

**MANANTIAL DE GRACIA**  
United Church of Christ  
New Britain, Connecticut

**CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS**

**PREAMBLE**

We, the members of Manantial de Gracia “Spring of Grace,” of the United Church of Christ, have decided to respond to God’s calling to proclaim and preach the Gospel in the New Britain community. We have decided to unite in our Christian Faith not only to proclaim and preach the Gospel, but also to administer the sacraments and proclaim the mission God has given us.

It is for this reason that we have adopted, in common agreement, this constitution, and these bylaws as the descriptive corporative order of our congregation.

**CONSTITUTION**

*Article I - Name*

This congregation shall be known as Manantial de Gracia, a United Church of Christ congregation, in the town of New Britain, Connecticut.

For the purpose of this Constitution and the attached Policy’s, Manantial de Gracia, is hereinafter designated as “the congregation.”

This congregation shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Connecticut.

*Article II – Mission & Vision*

**Mission:** To connect and reconnect individuals and families through God’s transforming love, healing mercy and grace; with the help of the Holy Spirit.

**Vision:** Manantial de Gracia “Spring of Grace” is an intercultural, multiracial, bilingual church called by Christ to engage in developing a transforming, healing community of disciples through fellowship, prayer, community events, and spiritual growth.

*Article III – Principles in Which We Believe*

1. The Bible as the inspired Word of God. And we accept it as the only text that reveals God's will. The Bible is our sole authority on material of faith and practice (Romans 15: 4, 2 Timothy 3: 16);
2. Holy Trinity: God the Father, creator of the world and every living thing that inhabits therein; God the Son, through whose death sacrifice redeemed us from all sin, in his resurrection and his second coming; and God the Holy Spirit through which we are aware of God’s gifts and his commandments (1 John 5: 7);
3. Jesus Christ as Lord of Church and world (Luke 1: 30-25);
4. Respect the freedom of religion and conscience of every human being;
5. The universal priesthood of believers, where God can call, train, and use all believers as instruments of blessing for the expansion of the His Kingdom;
6. The celebration of Holy Communion as a symbolic ordinance of obedience to the mandates of Jesus;

7. The universal Church of Jesus Christ, which extends past barriers of denominations and geography;
8. That every believer should be baptized in water in accordance with the mandate of the Lord. This baptism means to be buried in Christ fulfilling the circumcision of the heart to bear witness in faith and knowledge (Romans 6: 4);
9. The baptism of the Holy Spirit, and that this is a gift of power accessible to every believer after conversion (Acts 1: 8, Acts 2: 4, Mark 16: 17);
10. That the church is the most high institution of God on earth and that its mission is to bring the gospel of the kingdom to all nations and in the spiritual unity of all believers redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Article IV – Authority

The supreme authority of our congregation is Jesus Christ, so that all matters relating to the same will be led with this understanding. We as a church will pray and analyze all congregational decisions prior to making any decision that affects the mission and vision of this congregation.

Article V – Affiliations

This Congregation is in a covenant relationship with the United Church of Christ and as such we will maintain ties of friendship and communion with all local churches and organizations in the state, region and nation that are part of this denomination. As a local congregation, we will maintain ties of friendship and companionship with other expressions of faith provided these denominations, councils or fraternizations promote the Kingdom of God and respect our way of worshiping and serving God.

Article VI – Disposition

This Congregation and its properties will be dedicated to affirming the culture and religiosity of Hispanics/Latinos. No official will receive compensation for funds acquired in the dissolution.

In the event of the dissolution of this Congregation, their assets and properties will be turned over to the administration of the United Church of Christ's Council of Hispanic Ministries for scholarships for seminarians of Hispanic or Latin origins.

If this congregation is removed from the membership of the United Church of Christ in agreement with its procedures of discipline, properties, equipment, and bank accounts will remain with this congregation.

If the Congregation is divided, in a meeting with a (2/3) majority of members entitled to voice and vote, all properties, computers, and bank accounts shall be kept in the founding church, i.e. the Iglesia Manantial de Gracia, part of the United Church of Christ.

**NOTE: This article is not subject to changes and can not be modified.**

Article VII – Amendments

This Constitution, with the exception of Article VI, may be amended during regular or extraordinary assembly so long as three quarters of active members are present during assembly.

Any suggested changes should be circulated in writing for at least a month prior.

Article VIII – Membership

Those who are interested in becoming members of this congregation must:

1. Confess your faith, dedication, and commitment in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of your life;
2. Fill out an application requesting membership and take classes to better understand our identity and the History, Polity, and Practice of the United Church of Christ;
3. If you are a new convert, you should take confirmation classes (includes baptism and membership classes);
4. If you have previously accepted God, then you may join through transfer of membership from another congregation and by taking membership classes.

## BYLAWS

Article A - Membership*Section 1 – Requisites*

- a) Meet the requirements established in Article VIII of the Constitution:

*Those who are interested in becoming members of this congregation must:*

1. *Confess your faith, dedication, and commitment in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of your life;*
2. *Fill out an application requesting membership and take classes to better understand our identity and the History, Polity, and Practice of the United Church of Christ;*
3. *If you are a new convert, you should take baptism classes;*
4. *If you have previously accepted God, then you may join through transfer of membership from another congregation and by taking membership classes.*

- b) Be a minimum of 12 years of age & participate in confirmation classes..

*Section 2 – Responsibilities*

- a) Be loyal and faithful to the reclamations of Jesus Christ's evangelism, attempting to live under His Sovereignty like engaged disciples;
- b) Give testimony of Christian faith in familial life, at work and in the community;
- c) Actively support the programs, rules and missions of the local church;
- d) Use your time, testimony, talents and gifts in service to the church (stewardship);
- e) Protect, care for and defend the public and communal image of the church;
- f) Avoid feeding negative criticisms regarding the churches work, members or participants;
- g) Show concern for new people who arrive at the church, those in crisis or absent;
- h) Support decisions taken by the assembled church and/or the Board of Directors;
- i) Support the church financially by means of tithes and offerings;
- j) Support the programs and emphasis of the United Church of Christ.

*Section 3 – Rights*

- a) Influence over life and mission of church, by means of ideas and suggestions;
- b) Freely participate in church programs and activities;
- c) Have a voice and vote in church assemblies;
- d) Be regularly consulted and informed of the life and mission of the church;
- e) Receive guidance and assistance from Pastor and Church;
- f) Benefit from use of church facilities (the use of the facilities will be evaluated by Pastor or Board of Directors);
- g) Represent the church as a delegate when requested by Pastor or Board of Directors;
- h) Participate in Holy Communion;
- i) To be considered for leadership positions according to their gifts.

*Section 4 – Removal from membership and inactive membership*

- a) Any member can be removed from active church membership for any one of the following reasons, at the recommendation of the Deacon Board in consultation with the Pastor:
  1. By death;
  2. By transfer;
  3. By exclusion as a result of bad testimony. The member will have an opportunity to expound from their perspective before the Pastor and the Deacon Board, if they so choose. If the person wishes to reconcile, this process will be discontinued.
- b) The board of deacons will prepare a list of active and inactive church members for each church assembly. Inactive members will be:
  1. Those persons who for a period of 3 months have stopped participating in the worship and life of the church;
  2. Persons who do not meet their responsibilities as members;
  3. Persons who wish to be placed under this category.

Article B – Requirements To Occupy Positions of Leadership

Before and during the time that a person occupies a leadership position, (s)he must participate in training within the Circle of Leaders “Carlos Vélez Noel.”

In addition:

1. Each official should conduct their life in the light of the teachings of Jesus and give good testimony to their family, church and community;
2. Be an active member of the congregation;
3. Be responsible, diligent and firm in discharging their duties in the church, in their home, and in the community;
4. Manifest an optimistic attitude, of spiritual growth and maturity in their Christian life;
5. Promote team work and Christian fellowship in the church and the community;
6. Show sincere interest in those persons whom you serve and with whom you work;
7. Understand the systemic functions of the administrative process of the congregation;
8. Promote church activities, committee meetings, Board of Directors and others;
9. Contribute to the economic sustainment of the congregation through tithes and offerings;
10. Show ability or potential to assume inherent responsibilities of position held.

Article C – Board of Directors*Section 1: Participation in the Board of Directors*

The Board of Directors will be made up of active members of the congregation, who through prayer and preparation have been nominated by the pastor, and have accepted their positions.

- a) Members of the Executive Board of Directors will be accepted by the assembled church. They will hold only one executive position at a time. The Executive Board of Directors will be made up of:
  1. Pastor
  2. President
  3. President Elect
  4. Treasurer
  5. Secretary
  
- b) The following ministries form part of the Board of Directors, on an as needed basis:
  1. Minister of Creative Arts
  2. Minister of Evangelism
  3. Minister of Discipleship
  4. Representative of the Board of Deacons
  
- c) Facilitators of Care Groups are represented by the Pastor, but may be invited to present to the Board of Directors, with the exception of the Facilitator of children/teens (child under the age of 18) who gives voice to their age group by forming part of the Board of Directors.
  1. Children/Youth
  2. Women
  3. Men
  4. Elderly
  5. Singles
  6. Couples

*Section 2: Rights and Responsibilities of the Executive Board of Directors*

1. Will be responsible for working with the Pastor in planning and supervision of the work;
2. Will be responsible, along with the Pastor, for preparing work and activity calendar for the church;
3. Will meet monthly;
4. Will present to the church plans, projects, budgets and any other information that will enable the congregation to make informed decisions;
5. Will name any committees they deem necessary;
6. Will be responsible for acquiring by means of purchase and/or donation any equipment necessary for the church;
7. May name delegates and/or representatives from the church to other groups or bodies as necessary;
8. Will be in charge of church functions in the absence of the pastor;
9. Will inform the congregation, during Church Assembly, of realized works the church has accomplished;
10. Will be responsible, along with the treasurer of seeing to the good administration of church budget and finances. All significant changes in the budget need to be presented to the assembled church.

*Section 3: President*

1. Work under Pastoral direction;
2. Will officially Preside over board meetings;
3. Work in complete harmony with the Pastor in the preparation of work agenda for Board of Directors;
4. Also responsible, along with Pastor for interviewing confirmation candidates;
5. Assume responsibility for administration of the general programs of the church, along with Board of Directors in the absence of the Pastor.

*Section 4: President Elect*

1. Work under Presidents direction;
2. Forms part of the Finance Committee;
3. Facilitates the Board of Deacons;
4. Will substitute for President as necessary or if that person is unable to continue with that responsibility.

*Section 5: Treasurer*

1. Responsible and vigilante in conjunction with the Board of Directors for ensuring proper administration of church finances;
2. Effect payments approved in budget;
3. Track and record offerings and tithes along with designated witness;
4. Sign, in conjunction with the secretary and/or Pastor, all checks and withdrawals from bank account;
5. Will present to the church the annual budget approved by the Board of Directors;
6. Make purchases necessary to implement the activities of the church;
7. Finance Committee will be composed of Treasurer, President Elect, Secretary, and Pastor.

*Section 6: Secretary*

1. Responsible for assisting Board President and/or Pastor with creating, typing, and printing agenda;
2. Responsible for taking notes during Board Meetings and/or Church Assemblies;
3. Responsible for disseminating Minutes to Board Members;
4. Maintain and Update Church Calendar per meeting notes;
5. Sits on Finance Committee, signing checks jointly with the treasurer;
6. Responsible for Board emails and Social networking;
7. Will be responsible for the public relations of the church in conjunction with the Board of Directors;
8. Maintains updated church member directory;
9. Receives Visitor Information and prepares follow up information for Pastor's signature.

Article D – Ministries

*Section 1: Participation in the Board of Directors*

The Board of Directors will be made up of active members of the congregation, who through prayer and preparation have been nominated by the pastor, and have accepted their positions.

The following ministries form part of the Board of Directors, on an as needed basis.

*Section 2: Creative Arts Ministry*

This ministry works in conjunction with the pastor is responsible for worship and praise by means of:

- a) Plan, direct, and implement the churches creative arts program;
- b) Promoting the creation of:
  1. Choirs;
  2. Musicians (bands, groups);
  3. Audio Visual Teams (sound, lighting, video, still photography);
  4. Writers (lyrics, poetry, Playwriting);
  5. Theater works (actors, stagehands);
  6. Artists (drawing, painting, decorators)
  7. Physical Arts (dance, pantomime, self-defense);
  8. And others.
- c) Offer rehearsal time, and methods of practice;
- d) Offer creative arts workshops;
- e) Identify the tools, systems and/or necessary equipment for the growth of this ministry;
- f) Recruit and supervise the work of creative arts leaders.

*Section 3: Evangelism Ministry*

This ministry works in conjunction with the pastor in the following requirements and responsibilities:

- a) Develop and implement, programs and/or activities and home services;
- b) Identify the materials necessary equipment for the growth of this Ministry;
- c) Will be responsible for creating and maintaining ties of friendship with other churches in the United States of America, Latin America, and the Caribbean;
- d) Develop and promote services of evangelic and mission.

*Section 4: Discipleship Ministry*

This ministry works in conjunction with the pastor in the following requirements and responsibilities:

- a) Plan, direct, and implement the churches educational program;
- b) Prepare an annual work plan with goals and objectives;
- c) Promote the reading and studying of the Bible for personal and congregational enrichment;
- d) Identify educational materials and equipment necessary for the growth of this Ministry;
- e) Provide guidance for teachers;
- f) Recruit and supervise teachers' works.

*Section 5: Board of Deacons*

Assist in those "worldly" things that limit the pastoral ministry (Acts 6).

Aide the congregation serving in those roles that others cannot or do not choose to serve.

Alleviate and Protect pastoral leadership from attacks and negative murmurings that threaten the respect and dignity of the church.

Responsibilities include:

1. Maintain an active prayer life and intercession for the pastoral family, the Board of Directors, members of our congregation and the programs/activities of the church;
2. Work with the Pastor in areas such as pastoral care, prayer, visitation, crisis intervention, membership, and Holy Communion;
3. Responsible for preparing the table for Holy Communion;
4. Responsible for administering Communion to members that are unable to attend due to illness, as requested by Pastor;
5. Will act as and develop church ushers.

## Article E – Groups

### *Section 1: Participation in the Board of Directors*

The Board of Directors will be made up of active members of the congregation, who through prayer and preparation have been nominated by the pastor, and have accepted their positions.

Facilitators of Care Groups are represented by the Pastor, but may be invited to present to the Board of Directors, with the exception of the Facilitator of children/teens (child under the age of 18) who gives voice to their age group by forming part of the Board of Directors.

### *Section 2: Care Groups*

Care Groups can be suggested by church members directly to the Pastor. Subsequent leadership of these groups will be based upon Pastoral and/or Board of Directors recommendation.

Each of these groups will have a facilitator who will work in conjunction with the Pastor. The purpose of these groups is to organize & coordinate activities and workshops that will help the growth and spiritual maturity of church members.

Estos grupos serán:

Children/Youth	Women	Singles
Elderly	Men	Couples

## Article F– Pastor

### *Section 1: Pastoral Responsibilities*

Though the Pastor is one of the gifts of God to the local church, we know that not all persons who come into the Church want or are willing to be lead. But we understand that those who are so willing are happier and greatly blessed. It is for those, that the Pastor of Manantial de Gracia shall exercise the following functions:

1. Maintain unity among the active members of our congregation;
2. Govern, guide, direct, and maintain congregational unity;
3. Lead this congregation to mature and grow spiritually;
4. Care and monitor this congregation. This includes addressing those in need and take care of them from those that can hurt them and/or the Congregation;
5. The pastor will devote him/herself to the study of the Word of God as it is vital to the good health and the spiritual life of this congregation;
6. Caring for the congregation as it relates to detrimental changes, such as false doctrines, proselytization of other pastors, and keeping them out of harms way.

Also, the Pastor:

- a) Shall be the spiritual leader of the church;
- b) Shall be responsible for preaching the gospel and administering the ordinances;
- c) Is in charge of worship and leading the church in development and spiritual growth in sound doctrine;
- d) Shall be a member in voice and vote of all ministries, boards, and care groups;
- e) Visit church members and infirm as necessary;
- f) Counsel members as required;
- g) Capacitate church leaders and prepare candidates for confirmation: baptism and membership;
- h) Maintain a good testimony inside and outside the church;
- i) Will see to the annual follow-through of church programs;
- j) Preside over church assemblies;
- k) Called for an indefinite term;
- l) Supervise all personnel the church contracts and determine the tasks in consultation with Board of Directors and the church;
- m) Will have copies and oversee the acts and official documents of the church;
- n) Officiate baptisms, weddings, and funerals as required.

In order to terminate this working relationship be either party (Pastor or church) a 90-day written notification is required.

### *Section 2: Pulpit Committee*

If Pastoral position is left vacant, the congregation in Assembly will name a Pulpit Committee made up of active church members.

This committee will establish the proceedings to secure covering and hiring of the vacant pastoral position. The committee will investigate each candidate in regards to their theological preparation and ministerial experience. In order that a candidate be presented to the congregation, they must be chosen by a unanimous committee decision.

The naming of the new pastor will be made during a church meeting announced in writing. A vote of 75% of assembled active members will be necessary to extend a calling of a New Pastor.

### *Section 3: Interim Pastor*

During the time the Pulpit Committee is in the process of looking for a New Pastor, it is recommended that a temporary contract be drawn for an Interim Pastor. It is preferable that this Interim Pastor be a United Church of Christ Pastor who is a prepared and experienced minister.

The Board of Directors will establish with the Interim Pastor the necessary functions. The Interim Pastor should not be a candidate for the position of church pastor.

Article G – Meetings and Other Business

*Section 1: Worship*

Worship services will be celebrated every Sunday. Additional worship services may be celebrated upon suggestion and approval by Pastor and church.

*Section 2: Holy Communion*

Communion will be celebrated at the discretion of the Pastor.

*Section 3: Business & Assemblies*

The business relating to the life and mission of the church shall be dealt with in special meetings called by the Pastor or Church Officials.

A quorum will consist of half of the active church members plus one. If an assembly is annulled due to lack of quorum, an additional assembly can be called in the next two weeks and it will only be necessary for one third of the active members for the assembly to be constitutionally accepted.

Assemblies should be called at least one month in advance. Church Assembly shall occur at a minimum of once annually. Church Assembly meetings shall be presided by the Pastor.

Any active church member can make suggestions to be considered for the agenda of an assembly meeting.

All decisions shall be made through prayer. Active church members will have the right to participate in assembly meetings by right of voice and vote.

*Section 4: Fiscal Year*

The church fiscal year is January 1 to December 31.

CURRENT APPROVED CONSTITUTION & POLICY.

*\*\*Effective December 27, 2011, this Constitution & Bylaws was approved and adopted by unanimous vote.*

*\*Effective January 16, 2010, the name of the church was changed from Iglesia Bautista Congregacional de New Britain to Manantial de Gracia.*