings of the United Church of Christ. To do so, the Committee on Ministry shall provide opportunity for Local Churches to share with one another and the Committee the life and ministry of that Local Church and to seek the covenantal perspective of other Local Churches and the Committee on that church’s life and ministry.

Recognizing that conflict sometimes arises within any human endeavor and that the church is not exempt from conflict, the Committee on Ministry is to be open to receiving and shall respond to any invitation to assist Local Churches in resolving internal conflict, resolving conflict between churches, resolving conflict between a Local Church and its pastor or pastors, and resolving issues of disagreement which may arise over actions taken by other Local Churches or other settings of the United Church of Christ.

Mindful that the Committee on Ministry may not in any way compromise the local autonomy of any Local Church in any matter, the Committee is never-the-less enjoined to seek every opportunity and avenue to open lines of communication that each Local Church may have the benefit of the perspective of other Local Churches and the Committee upon its life and ministry.

The Committee on Ministry may release a Local Church from Membership in the Association when that church requests such a release or by initiating procedures to remove that church from membership in the Association pursuant to Article II, Section 4. Churches whose possible release is not of their own request shall be notified in writing at least 30 days before the Annual meeting at which that action will be on the agenda.

Section 5: The Committee on Ministry and Authorized Ministers

The Committee on Ministry is entrusted with primary responsibility for maintaining the sacred covenant between authorized ministers who hold, who may come to hold, and who shall seek to hold standing in this Association and the whole United Church of Christ.

The Committee on Ministry shall act in all matters relating to the granting or the transfer of standing of ordained ministers, the granting of Privilege of Call or Dual Standing, the granting of full Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing to ministers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or the United Church of Canada, the granting of standing as a Member in Discernment of the Association, the installation of ministers, the granting of standing as licensed or commissioned ministers, ecclesiastical endorsement and approval of persons for certification by professional organizations, government chaplaincies, and chaplaincy programs, the periodic review of ministers, the granting or continuation of leaves of absence, the discipline of ministers, and the termination of standing as an Authorized minister.

Section 6: Quorum

A quorum for meetings of the Committee on Ministry shall consist of seven members then in office.

Section 7: Action of the Committee Final

The Action of the Committee on Ministry in all matters related to its responsibilities pursuant to Article V, Section 5 shall be final and is the action of the Association, except in the appeal of a Fitness Review.

Section 8: Appealing a Fitness Review

A request for an appeal of a “Fitness Review” must be made in writing to the Association Council within thirty (30) days of the Committee on Ministry’s decision. The appeal can only question whether the Committee on Ministry properly followed the procedure for a “Fitness Review” as outlined in the Manual.
on Ministry. The written appeal must contain specific descriptions of the Committee on Ministry’s failure to follow the procedure outlined in the Manual on Ministry. The two outcomes of the appeal are: 1) the Association Council reaffirms the Committee on Ministry’s decision; or 2) if the Association Council determines that the Committee on Ministry failed to follow the procedure in the Manual on Ministry and the Association Council shall instruct the Committee on Ministry to re-examine the matter following the procedure as outlined in the Manual on Ministry. No matter may be appealed from the Committee on Ministry more than once.

**Article VI: Standing Ministry Teams**

**Section 1: Definition**
The Standing Ministry Teams of the Western Association shall be the Communications Ministry Team, the Youth Ministry Team, the Pastoral Care Ministry Team and the Social Justice Ministry Team.

Each Standing Ministry Team will provide an accurate description of its mission and work annually to the Association Council and the Nominating Team, and a regular report of activity and finances to the Association Council and the Annual Meeting of the Association.

**Section 2: Structure**
Each Ministry Team shall consist of at least four (4) members representing each of the four (4) area clusters; one of whom shall be elected at the Annual Meeting of the Association who shall represent the Ministry Team on the Association Council and act as convener of the team. Teams may have more than four (4) members at their discretion as ministry tasks warrant.

Each Ministry Team shall strive to be as equitable as possible representing both clergy and lay members of the Association, and in regard to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Section 3: Budgets**
Each Ministry Team shall submit a budget to the Association Council at a time designated by the Council Moderator, to be submitted for approval with the rest of the Association Budget at the Annual Meeting of the Association.

**Section 4: Meetings**
Each Ministry Team shall meet at least quarterly at a time and place of its choosing and at other times and places as it shall deem necessary for the carrying out of their Ministry Work.

**Section 5: Authority**
Exemplifying the covenant we share as various settings of the United Church of Christ, each ministry team shall coordinate their work with entities and/or staff members at the Conference and National settings that have similar duties, or may have resources to offer.

The rules contained in the latest edition of Robert’s Rules of Order shall govern all Ministry Team Meetings in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are consistent with these By-Laws, the Association Articles of Incorporation, Association policies, or any special rules of order the Association Council may adopt.

Each Ministry Team shall designate one person to keep a record of their meeting minutes, reports to the Association and Association Council, and all correspondence pertaining to their ministry work. These records will be kept with the Ministry Team recorder and shared with new members and the Association Council as requested.
Section 6: Duties and Responsibilities
The Communications Ministry Team shall work with the Association Council, the Committee on Ministry and the Standing Ministry Teams to build webs of communication among entities of the Association and share information about Association concerns and events. Specific attention will be focused on publicity and technology, sharing information about the ministries and relevance of entities of our Association, including local churches.

The Youth Ministry Team shall work with Youth and Youth Leaders to encourage Youth Ministry in the Association, providing avenues and/or events for enhanced youth ministry, continuing education, spiritual formation and growth. Specific attention will be focused on providing congregations with opportunities for enhanced Youth Ministry.

The Pastoral Care Ministry Team shall work to communicate with Authorized Ministers in the Association to bring comfort and pastoral care; and shall provide avenues and/or events for continuing education and action to promote and encourage their physical, social and mental health. Specific attention will be focused on maintaining covenantal connection with retired clergy and chaplains as well as active clergy in times of distress.

The Social Justice Ministry Team shall work to identify issues of social injustice, systemic injustice and inequity globally and locally; and provide avenues and/or events for continuing education and action that can be implemented in the Association. Specific attention will be focused on disseminating information about local justice issues and social concerns.

Article VII: Area Clusters

Section 1: Purpose
Area Clusters are groups of Local Churches and/or ministers and/or other persons which exist to foster fellowship and cooperative efforts among Association members within their respective areas, to provide a forum for discussion and dissemination of information from other settings of the United Church of Christ, and to encourage mutual care and concern among and between the churches and ministers within their areas.

Section 2: Structure
The four (4) clusters are organized by geographical areas: Central Area, Lafayette Area, Kansas City-St. Joseph Area, and Ozark Area. Any adjustment of the Area Cluster boundaries or transfer of membership of churches between Area Clusters will be done by the Association Council with the agreement of the Local Churches concerned.

Section 3: Authority
Area Clusters may not take actions or make statements in the name of the Association. Area Clusters may gather, convene, discuss, worship, plan and carry out program and activities for their own members, and are encouraged to become an active and integral part of the mission and ministry of the Association and of United Church of Christ to and with its members.

Section 4: Quorum
No quorum is necessary for Area Cluster meetings.
Article VIII: Gifts and Property

The Association may receive, refuse, or hold by gift, purchase, devise, bequest or otherwise, any property, whether real, personal or mixed, in order to provide for any lawful uses and purposes of the Association; and may convey, lease, improve, mortgage or otherwise encumber such property for such purposes.

The Association may purchase or sell real property, only after appraisal and advise of legal counsel and only after proper notice has been given to all Association members, and such purchase or sale is approved by majority vote at a duly called Association meeting.

Article IX: Dissolution

Should the Association dissolve for any reason, voluntarily or otherwise, all money, assets and property of the Association shall be delivered, transferred and conveyed to the Missouri Mid-South Conference of the United Church of Christ or its successor, for whatever uses and purposes it may designate in the pursuit of its religious endeavors. Under no circumstances shall said assets ever benefit one or more private individuals.

Article X: By-Laws Review

The Association Council shall appoint an ad-hoc team to review these By-Laws at least every five (5) years, or sooner at the discretion of the Council. Any revisions or amendments will be suggested to the Association Council, who will then choose whether to bring such action to the Association.

Article XI: Amendments

These By-Laws may be amended or revised by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote at any meeting of the Association provided such amendments or revisions have been reviewed at a previous meeting of the Association Council; and provided that written notice of the vote to be taken on amendments or revisions shall have been sent to Association members at least 60 days prior to the meeting at which the proposed amendments or revisions will be presented for approval.

Article XII: Declaration

These Bylaws shall become the Bylaws of the Association and shall be in force upon their adoption and shall remain in force until and unless amended, superseded, or set aside by the Association according to Article XI of these Bylaws.