



TRINITARIAN
CONGREGATIONAL PARISH
OF CASTINE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

MEMBERSHIP BOOKLET II:
HISTORY, STRUCTURE, AND
ORGANIZATION

WELCOME!

We thank you for your interest in the Trinitarian Congregational Parish of Castine, United Church of Christ. This publication is part of a series of booklets designed to help you understand the history, structure, and mission of our church, and to give you some information on how the church functions.

We are providing this resource for our friends and members for several reasons, but one reason stands out as important in our Christian lives together. The fact is, we come together from diverse faith backgrounds and experiences. Unlike previous generations, which may have tended to live their lives in one community and perhaps one church, we seem to be a people who come from away, bringing to this place religious beliefs and practices that were learned and formed in other places and other churches, from a wide variety of denominations and convictions. In many ways, that diversity gives us a richness in the expression of our faith during our walk together in this place. But in other ways, it can cause a certain amount of confusion, as we compare the practices and traditions of this church with those in churches we attended in other places and parts of our lives.

The information in this series of booklets assumes that the reader is considering membership in the church. As such, the booklets are set up in four sections or sessions, corresponding to meetings that we hold as part of the member reception process.

- I. **Membership & Church Life**
- II. **History, Structure, & Organization**
- III. **Faith**
- IV. **Bylaws**

During these meetings, candidates for membership can get to know church members and friends, review the material in this booklet, and ask questions about the church and our Christian life together. One note here – we will often use the abbreviation *TCP* to stand for the full name of the church: *Trinitarian Congregational Parish of Castine*. Please remember one thing as you review this material: *No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.*

HISTORY, STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

A Brief History of the Christian Church

It is said that in order to know who one is, one needs to know from where one comes. And so, acknowledging the diversity of our present day membership, it may be important to consider the history of the Christian movement.

Of course, no small booklet can begin to capture the complexities and evolutions of the Christian church universal. And so this small article is in no way complete or comprehensive. It may, however, offer some suggestions for answers to the questions “Where does our church come from? What is our heritage?”

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18, NRSV).

Some may trace the roots of the Christian movement to this moment in the ministry of Jesus, where Peter, the disciple, confessed his belief that Jesus was the long-promised Messiah. Others might see the Christian church as beginning at the spiritual awakening of the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2). What we do know, however, is that early Christians were often persecuted by the cultures in which they lived, often because they didn’t participate in some of the customs and traditions (and frankly, the rules) that the surrounding cultures saw as necessary for their survival and affluence. And so, for centuries following the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christian movement was scattered, diverse, and often followed in secret.

Much of that changed, however, in the year 313 (CE) when Roman Emperor Constantine, a convert himself to Christianity, made a decree proclaiming religious tolerance throughout the empire. With the freedom to worship as Christians came significant development in the theology, faith, and order of the church.

There was, however, still conflict. Divisions among the church, particularly between Eastern regions (Greek) and Western regions (Roman) grew. Although the process was a long one, by the year 1064 there was a clear split between what we would come to know as the Roman Catholic church and the Eastern or Orthodox Christian church. This great schism is still recognized today as a major division within the Christian church.

Unfortunately, the East-West schism in the church did not stop controversy over faith and order. In a world where secular power was often intertwined with church authority, corruption and abuse was essentially inevitable. In the west, another great split came with the Protestant Reformation, often said to have begun when Martin Luther nailed his articles of protest to the door of a church in Germany in 1517. The reformation of the church would split Roman Catholics from new, “protestant” denominations, which themselves would split and reform and evolve to the many denominations of Christian religion that we find today.

One Branch of Reform

As we look back along our own heritage, we trace our ancestors back to England and the rule of Henry VIII. Unhappy with the interference of the Roman Catholic Church in his own marriage plans, Henry nationalized the church, making it into the Church of England. This brought church and state together, and for some believers, created insufferable problems. With the power of the state behind it, the church could punish, even execute, those who did not follow church leaders or dictates. And the church often suffered from the church bureaucracy, which, answering to the state, was often filled with incompetent or impenitent leaders.

Over time, a group of believers, mockingly called “puritans” by other believers, pushed for reforms in the Church of England. Some, forced into exile for their beliefs, traveled to Europe and learned from the great reformed theologians, including John Calvin. Returning to England with their reforms, they found a mixture of acceptance, rejection, and even persecution. Eventually, some puritans permanently fled England in search for religious freedom in the American Colonies. One such

example is the Pilgrim movement, which came to what is now Massachusetts in 1620.

Eventually, many groups of puritans established communities in America, and particularly in New England. Puritans with strong separatist views (who rejected a church hierarchy controlled by others) formed the Congregationalist movement, and established many churches under a strong polity of self-governance and self-reliance, often with a strong Reformed theology. For assistance with sticky issues associated with church discipline, membership, and ordination, these churches formed “associations.” “Conferences” made up of groups of associations were also formed for educational and mission purposes, and loose national associations of Congregational churches were also formed. Eventually, through some efforts to re-unite some of the distinct Protestant denominations, the United Church of Christ would be formed in 1957. The UCC would consist of four “streams” of reformed churches, including many Congregational churches.

A Brief History of the Main Street Church

Almost two centuries ago, between July 20 and July 26, 1820, a group known as an Ecclesiastical Council met here in the town of Castine. Now in the terms of a congregational church, an Ecclesiastical Council is a group of clergy and delegates from congregational churches in neighboring towns who gather for a particular purpose. They may be gathering to form a new church in a community. They might be examining a person who is a candidate for a pastor position at a church in order to determine if the person is fit for ministry. They may be gathering to hear a complaint about a settled minister, or to work out a conflict between a minister and his or her congregation. This is not a sitting committee or a group of elected officials; the council is formed for one purpose, and when that purpose has been met, the council adjourns.

For the purpose of this meeting in 1820, the council consisted of Jonathan Fisher, pastor of the Blue Hill church, and Joshua Wood, a delegate from Blue Hill; Mighill Blous, the Pastor of the Bucksport church; John Sweezey, a delegate from Bucksport; Deacon William

Boyd, a delegate from the Bangor church, and Thomas Williams, pastor at the Brewer church.

The council listened as members of the First Congregational Society of Castine made a case against the pastor of that church, the Rev. William Mason, whom they believe had led the Castine church astray. “We fear the church in this place is not a church of Christ” they said. “We cannot receive the pastor of this church as a Gospel minister. He supports the foregoing causes of our difficulties.” They further stated that “We believe the church countenances erroneous and unscriptural sentiments”... that “discipline is neglected in the church;” and that “our difficulties in regard to the Pastor arise from our apprehensions that he is a stranger to vital piety.” (*taken from TCP records.*)

Having heard these arguments and other testimony, the council sent a delegation to Rev. Mason on July 26 to explain the situation and “receive any communication which they may think proper to make to them.” When this delegation returned without any comment from Rev. Mason or the church, the council voted to gather and acknowledge the dissenting members as “a Church of Christ in this town, in due form, according to usage” and proceeded to receive members from Castine and Penobscot. The council then “gave unto them the right hand of Fellowship, according to usage, and adjourned without delay.”

This is the beginning of the Trinitarian Congregational Parish of Castine, the result of a schism in the church membership differing with the *Unitarian* leanings of the town’s Congregational church minister, Rev. Mason. The split wasn’t sudden, nor was it isolated to the Castine church. Actually, the Unitarian movement began primarily within the Congregational movement in New England during the 18th Century, and conflict was often present between Unitarian and Trinitarian factions. In 1805, Unitarians gained key faculty positions at Harvard University in Boston, which contributed to the tension. And in 1825 the American Unitarian Association was founded as a separate denomination. Congregations throughout New England would struggle with their identity following the schism, as evidenced in the decision in Castine to form a new church.

The new church, the Trinitarian Congregational Society of Castine had no permanent pastor and no home for eight years. In 1828, John Crosby of Andover Seminary (a seminary formed specifically as a result of the Harvard move toward Unitarianism) accepted an invitation to pastor the church for a salary of \$600 a year. Until 1829, the church met in Castine's courthouse, located on the town common where Witherle Memorial Library now stands. The land for the church building on Main Street was purchased from Joseph Bryant for \$146, and the completed building was dedicated on October 6, 1829. The original building, called the Second Congregational or First Trinitarian, was a single story building with a short cupola.

In 1867, the building was rebuilt, raising the structure by nine feet and excavating an additional three feet in the basement and adding a new spire of 120 feet. A "new, finely toned bell, of about one thousand six hundred pounds weight, was presented by N. Wilson Brooks, Esq., of Detroit, Michigan. The cost of rebuilding, including everything else, was about twelve thousand dollars. The building, within and without, has no sign of its former self, and is commended by all for its convenience and comeliness, being an ornament to the village." (Wheeler's History of Castine, p. 111.)

On a November Sunday in 1872, the church caught fire. The fire in the furnace burned so fiercely that it ignited the lathing and studding in the cold air duct. A cold windy day made matters worse, but the fire was contained to the building, and damage was repaired at the expense of \$1,200.

As an aside note, women were first allowed to take part in church meetings in 1876.

In 1878 the Samuel Adams House (103 Main Street) was given to the church as a parsonage by the Adams family. Samuel Adams was a deacon of the church for decades, and many of the Adams clan contributed much to the business, social, and spiritual life of Castine during the 19th century. The parsonage was sold by the church in 1986.

In 1890 an "Archback" four-face clock was purchased for installation in

the steeple base. Sarah Perkins Johnston, who lived on upper Main Street, wanted a town clock with large, easy-to-read faces that would strike the hours and be heard all over town. When she died in 1889, Mrs. Johnston's will included money for that town clock, and a special town meeting was called where residents gave selectmen authorization to accept the money. The Trinitarian Society agreed to have the clock placed in the church's steeple.

E. Howard and Co. of Boston shipped a Number One striking clock with four dials (each six feet in diameter) to Castine, where it was duly installed. The machine, an elaborate brass and cast iron pendulum clock, was powered mechanically with hand-wound weights that were drawn up weekly. An outside clapper was installed on the church's bell to ring the hours. For years the clock was wound by hand, usually by younger residents of the town who laboriously climbed the narrow ladder in the tower once a week. In 1993 the clock was restored with donations solicited from residents and visitors, and an automatic (electrified) winding device was installed. The clock is still maintained by the Town of Castine.

In 1896, Mrs. Arthur A. Devereux and Mrs. E. E. Philbrook began the "Book and Thimble" club at the church. "While this society has taken charge of the fairs held and public suppers given by the Trinitarian Congregational Society, it has also been a social success. As the title implies, the best readers entertain by reading from some interesting book, while those most nimble in the use of the needle, work on articles for the summer sale." (Wheeler, p. 393). This group, which evolved into a missionary group, was the predecessor of today's Dr. Mary Cushman Circle, which is still active at the church. (*Note: Dr. Mary Cushman, a daughter of TCP pastor John Cushman (serving 1885 – 1901) was a pioneer in medical missionary work for 30 years, establishing a hospital in Angola.*)

Also in 1896, the sanctuary of the Main Street church received a substantial redecoration and refurbishment. A popular pressed-tin decoration was installed over the entire ceiling and walls, covering the frescoes. An entirely new set of pews was installed, curved with wood finish instead of the squared, white box style. Additional stained glass

windows were also installed.

In 1905-06 the State of Maine incorporated most churches, and the name of the Main Street church changed from “Trinitarian Society” to the “Trinitarian Parish,” then to the “Trinitarian Congregational Parish” church.

In 1844 a Methodist Chapel was constructed on Court Street in Castine facing the Town Common. In 1943, a decision was made to demolish the chapel, and the former Methodist Parish of Castine and the Trinitarian Parish brought their congregations together in federation, initially known as the “Trinitarian Parish Church-Federated of Castine.” All activities were consolidated at the Main Street church.

In 1967, further consolidation was needed in the Castine churches, and clergy representing the four protestant congregations in Castine: Episcopalian, Unitarian, Congregationalist, and Methodist (the federated pair) came together to function as the “**Interchurch Parish of Castine.**” This ecumenical effort was partially based on the need to account for scarce pastoral resources. Pastor Mervin Deems became its regular minister, performing the respective rites of service in each of the three churches.

The Interfaith Parish, however, was not to remain intact for long. In 1971 the Episcopalian element of the Interchurch Parish withdrew to return to their own services in the Episcopal Chapel on Perkins Street. In 1980, the Unitarian element of the Interchurch Parish returned to its own church services at their church on the Common. Although the Interfaith Parish would continue in name (as the continued federation of Methodist and Congregational members), eventually any distinction in membership was lost, and Methodist recognition of the parish would cease in the late 1990s. At this time the church resumed its historic name, the Trinitarian Congregational Parish of Castine, and took up affiliation with the United Church of Christ.

In 1991 a substantial renovation project was undertaken on the vestry and kitchen, reinforcing the sanctuary floor and installing a new concrete vestry under-floor. This project would continue through 1994.

In 1997 a new Rogers organ was installed and dedicated by Gerald Wheeler.

Pastors of the Church

<i>Pastor</i>	<i>Year Called</i>	<i>Ended Ministry Here</i>
John Crosby	1828	1832
Wooster Parker	1832	1836
Baruch Beckwith	1836	1845
Daniel Sewall	1845	1854
Alfred Ives	1855	1878
Lewis Thomas	1878	1882
W. W. Fay	1883	1883
John Cushman	1885	1901
George Lockwood	1901	1903
Robert G. Harbutt	1904	1907
George Patterson	1907	1915
(Vacant)	1915	1919
Richard Beyer	1919	1919
Alfred Donnell	1919	1920
John Britton Clark	1921	1921

Lawrence Phelps	1922	1925
(Vacant)	1925	1927
Oscar Olsen	1928	1939
Nelson Canfield	1939	1942
Frank Pitman	1942	1944
Ray True	1944	1946
Robert Simonton	1946	1950
Alexander Loudon	1950	1966
Mervin Deems	1966	1971
Marshall Eck	1971	1976
Denis Noonan	1976	1986
Wesley Woodman	1986	1987
Sandra Reed	1988	2000
William Freiderich	2001	2010
Timothy Hall	2011	2021

CHURCH POLITY

“Polity” refers to the way in which the church’s governance is organized. In churches of the Puritan tradition, leaders were very suspicious of organizational polity that gave power to the state, or to a hierarchy of bishops and other church administrators. And so the “congregational”

system of church polity evolved, with each church accepted as being totally independent from one another. In the congregational tradition, the congregation owns, operates, leads, and governs the church – there is no other authority over the local church body. This governance structure is reflected in the TCP polity statement, found in its Bylaws:

This congregation is a member of the United Church of Christ (also referred to herein as the UCC). Article V Section 18 of the UCC Constitution and UCC Bylaws defines the relationship of the UCC to the local church and its individual members as follows:

“The autonomy of the Local Church is inherent and modifiable only by its own action. Nothing in this Constitution and the Bylaws of the United Church of Christ 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 to the General Synod, or to any Conference or Association now, or at any future time, the power to abridge or impair the autonomy of any Local Church in the management of its own affairs, which affairs include, but are not limited to, the right 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 benevolences; and to withdraw by its own decision from the United Church of Christ at any time without forfeiture of ownership or control of any real or personal property owned by it.”

This congregation shall not be bound by actions, decisions and/or advice emanating from the General Synod, a Conference or an Association, and most particularly as such actions, decisions and/or advice may be contrary to and not in conformity with the principle favoring separation of church and state.

The Sunrise Association

“Associations,” made up of pastors and later lay members from several neighboring congregational churches, formed very early in American history to provide support and fellowship between churches. These associations also provided a way in which church leaders could gather to examine possible pastors and others who felt the “call” to a life of ministry in the area, something called “viscinage.” And in the rare case when a church or a pastor went off in a direction that was considered to be a heresy (against God), associations could call together councils to examine charges and try to bring the church or pastor back into line.

The Sunrise Association is one of eight associations in Maine affiliated with the United Church of Christ. In addition to the fellowship it offers to members and pastors of churches in Hancock, Waldo, and Washington counties (there are currently 27 member churches), the Association also serves to guide the formation and preparation of candidates for ordination in the United Church of Christ.

The Trinitarian Congregational Parish of Castine is a member church in the Sunrise Association. In addition to the pastor, the church has two delegates who can attend association meetings as voting members, hold offices, and serve on committees.

The Maine Conference (United Church of Christ)

During the westward expansion of the United States, many churches came together to build up missionary funds, to be used largely to plant new churches along the frontier. In Maine, missionary funds for this form of evangelism were placed under the auspices of a statewide “conference,” the officers and delegates of which met on occasion to discuss the funds and their dispersion. The Maine Conference was thus formed in 1826, the first conference of congregational churches in the country. Note that in true Congregational tradition, and as a regional organization with a specific ministry purpose, the conference held no authority or control over local churches or Associations.

It is assumed that the Maine Conference affiliated with other regional and national associations, including the Congregational Christian Churches of America, which in 1957 merged with other denominations to become the United Church of Christ. The Maine Conference ratified the merger, becoming one of the regional offices of the new denomination. Because each church had to ratify its acceptance of the new denomination (and not all did), there are some churches in Maine today that are members of the Maine Conference but are not UCC churches (the Elm Street Congregational Church in Bucksport is an example).

The Maine Conference is staffed a Conference minister and other staff, and receives its funds from program fees, membership dues, and Basic Support contributions from local churches (Our Church's Wider Mission). Programs include assisting local churches with pastor searches, conflict resolution, and interim ministry. The conference also owns and operates Pilgrim Lodge, a summer camp and retreat facility in West Gardiner.

The Conference has one annual meeting, attended by members and delegates. In addition to its minister, TCP is allowed two voting delegates at each conference meeting.

For more information, go to www.maineucc.org

The United Church of Christ

As a mainstream protestant denomination, the United Church of Christ traces its history back to colonial America and the earliest Congregationalist parishes. From there, it finds three other "streams" of reformed church denominations finding their way to America from European roots: the German Reformed Church, the Christian Church, and the German Evangelical Synod. As time passed and the nation grew, these four denominations eventually became two, and then in 1957 became one: the United Church of Christ. Even as a unified denomination, however, the roots of the United Church of Christ are complicated, deep, and usually intertwined. In its simplest terms, the denomination can be recognized as reformed (Protestant, with both Calvinist and Lutheran roots), Trinitarian (believing in Father, Son, and

Holy Spirit), and non-hierarchical (no national or regional authority – the authority of the church is kept at the local congregation). The denomination operates under the umbrellas of four covenanted ministries: Justice Ministries, Wider Church Ministries, Local Church Ministries, and the office of General Ministries. The denomination's offices are in Cleveland, Ohio.

For more information, please go to www.ucc.org

TCP CHURCH STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH CHURCH COUNCIL

The officers of the Trinitarian Congregational Parish of Castine include:

- Chair of the Church Council (Moderator)
- Administration Chair (Clerk)
- Financial Chair (Treasurer)
- Chair, Board of Deacons
- Chair, Board of Trustees
- Ministry Chair
- Stewardship Chair
- Mission and Outreach Chair

Together, the officers of the church and the minister serve as the Church Council, which is the unified governing body of the church, responsible for all church business between annual meetings of the congregation.

The Church Council meets monthly and as additionally needed to review and conduct the business of the church.

Church officers are elected for three-year terms on an alternating basis, and may be re-elected.

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Historically, New England churches were organized as two separate entities. Deacons were considered to be the leaders of the spiritual side of the church (the people), while Trustees were often in charge of a separate corporation that dealt with the secular side (building and grounds, finances, etc.). In many colonial communities, the church building was actually a public building, and the pastor was an employee of the town! Church buildings were known as “meeting houses,” acknowledging their multiple uses. And in many churches, members actually owned their pews and held deeds that could be bought and sold like any real estate.

Today the separation of the sacred and secular is still noticeable, although the church itself exists as one corporation within the laws of the State of Maine. Here is how the primary boards work:

Board of Deacons

Deacons historically serve at three tables: the table of the Lord, the table of the Poor, and the table of the Ministers. Deacons assist with the serving of communion, and are responsible for the spiritual lives of members. While the Trustees are responsible for the upkeep of the building, the Deacons usually approve any use of the sanctuary space. Deacons are primarily responsible for disbursements from the church’s mission budgets, and are charged with keeping an eye on the community in case members and residents fall into need. Finally, the Deacons provide both supervision and support for the pastor, and offer guidance in how worship is to be conducted. |

Deacons are elected by church membership at the Annual Meeting for a term of three years. Each year one-third of the Deacon Board is up for election. The Chair of the Board of Deacons is elected annually by the Deacon Board, and serves on the Church Council.

Trustees

As stated before, Trustees are in charge of the real property of the church, and are responsible for maintenance, repairs, grounds care, and utilities. Another area of church business managed by the Trustees are all historical records.

Trustees are elected by church membership at the Annual Meeting for a term of three years. Each year one-third of the Trustee Board is up for election. The Chair of the Board of Trustees is elected annually by the Trustee Board, and serves on the Church Council.

Committees

At the Annual Meeting of 2018, the congregation approved changes in the Bylaws that streamlined governance structures and reduced the number of committees to which members were nominated and elected by the congregation. That does not mean that the work of these committees is no longer necessary, or that the work is not delegated to members and friends with special talents and interests. Instead, the Church Council, the Board of Deacons, and the Board of Trustees are authorized to establish committees of members and friends to serve the needs of the congregation. These committees serve on an *ad hoc* basis, and members are not elected by the congregation and serve no set terms. The work done by these committees is reported to the Church Council or Board that appointed the committee.

These committees may include:

- **Christian Education Committee**
- **Ministerial Relations Committee, a long-established committee**
- **Stewardship Committee, a long-established committee**
- **Budget Committee**
- **Audit Committee**
- **Music Committee**
- **Art Committee**
- **Fellowship and Community Outreach Committee**
- **Nominating Committee**

CHURCH MEETINGS

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting shall be held on the third Sunday of August each year, to receive the yearly reports of officers and organizations, to elect officers, transact business, adopt the annual budget, and set up plans for the new year.

Meetings of Committees and Boards

Boards and committees of the church determine their respective schedule of meetings.

Special Meetings

Special meetings of the congregation may be called:

- by the Church Council; or
- by seven or more members of the congregation by application to the Administrative Chair and the Chair of the Church Council.

Specific procedures for the calling of a special church meeting are addressed in the church bylaws.



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