



# Operations Manual

The First Presbyterian Church of Branchville, NJ

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**OPERATIONAL MANUAL OF POLICIES**

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## **Mission and Vision Statements**

The Mission and Vision Statements were developed as part of the Discernment Report submitted to the Presbytery December, 2024.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

“We welcome all as we celebrate God’s love.”

### **VISION STATEMENT**

“We open our hearts and our buildings to all who seek to grow closer to God; through community and spiritual fellowship, by God’s grace.”

# **Articles of Incorporation**

## **Preamble**

The congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of Branchville, met on October 25, 2020, and by a majority vote of all members present, resolved to file the within Articles of Incorporation pursuant to NJSA 16:1-1 et. seq. Said congregation, by majority vote taken on October 25, 2020 also elected Trustees and have adopted the bylaws of said corporation as more fully set forth herein.

## **Article I**

Name

The name of the corporation is The First Presbyterian Church of Branchville, Inc.

## **Article II**

Type

The Corporation is a nonprofit religious corporation.

## **Article III**

Duration

**The period of duration of the Corporation is perpetual.**

## **Article IV**

Purposes

The purposes for which the Corporation is formed are more fully set forth in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including:

The Great Ends of the church (Book of Order F-1.0304):

- the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;
- the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;
- the maintenance of divine worship;
- the preservation of the truth;
- the promotion of social righteousness; and
- the exhibition of the kingdom of heaven to the world.

In furtherance of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the purposes stated above, the Corporation shall exercise powers as set out herein.

## **Article V**

Support and Conform to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The Corporation shall support, at all times and in all respects, the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Corporation and all of its property, both real and personal, shall be subject to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as it is now or shall be, from time to time, amended, established, made, and declared by the authority of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The business of the Corporation shall be conducted in conformity with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as it is now or shall be, from time to time, amended, established, made, and declared by the authority of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

## **Article VI**

All Property Held in Trust for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

All property held by or for a congregation, a presbytery, a synod, the General Assembly, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), whether legal title is lodged in a corporation, a trustee or trustees, or an unincorporated association, and whether the property is used in programs of a congregation or of a higher council or retained for the production of income, is held in trust nevertheless for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (Book of Order G-4.0203)

## **Article VII**

Powers and Duties

The corporation so formed, or the individual trustees, shall have the following powers: to receive, hold, encumber, manage, and transfer property, real or personal, for the congregation, provided that in buying, selling, and mortgaging real property, the trustees shall act only after the approval of the congregation, granted in a duly constituted meeting; to accept and execute deeds of title to such property; to hold and defend title to such property; to manage any permanent special funds for the furtherance of the purposes of the congregation, all subject to the authority of the session and under the provisions of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The powers and duties of the trustees shall not infringe upon the powers and duties of the session or the board of deacons. (Book of Order G-4.0101) In addition, to the extent not included in the above and not inconsistent with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Corporation shall have all of the general powers of a nonprofit religious corporation organized under NJSA 16:1-1 et. seq. In addition, the Corporation shall not engage in ultra vires acts.

## **Article VIII**

## **Members**

Only persons eligible for membership in the congregation or council shall be eligible to be members of the corporation and to be elected as trustees. (Book of Order G-4.0102)

## **Article IX**

### **Trustees**

The ruling elders on the session of a congregation, who are eligible under the civil law, shall be the trustees of the corporation. (Book of Order G-4.0102)

## **Article X**

### **Officers**

The bylaws identify and provide for the method of election or appointment of the officers of the Corporation.

## **Article XI**

### **Bylaws**

The bylaws referenced herein were adopted by the Trustees of the Corporation and by the members of the full congregation on October 25, 2020. The bylaws of the Corporation shall be in conformity with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as it is now or shall be, from time to time, amended, established, made, and declared by the authority of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Said bylaws may be amended or repealed by the members of the Corporation but must at all times and in all respects remain in conformity with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

# **By-Laws of The First Presbyterian Church of Branchville**

**P.O. Box 1  
3-5 Wantage Avenue  
Branchville, NJ 07860**

## **A NEW JERSEY CORPORATION**

**Adopted as of October 25, 2020**

### **1. PURPOSE AND POWERS**

- a. **Purpose.** The purpose or purposes of the corporation, the First Presbyterian Church of Branchville, as established in the articles of incorporation, are those specifically designated in the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 Section 501(c)(3), as amended, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax law. The specific purpose of the corporation is as follows: The Corporation is organized exclusively for charitable, religious and religious-educational purposes, including for in-kind purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code which governs non-profit corporations.
- b. **Powers.** The corporation has the power to do any and all lawful acts that may be necessary or convenient to affect the corporation's purposes. It has the power to aid or assist other organizations or persons whose activities further accomplish, foster, or attain such purposes. The powers may include, but are not limited to, the acceptance of contributions from the public and private sectors both financial and in-kind.
- c. **Limitations on Activities.** The corporation may not engage, participate, or intervene in any activities not permitted by a corporation exempt from federal income tax. The corporation may not endorse, contribute to, work for, or otherwise support or oppose a candidate for public office unless otherwise allowable by law. The assets and income of the corporation may not be distributed to or benefit the trustees, Trustees, officers, or other individuals, except that the corporation is authorized to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered.

## 2. MEMBERS

- a. **Eligibility.** Active members in good standing of the congregation, over age 21, and who *"contribute by regular payments at stated periods to the support and necessary expenses of the congregation."* (N.J.S.A. 16:11-5).
- b. **Annual Meeting.** The annual members' meeting will be held on the last Sunday in the month of January at the corporation's registered location (3-5 Wantage Avenue, Branchville, NJ) each year or at any date, time, and place as designated by resolution of the Board of Trustees. The meeting's purpose is to elect a Board of trustees, report affairs of the corporation, and conduct any other proper business not inconsistent with law.
- c. **Special Meetings.** A special members' meeting may be called at any time by the Board of Trustees, by the Chairman of the Board, by the President, or by ten percent (10%) of the voting members.
- d. **Meeting by Electronic Transmission.** Where permitted by applicable law, the corporation may conduct all corporate meetings, in whole or in part, by electronic transmission. Members may be deemed present by electronic transmission and may participate and vote at a meeting. The corporation will implement reasonable measures to provide members with reasonable opportunity to participate in the meeting and maintain a record of any member vote or action taken at the meeting by electronic transmission. Absentee voting is not allowed.
- e. **Notice of Meetings.** Except as otherwise provided by law or the articles of incorporation, all notices of annual or special meetings must be in writing and given in person by electronic transmission where permitted by law or by first-class mail no less than ten (10) nor more than sixty (60) days before such meeting. All notices must specify the place, date, hour, general purpose, and matters to be transacted for the meeting
- f. **Waiver of Notice.** Any deficiency in the notice of a members' meeting may be waived by attending the meeting without objecting at the commencement of the meeting or by written waiver before or after the meeting is filed with the corporate records.
- g. **Quorum; Adjournment.** The presence, in person or online, of ten percent of entitled votes constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business, except as otherwise provided by statute or the articles of incorporation. If a quorum is not met, the meeting may be adjourned to another date, time, or place announced



at the meeting without further notice to members, unless the adjournment is for more than thirty (30) days or the Board of Trustees fixes a new record date for the adjournment. No other business may be transacted if a quorum is not met.

- h. **Voting.** Each person is entitled to one vote on each corporate/congregational matter submitted to a membership vote. Members who may vote on corporate matters are those who *"contribute by regular payments at stated periods to the support and necessary expenses of the congregation."* The Treasurer is to maintain a list of those who give financial support and provide a copy to session (N.J.S.A. 16:11-5). All elections will be determined by a majority of votes, except as otherwise required by law or the articles of incorporation.

### 3. BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- a. **Powers.** Subject to the provisions of any state law, federal law, the articles of incorporation, and the bylaws, the Board of Trustees will manage all business and affairs of the corporation. All corporate powers will be exercised by or under the direction of the Board of Trustees.
- b. **Standard of Care.** Each Trustee must exercise corporate powers and perform corporate duties loyally, in good faith, in a manner such Trustee believes to be in the best interest of the corporation, and with reasonable care using the ordinary prudence that a person in similar position would use under comparable circumstances. Each Trustee may be held accountable and subject to disciplinary action by the corporation as permitted by state and federal law for failure to meet the necessary standard of care towards the corporation.
- c. **Number and Qualification.** The authorized number of Trustees is 9. The number of Trustees may be changed by an amendment to the articles of incorporation or as permitted by law. Trustees need not be members unless otherwise required by the articles of incorporation.
- d. **Election and Term of Trustees.** The Board of Trustees will be elected at each annual meeting of the members in conformity with the vote of the congregation for elders and for a corresponding term of office, subject to 2a above. Each Trustee, including a Trustee elected to fill a vacancy, will hold office until both the expiration of the elected term and until a successor has been elected and qualified.

- e. **Vacancies.** A vacancy in the Board of Trustees exists when there are fewer Trustees holding office than authorized in the articles of incorporation as a result of death, removal, resignation, or disqualification. A vacancy may be filled by majority approval of the remaining Trustees, although this may be less than a quorum or by a sole remaining Trustee.
- f. **Resignation.** Any Trustee may resign effective upon giving written notice to the Secretary unless the notice specifies a later time for that resignation to become effective.
- g. **Meetings**
  - i. *Time and Place of Meetings.* Regular meetings of the Board of Trustees will be held without notice at such time and place as may be determined by Board resolution. Absent such resolution, regular meetings will be held at the corporation's principal executive office or online. Special meetings may be held at any place designated in the notice of the meetings or, if not stated in the notice or there is no notice, at the corporation's principal executive office or online.
  - ii. *Telephonic, Video or Electronic Transmission of Meetings.* Unless otherwise restricted by law, the articles of incorporation, or the bylaws, members of the Board of Trustees and any committee designated by the Board of Trustees may participate in any meeting by means of conference telephone, video communication, or other electronic transmission methods so long as all Trustees or committee members can hear each other and have the capacity to propose or object to specific actions proposed to be taken by the corporation.
  - iii. *Special Meetings.* Special meetings of the Board of Trustees may be held for any purpose at any time by the Chairman of the Board, the President, the Secretary, or any two Trustees.
  - iv. *Notice of Special Meetings.* Notice of the time and place for special meetings must be given at least four (4) days before the date set for the meeting. Notice may be given personally, by first-class mail, by telephone (including voice messaging system), by facsimile, by electronic mail, or by any other means as permitted by law. The notice need to specify the purpose of the meeting and the place if the meeting is to be held at the principal executive office of the corporation.
  - v. *Waiver of Notice.* Any deficiency in the notice of a Board meeting can be waived by attending the meeting without objecting at the

commencement of the meeting, by written waiver before or after the meeting filed with the corporate records, or by an approval of the minutes of the meeting.

**h. Quorum and Voting**

- i. A majority of the total number of Trustees constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at a Board meeting. The act of a majority of Trustees present at any Board meeting where a quorum is present will be considered the act of the Board of Trustees, except as may otherwise be provided by law or by the articles of incorporation.
  - ii. If a quorum is not present at any meeting of the Board of Trustees, the Trustees present may adjourn the meeting without notice other than an announcement at the meeting until a quorum is present.
  - iii. A meeting where a quorum is initially present may continue to transact business notwithstanding the withdrawal of Trustees if any action taken is approved by at least a majority of the number of Trustees required to constitute a quorum for that meeting.
- i. **Trustees Acting by Unanimous Written Consent without Meeting.** Unless otherwise restricted by the articles of incorporation or these bylaws, any action required or permitted to be taken at any meeting of the Board of Trustees, or of any committee thereof, may be taken without a meeting if all members of the Board or committee consent in writing or by electronic transmission. A record of the unanimous written consent must be filed with the corporate records. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a Board of Trustees constituting less than the full number of authorized Trustees may act by written consent according to procedures established herein to fill vacancies.
- j. **Fees and Compensation.** Unless otherwise provided by law or the articles of incorporation, Trustees and members of a Trustee's committee may not receive compensation for their services and may not receive reimbursement for expenses.

**4. OFFICERS**

- a. **Principal Officers and Tenure.** The principal officers of the corporation will be a President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. The principal officers will be chosen by the congregation and each will serve at the pleasure of the Board of Trustees

until a successor is duly appointed and qualified or until the officer's death, resignation, or removal as provided by these bylaws, subject to any contractual employment rights that may apply. One person may hold multiple officer positions.

- i. *President.* Subject to the supervisory powers that may be given by the Board of Trustees to the Chairman, if such an officer is elected, the President will
  - A. have general supervision, direction, control, and management of the business and affairs of the corporation;
  - B. preside at all meetings of the members, if any;
  - C. preside at all meetings of the Board of Trustees in the absence of the Chairman or where there is no such position; and
  - D. exercise and perform such powers and duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Trustees or these bylaws.
- ii. *Secretary.* The Secretary will
  - A. maintain at the principal executive office or such other place as the Board of Trustees may determine, a book of minutes of all meetings of Trustees, committees of Trustees, and members, if any;
  - B. give notice of all members, if any, and Board of Trustee meetings as required by law and these bylaws;
  - C. exercise and perform such powers and duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Trustees or these bylaws.
- iii. *Treasurer.* The Treasurer is an "ex-officio" member of the board of trustees and has these duties:
  - A. have charge of moneys of the congregation which are contributed or paid to the board of trustees for congregational uses, and shall keep a correct account of the receipts and disbursements of the same, separate from his/her private account and under his/her official title as "Treasurer";
  - B. render a statement in writing of the receipts and disbursements for the preceding year at each annual business meeting of the congregation, and from time to time render such other financial

statements as shall be required by the congregation or the board of trustees; and

- C. be the custodian of all policies of insurance and securities of the board of trustees, and all books, papers and documents pertaining to the temporal affairs of the congregation, except the book of minutes of the proceedings of the board of trustees, which shall remain in the custody of the secretary of the board, and shall deliver them and the balance of moneys in his hands as such treasurer to his successor in office on demand;
  - D. deposit all moneys, drafts, checks, and other valuables in the name and to the credit of the corporation/congregation in the banks and depositories designated by the Board of Trustees;
  - E. disburse corporate funds as instructed by the Board of Trustees;
  - F. submit to the President and the Board of Trustees, upon request, an account of all the Treasurer's transactions and of the financial condition of the corporation; and
  - G. exercise and perform such powers and duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Trustees or these bylaws.
- b. **Standard of Care.** Each principal officer must exercise corporate powers and perform corporate duties loyally, in good faith, in a manner such officer believes to be in the best interest of the corporation, and with reasonable care using the ordinary prudence that a person in similar position would use under comparable circumstances. Each officer may be held accountable and subject to disciplinary action by the corporation as permitted by state and federal law for failure to meet the necessary standard of care towards the corporation.
  - c. **Removal and Resignation.** Subject to any contractual employment rights that the principal officer may have, any principal officer may be removed, with or without cause, by a majority of the Trustees at the time in office at any regular or special meeting of the Board.
  - d. **Vacancies in Office.** A vacancy in any office because of death, resignation, removal, disqualification, or any other cause must be filled in the manner described in the bylaws for regular appointments to such office.

## 5. INDEMNIFICATION

- a. **Trustees and Officers.** The corporation indemnifies its Trustees and officers in connection with any proceeding arising by reason of the fact that such person is or was a Trustee or officer of the corporation.
- b. **Employees and Other Agents.** The corporation may at its option and from time to time indemnify its employees and other agents to the extent permitted by law, the articles of incorporation, and any applicable individual contracts against expenses (including attorneys' fees), judgments, fines, settlements, and other amounts actually and reasonably incurred in connection with any proceeding arising by reason of the fact that such person is or was an employee or agent of the corporation.
- c. Irrespective of the foregoing, the corporation may not be required to indemnify any employee or agent in connection with any proceeding (or part thereof) initiated by the employee or agent themselves unless
  - i. such indemnification is expressly required by law; or
  - ii. the proceeding was authorized by the Board of Trustees.

## **6. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

- a. **Record Date.** For the purposes of determining the notice of any meeting, to vote, or for any proper purposes or corporate action, the Board of Trustees may fix a record date in advance no less than ten (10) nor more than sixty (60) days before the date of the meeting or proposed corporate action.
- b. **Fiscal Year.** The corporation's fiscal year is the twelve (12) consecutive months ending on the last day of December or as fixed by resolution of the Board of Trustees and may be changed by the Board of Trustees.
- c. **Checks, Drafts, and Evidence of Indebtedness.** All checks, drafts, and other payment of money, notes, or any form of indebtedness, issued in the name of or payable to the corporation, must be signed or endorsed by such person or persons in such manner as, from time to time, is determined by resolution of the Board of Trustees.
- d. **Executing Corporate Contracts and Instruments.** The Board of Trustees, except as otherwise provided in the bylaws, may authorize any officer or agent to enter into any contract or execute any instrument in the name of or on behalf of the corporation. Such authority may be general or confined to specific instances. Unless so authorized or ratified by the Board of Trustees or by an officer acting within proper agency power, no officer, agent, or employee has any power or authority to bind the corporation by any

contract or engagement or to pledge its credit or render it liable for any purpose or to any amount.

**e. Amendments to Bylaws**

- i. *Amendment by Members.* Members may adopt new bylaws or amend or repeal these bylaws by
  - A. a majority vote; or
  - B. a written consent of holders of outstanding shares having no less than the minimum number of votes that would be necessary to take action in a meeting where all shares entitled to vote were present and voted.
- ii. Notwithstanding the section above, nothing in the new bylaws or amended bylaws may contradict any terms of the articles of incorporation.
- iii. *Amendment by Trustees.* Subject to law and the foregoing rights of members to adopt, amend, or repeal the bylaws, and to any other legal provisions, the bylaws may be adopted, amended, or repealed by the Board of Trustees.

**f. Dissolution**

- i. Except as otherwise provided by statute or the articles of incorporation, the nonprofit may be dissolved only with authorization of a supermajority (2/3rd) vote of the members given at a meeting called for that specific purpose.
  - ii. Upon dissolution of the nonprofit, assets will be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or will be distributed to the federal government or to a state or local government, for a public purpose.
- g. Offices.** The registered office of the corporation is located at 5 Wantage Avenue, Branchville, New Jersey 07826 or as otherwise designated by the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees may at any time and place establish offices as required where the corporation is qualified to do business.
- h. Governing Law.** The bylaws will be governed, construed, and interpreted by, through, and under the laws of New Jersey.

## **Alcohol Policy**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this Alcohol Use Policy is to provide clear guidelines and expectations regarding the use of alcohol for The First Presbyterian Church of Branchville. It is intended to promote responsible alcohol use, ensure the safety and well-being of our congregation members, and align with guidance provided by the General Assembly of the PC USA.

**Scope:** This policy applies to all members, attendees, staff, volunteers, and participants in First Presbyterian Church of Branchville events and functions, held on church premises. It covers the use of alcohol in various situations and seeks to strike a balance between encouraging responsible consumption and discouraging risky behaviors.

**Abstention:** Abstention from alcohol use should be supported and encouraged as a fundamental choice for individuals within our congregation.

**Moderate Drinking:** In low-risk situations, moderate drinking should not be opposed as long as the alcohol is not provided by the church and it is brought onto church property by the persons involved. We acknowledge that responsible alcohol consumption can be a part of social and cultural practices. However, it is important to emphasize that moderation is key, and individuals should be mindful of their consumption to avoid excess.

**Heavy Drinking:** Heavy drinking, which involves excessive or irresponsible alcohol consumption, will not be tolerated in any situation. It can lead to physical and emotional harm, disrupt relationships, and compromise the well-being of our church.

### **Responsibilities**

**Church Leadership:** The leadership of First Presbyterian Church of Branchville is responsible for setting a positive example and promoting responsible alcohol use within the church community.

**Congregation Members:** Congregation members have a responsibility to adhere to the principles outlined in this policy. They shall:

- Abstain from alcohol use if they have chosen to do so.
- Consume alcohol responsibly in low-risk situations.



- Avoid heavy drinking and high-risk situations.
- Encourage and support fellow congregation members in making responsible choices.

**Church Events and Functions:** All alcohol use during church-sponsored events and functions, needs to have the approval of the Session for each event and must adhere to the principles of this policy. The responsible consumption of alcohol may be permitted at certain events, as determined by the church leadership, with strict guidelines and oversight in place to ensure safety.

## **Anti-racism Policy**

**Purpose:** The First Presbyterian Church of Branchville is a community rooted in the love and teachings of Jesus Christ, who calls us to love one another, seek justice, and walk humbly with God. As followers of Christ, we are committed to affirming the dignity and worth of all people, made in the image of God. In this spirit, we affirm our church’s commitment to being an anti-racist faith community.

**Definition of Anti-Racism:** Anti-racism is the acknowledgment of the existence of racism in society and in ourselves and committing to actively reject any forms of racial injustice within our church.

**Our Commitment:** At the First Presbyterian Church of Branchville, we recognize that racism, in all its forms—personal, institutional, and systemic—is contrary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We understand that neutrality or silence in the face of racism allows injustice to persist. Therefore, we commit to intentionally embodying the principles of anti-racism in our community life, our worship, our leadership, and our relationships with one another and the broader world.

We will strive to be a church that listens, learns, and grows in its awareness of how racism affects individuals and communities. This includes the willingness to reflect on our own biases and the ways in which we may have knowingly or unknowingly participated in unjust systems.

As a body of believers, we are called to pursue justice. The Bible teaches us in *Micah* 6:8 (NRSV): “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” This scripture reminds us that justice is not an optional virtue but a divine requirement.

## Guiding Principles

1. **Dignity of All People:** We affirm that every person is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and therefore possesses inherent dignity and worth, regardless of race, ethnicity, or background.
2. **Justice as a Core Value:** We believe that seeking justice is central to the Gospel. Our commitment to anti-racism is a reflection of our faith and a response to God's call to love our neighbors as ourselves.
3. **Ongoing Reflection and Repentance:** We acknowledge that racism has been part of the history of the church and society. We are committed to prayerfully reflecting on our history and seeking God's guidance in repentance, reconciliation, and renewal.
4. **Inclusive Community:** We seek to foster a church environment where people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds feel safe, respected, and valued.
5. **Spiritual Formation:** We believe that anti-racism is part of our spiritual growth and discipleship. It is an ongoing journey that requires humility, openness, and courage.

**Actions:** Session will review this policy annually at the June Session meeting and determine whether the church is in compliance with the policy, and, if not, what actions will be taken to come into compliance.

Adopted by the First Presbyterian Church of Branchville on June 11, 2025 by unanimous email vote.

## Background Check Policy

**Purpose:** The First Presbyterian Church of Branchville is committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for all, especially our children, youth, and vulnerable adults. This policy outlines our commitment to conducting thorough background checks for all employees, volunteers, and officers who have direct contact with or supervisory responsibilities over these populations, or who handle church finances or sensitive information. This policy aligns with the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s emphasis on "Safe Church" practices.

**Scope:** This policy applies to all paid staff, elected officers (e.g., Elders, Deacons), and volunteers serving in ministries involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults (e.g., Sunday School teachers, youth group leaders, nursery workers, drivers for church activities). It also applies to individuals with access to financial records or sensitive personal information. The Clerk of Session will be accountable for the proper execution of the policy.

**Required Elements:** Prior to commencing their role, and periodically thereafter (at least every three years), individuals covered by this policy shall undergo comprehensive background checks including:

1. **Criminal Record Check:** A national criminal background check will be conducted to identify any felony or misdemeanor convictions, particularly those related to crimes against persons, sexual offenses, or offenses involving dishonesty or moral turpitude.
2. **Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) Check:** For any individual who will be driving church vehicles or transporting congregants in their personal vehicle for church-related activities, an MVR check will be conducted to ensure a safe driving history.
3. **Sex Offender Registry Check:** A search of national and state sex offender registries will be performed to identify any individuals listed on such registries.

**Confidentiality and Process:** All background check information will be handled with the utmost confidentiality and kept exclusively by the pastor. Applicants will be required to provide written consent for these checks. Adverse findings will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, considering the nature and severity of the offense, time elapsed, and relevance to the position. Disqualification may occur based on the results of these checks, in accordance with applicable law and church policy.

***Adopted August 2025***

## **Building Use Policy**

1. The building use applicant or organization filling out the application for the use of any building will be held responsible for adequate supervision of their activities.
2. Supervision of children's or youth groups during building use shall be a ratio of not less than two (2) responsible adults (age 21 or over) for every 20 minors and not less than two (2) adults for each room used.
3. The parties to whom a permit is issued must assume full responsibility for any damage to or loss of property that may occur during their occupancy.
4. It is required that groups/organizations using church facilities shall carry public liability coverage and that a certificate of insurance showing this coverage shall be supplied to the church at the time of application (single limit of \$500,000 bodily injury and/or property damage).
5. No changes of any kind are to be made in any room without express consent of an authorized agent of the church Session. Special permission must be obtained for decorating, installing scenery and moving furniture. (***No balloons may be used.***)

6. All premises are to be left in the same condition as that in which they were found.
7. Applications/Permission for use of any building(s) is not transferable.
8. Application for a permit to use any building or parts thereof shall be filed through the church office at least four (4) weeks prior to the date for which the request is made.
9. It is understood that, in all cases, the regular activities or organizations of the church shall have first preference when requesting the use of any part of the building(s).
10. All permits shall be revocable and shall not be considered as lease.
11. The Session or its authorized agent may reject any application or cancel any permit.
12. The fee(s) charges shall not be considered a “rental” fee, but will be limited to operation expenses with a reasonable allowance for usage.
13. The number in attendance at any function must not exceed capacity of the area approved for use: Main Room in Fellowship Hall – maximum of 125 persons.
14. All usage is to be of high moral character and only as stated in the application. NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES shall be brought to or consumed in or about the church building and grounds. NO SMOKING/VAPING will be permitted in all buildings.
15. All donations are payable by check to the First Presbyterian Church, P.O. Box 1, Branchville, NJ 07826. A cleaning deposit of \$50.00 (half a day use) or \$100.00 (full day use) shall accompany each application and will be refunded if the building is left in the condition in which it was found.

## **Children and Youth Protection Policy**

### **Purpose Statement**

Branchville Presbyterian Church is committed to providing a safe, secure, and nurturing environment for all children and youth participating in our programs, activities, and facilities. This policy outlines our commitment to preventing child abuse and neglect in all its forms, ensuring the well-being of every young person entrusted to our care.

### **Policy Statement**

We believe that all children and youth deserve to be treated with respect, love, and dignity. Our church has a zero-tolerance policy for child abuse and neglect. We are dedicated to implementing best practices in child protection, including thorough screening, comprehensive training, clear codes of conduct, and transparent reporting procedures for all staff, volunteers, and congregants who interact with minors.

### **Key Principles and Procedures**

1. Screening and Background Checks

All individuals, both paid staff and volunteers, who work with children and youth must undergo a comprehensive application process, including criminal background checks, before beginning their service.

## 2. Training and Education

Mandatory training on child abuse prevention, recognition, and reporting protocols will be provided annually for all Elders and Deacons, and volunteers working with minors. This training emphasizes appropriate boundaries, safe supervision practices, and the importance of vigilance.

## 3. Supervision and "Two-Adult Rule"

At least two adults, who have both completed background checks and training, must be present during all activities involving children and youth. No adult should ever be alone with a child or youth in any church-sponsored activity without direct supervision.

## 4. Reporting Suspected Abuse

Any individual with a reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect, whether physical, emotional, sexual, or neglectful, is required to report it immediately to the appropriate civil authorities (e.g., Child Protective Services or law enforcement) and to the designated church leader. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible while ensuring the child's safety. Retaliation against anyone making a report in good faith is strictly prohibited.

***Approved by Session 9/8/25***

# Electronic Meeting Policies

## Purpose

To provide clear guidelines for the participation of Session members in meetings using electronic means, ensuring the effective and responsible governance of the church while maintaining good order and deliberation as guided by the PC(USA) Book of Order.

## Scope

This policy applies to all duly elected Ruling Elders and the Teaching Elder (Pastor) who constitute the Session of this Presbyterian Church (USA) church.

## Policy

### **A. Electronic Participation in Convened Meetings**

Session members may participate in regularly called or special meetings via electronic technology (e.g., video or teleconference) provided they give prior notice to the Pastor or Clerk of Session. The electronic method used must allow for simultaneous, two-way communication among all participants. A Session member participating electronically under these conditions shall be counted toward a quorum.

### **B. Motions Outside of Convened Meetings**

Motions for routine or time-sensitive administrative matters may be proposed to the Session via electronic communication, such as email. However, any motion proposed outside of a convened meeting must receive the **unanimous** written assent of all current, active Session members. If any Session member registers a dissent or abstention, the motion shall be automatically deferred and must be taken up and considered during a regularly scheduled or specially called live, in-person, or fully electronically connected meeting.

## **Endowment Policy**

**Process:** As per our Endowment Policy, 80% of this money will be invested into our Endowment Fund and 20% will be available for use immediately. Once the Endowment Fund reaches the \$250,000 mark, then ½ of the interest can be applied to the yearly budget. The 20% available to be used immediately will allow us to do some much-needed repairs to our Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall, retire our credit line (saving us \$550 each month).

## **Estate Policy**

**Process:** 20% of each will go towards current expenses or projects and 80% will go into the Endowment Fund.

## **Funeral Policy**

***In Review***

## **Personnel Policies**

**Equal Employment Opportunity:** The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will recruit, hire, call, train, and promote all persons in all job classifications without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, sex, age, marital status, or religious affiliation.

### **Employment Practices**

#### **Employer Rights and Responsibilities**

1. To establish and administer a personnel system which can meet the personnel needs of the Church.
2. To write position descriptions and personnel qualifications for particular functions and determine the knowledge, skills, and experience needed to perform these functions.
3. To describe and administer processes for compensation, career development, benefits, working conditions, promotion, grievance, dismissal, and other aspects of employment.
4. To hold employees accountable for carrying out their position descriptions effectively.
5. To exercise suitable discipline.
6. To establish rules and necessary action to govern the working environment.
7. To amend, modify, or change these policies at any time with the approval of the Pastor (Head of Staff) and the Personnel Committee.

#### **Employee Rights and Responsibilities**

1. To receive information and training regarding all aspects of their position so they can grasp their role and function within the total Presbyterian structure.
2. To receive regular information concerning the quality of their performance and through annual performance reviews and evaluations. To have as much control as possible over their own career development.
3. To participate in the development of personnel policies and practices and to be kept informed of any changes to them.
4. To have working conditions which promote the general welfare and encourage productivity.
5. To work in a smoke-free environment.
6. To receive adequate compensation and other benefits under a fair and open process.
7. To honor their commitment to goals and objectives agreed upon in the evaluation and performance review process.

8. To make suggestions on the improvement of operations and to act in accordance with the employer's rules and regulations.

**Exempt and Non-Exempt Categories:** In accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act, there are exempt and non-exempt positions. An exempt employee is one who, because of his/her position's duties, is exempt from the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Persons in exempt positions are not paid overtime wages. A non-exempt (non-managerial) employee is covered by FLSA overtime rule protection.

**Probationary Period:** New employees will complete a three-month probationary period designed to give the employee and their supervisor an opportunity to evaluate their interest in and qualifications for their position under actual working conditions. The purpose of the probationary period is to create a trial working period to enable the Pastor/Session/Personnel Committee to evaluate work performance and conduct to determine the granting of permanent status. After ninety days, performance will be reviewed with the employee by their supervisor. If all requirements for employment are completed satisfactorily, the employee will be entitled to full benefits, including credit toward vacation and sick leave starting from the first day of the probationary period.

#### **Probationary Period Objectives**

1. To instruct the Employee in the duties to be performed.
2. To give the Employee the necessary tools or materials to accomplish their duties.
3. To inform the Employee of the standard of performance expected.
4. To give assistance to the Employee to correct or improve performance.
5. To give the church an opportunity to assess the performance and fit of the new employee.

**Employee Review:** All employees should feel free to consult with the Pastor and/or the Personnel Committee with questions regarding responsibilities or performance. He/she need not wait for the annual review. The Pastor will conduct a documented discussion of performance of all staff in September of each year. After discussing a problem with the employee, the Pastor, in conjunction with the Personnel Committee, is authorized to take corrective action if an employee is not performing effectively the tasks described in his/her position description.

**Employee Grievance Process:** In the event of an employee complaint, he/she should contact the Pastor or the Personnel Committee. If the problem is not addressed within five



working days, the employee should file an official grievance in writing to the Chair of the Personnel Committee.

**Benefits:** All personnel are covered by the Federal Old Age and Survivors Benefits Act (Social Security). The employee's share of the tax is withheld each pay period.

**Paid Time Off:** The Employee shall be entitled to 15 days at full pay, or fractions thereof, paid time off, pro-rated the first year of employment, commencing on the start date of employment, but not within the probationary period. These days must be used by the end of the calendar year and will not carry over to the next year.

**Holidays and Snow Days:** The Church Office Administrative Assistant will have every Federal holiday off with pay, and the office will be closed. If the holiday falls on a weekend, the previous Friday or the following Monday may be taken. In the case of snow, if the local school (Frankford Twp.) is closed, the office will be closed and the Administrative Assistant can choose to take a day from Paid Time Off or to work from home.

**Sexual Harassment and Misconduct Policy:** All employees have a right to work in an environment free from any type of discrimination and free from sexual harassment. The employer prohibits unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which may constitute sexual harassment. Any such conduct should be reported immediately to the Head of Staff or the chair of the Personnel Committee. All employees shall sign and be governed by the Branchville Presbyterian Sexual Misconduct Policy and the related form must be signed and returned upon employment.

## **Job Descriptions**

**Video Streaming Coordinator:** The purpose of this position is to video stream our church services, whenever they are held, live to Facebook or appropriate media. At its close, the service will also be uploaded to YouTube, for viewing. Currently this position is paying \$20 per week, with the hope that it will be raised to \$25 for the Budget Yr 2024.

**Church Auditor:** The Auditor is authorized to review and reconcile the accuracy of church financial records and relate any found discrepancies to the Treasurer. The church auditor verifies the bank checking account against the transaction register on a monthly basis and to provide a report to the church Treasurer. This position is currently held by a volunteer.

## **Administrative Assistant/Treasurer**

**Reporting Relationship:** This position reports to the Pastor (as head of staff), and to other appropriate members of Session and the Personnel Committee.

**Purpose:** To provide administrative and financial services for the church, the Pastor, other professional church staff, and elders.

### **Position Responsibilities**

1. Perform the function of administrative assistant to the Pastor, including typing, data entry, routine correspondence, maintenance of calendar, newsletter, answering phones, access mail from the Post Office and redistribute to appropriate recipients, etc.
2. Be responsible for production of materials through computers, copier, etc., and oversee use of office machines by others.
3. Perform administrative work for church committees and organizations as directed by the Pastor, and committee chairs.
4. Be responsible for the ordering of office supplies and maintenance of the copier.
5. Prepare church bulletins, announcements, letters to the congregation, monthly newsletter, etc. for distribution. Where applicable, prepare these items for email and by limited regular mail when necessary.
6. Work with the Stewardship chair to update pledge information annually. Prepare quarterly statements and email to members.
7. Update Membership Directory as needed and distribute annually.
8. Prepare Annual Report and distribute to congregation.
9. Supervise office volunteer assistants as needed.
10. Pay monthly invoices through Lakeland bank account bill pay and enter payments into Quicken. Once entered, a report will be generated for review by the Auditor.
11. Prepare monthly financials for the Session.
12. Prepare quarterly federal and New Jersey tax payments, including W-2 reports.
13. Currently the hours required, when the office is open, is Mon-Friday, 9:30am-2pm. On occasion, with the agreement of the Pastor or the Personnel Chair, working from home will be permitted. If an agreed sick or vacation day is needed, volunteers should be contacted to fill in at the office. This position is currently being paid \$24,000 annually, with the hope of it being increased to \$25,000 next year.

**Position Evaluation:** Performance reviews will be conducted by the Pastor, and the Personnel Chair, if required. The Session will annually review compensation.

**Organist**

**Purpose:** Provide appropriate organ music during all worship services.

**Accountability:** Accountable to the Pastor as head of staff.

**Responsibilities:**

1. In cooperation with the Music Director and the Pastor, is responsible for the selection and playing of appropriate organ or piano music for all regular and special services such as Tenebrae, Easter, and Christmas Eve.
2. In the absence of the Choir Director, is required to play for choir rehearsals.
3. Attend monthly Music and Worship Committee meetings, whenever possible.
4. Play at all weddings or funerals that are held at the church. If an organist's schedule does not permit an organist to play, they are to make suggestions for a substitute. You will also be expected to submit your personal fee schedule to the church office for inclusion in the master wedding fee schedule.
5. Is responsible for reporting any problems with the organ to the Music and Worship Committee as well as schedule organ maintenance, if necessary.
6. With permission from the Music and Worship Committee, arrange for the organ to be tuned a minimum of once/year, preferably twice/year.
7. Arrange for a substitute organist when unable to be present. The current rate is \$150 with the hope of it being raised to \$165 next year.
8. The organist shall provide his/her own music for the worship service, i.e., Prelude, Offertory and Postlude.

**Evaluation:** Performance reviews will be conducted by the Pastor, the Elder representing the Music and Worship Committee and the Personnel Committee of the Session. The Personnel Committee along with the Elder from the Music and Worship Committee will annually review the level of compensation, and when performance warrants and budget allows, adjustments will be made.

**Reporting Relationship:** This position reports to the Pastor, the Elder representing the Music and Worship Committee and the Personnel Committee of the Session.

**Music Director - Choir/Bell Director:** Is responsible for the organization, offerings, operation, and direction of the Chancel Choir and the Bells of Branchville. Works in close cooperation with the Organist, the Pastor and the Music and Worship Committee.

*NOTE:* Currently the “Chancel Choir Year” starts the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday after Labor Day and ends on Father’s Day (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in June) and the Bells of Branchville year begins the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Labor Day and usually ends after Music Sunday in May.

1. Select and provide music and prepare the Chancel Choir to sing during worship services and special services. Make sure that the music is appropriate for the season or Sunday of the church year during which it will be sung. Consult with the Pastor if necessary.
2. Prepare the Chancel Choir to offer special music on Greening Sunday, Christmas Eve, Maundy Thursday (Tenebrae Service), and on Easter Sunday. This preparation could involve extra rehearsals.
3. Conduct weekly rehearsals with the Chancel Choir and the Bells of Branchville at agreed to rehearsal times. Currently, the Chancel Choir rehearses on Thursday evening from 7:00 – 8:00 and the Bells of Branchville rehearse on Sunday from 11:15 – 12:15.
4. Arrange for a substitute choir director in the event of absence from rehearsals or church services.
5. Arrange for special music each Sunday during summer months when the Chancel Choir does not sing.
6. Coordinate all preparations for the annual Music Sunday service, held in May.
7. Be responsible for the maintenance of the pianos in the church and Fellowship Hall. Pianos should be tuned at least once/year. Submit the invoice for the tuning to the church Treasurer.

#### **Position Responsibilities: Administrative**

1. Serve as a member of the Music and Worship Committee and attend all Music and Worship Committee meetings, whenever possible.
2. Be the Director of the Bells of Branchville. This involves rehearsing on a weekly basis at an agreed upon time, providing a rehearsal place that includes bell tables, mats, and gloves as well as providing music at the appropriate level for the group to play. Maintain the handbells through proper handling and cleaning. If the bells need maintenance or repair, get an estimate for the cost of the repair or maintenance, then

confirm with the Treasurer that the funds are available to proceed. Make arrangements to have the necessary repair or maintenance completed.

3. Prepare an annual budget which includes all expenses related to Chancel Choir and handbell music. Submit this budget to the Music and Worship Committee.
4. Create and maintain a list of the names, phone numbers, and email addresses for Bells of Branchville and Chancel Choir members.
5. Encourage new members to join the Chancel Choir.
6. Each week, inform the Administrative Assistant of the names of the anthems that will be used in the church service. Do this at an agreed upon time so the information can be placed in the weekly church bulletin.
7. Be responsible for the maintenance of the Chancel Choir robes.
8. If music or other supplies need to be purchased out of church funds, the Director is to speak to the Elder from the Music and Worship Committee, to ensure funds are available in the budget.
9. Submit articles to the newsletter as necessary and to make announcements in the bulletin.

**Position Evaluation:** Performance reviews will be conducted by the Pastor and the Elder from the Music and Worship Committee, with input, as needed, from the Elder of the Personnel Committee, on a yearly basis. The Session will annually review the adequacy of compensation.

### **Termination for Cause**

**Dismissal For Cause:** Dismissal for cause may take place by written notice from the Pastor and/or Personnel Committee. No severance allowance will be paid. Causes for dismissal may include, but are not limited to: unsatisfactory performance, insubordination (including refusal to do any work which the employee is capable of doing which falls within his/her position description), neglect in the care and use of Church property and funds, unexcused absence, repeated tardiness, illegal conduct, failure to observe employer policies, dishonest or unethical behavior, harassment of other employees. Dismissal is an action of last resort taken only after remedial measures have proven ineffective or when the employee's conduct is such as to prevent further employment. Written documentation is required prior to the recommendation for dismissal. Dismissal is subject to the complaint procedure as outlined in these policy guidelines. Administrative Leave without pay may be invoked for a period of up to two weeks by the Head of Staff and or the Personnel Committee in circumstances where

an offense has been clearly established requiring disciplinary action but not warranting dismissal. Consultation between the employee and the immediate supervisor should precede suspension. Notice of the reason for the suspension must be given to the employee in writing, including the information that the employee has the right to use the Grievance Process to defend his or her own position

***Approved by Session 11/13/23***

## **Policy on Video Recording**

### **Process**

1. The Office Administrative Assistant will be responsible for keeping copies of the policy.
2. All new members will have a copy of the policy included in their new member welcome package.
3. Every three months the Office Administrative Assistant will include a link to the policy in the Church Key with a reminder that if anyone wants to opt out of social media postings, they should complete the form and submit it back to the office.
4. Session will designate those people who have authority to post to the church's social media. Only those designated people will have the authority to post material to social media. The Office Admin. shall notify those persons authorized to post material, of any member of the congregation who has requested not to be identified or included in social media posts.

## **Policy on the Acceptance and Management of Gifts of Stock**

The First Presbyterian Church of Branchville gratefully welcomes gifts of publicly traded stock and other marketable securities as an expression of generosity and stewardship in support of the mission and ministry of the church. Gifts of stock may be accepted at any time and shall be recorded at their fair market value as of the date of receipt, in accordance with applicable accounting standards and denominational guidelines.

Unless otherwise required by law or explicitly approved by the Session in advance, the church does not accept gifts of stock with restrictions related to holding, voting, or disposition. The church reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to sell, transfer, or otherwise dispose of any gifted stock at any time after receipt. Decisions regarding the management or sale of such stock shall be made in a manner consistent with the fiduciary responsibilities of the Session and the financial best interests of the church. ***Approved by Session 01/12/26***

## Sexual Misconduct Policy

This page, with your original signature, MUST be returned with your Application.

The following information related to sexual misconduct was mandated by the Sexual Misconduct Policy and Its Procedures adopted by the 1991 General Assembly, and was revised by the 1993 General Assembly.

Please check one of the following.

\_\_\_\_\_ I certify by the signature below that no civil, criminal, ecclesiastical complaint has ever been sustained\* or is pending\* against me for sexual misconduct; and that I have never resigned or been terminated from a position for reasons related to sexual misconduct.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am unable to make the above certification. I offer, instead, the following description of the complaint, termination, or the outcome of the situation with explanatory comments (write on back).

The information contained in my Application is accurate to the best of my. I hereby authorize the entity to which my Application is being given to inquire concerning any civil or criminal records, or any judicial or ecclesiastical proceedings involving me as a defendant, related to sexual misconduct. By means of this release I also authorize any previous employer, and any law enforcement agencies or judicial authorities or ecclesiastical governing bodies to release any and all requested relevant information related to sexual misconduct to the entity to which my Application is being sent.

I have read this certification and release form and fully understand that the information obtained may be used to deny me employment or any other type of position from the employing entity. I also agree that I will hold harmless the employing or judicial authority or any other entity from any and all claims, liabilities, and causes of action for the legitimate release of any information related to sexual misconduct.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Please type or print your name here

\_\_\_\_\_

\*Sustained

1. In a criminal court, "sustained" means that there has been a guilty plea, a guilty verdict or a plea bargain.
2. In a civil court, "sustained" means that there has been a judgment against the defendant.
3. In an ecclesiastical case, "sustained" means that there has been a guilty plea and censure imposed, or finding of guilty with censure imposed, by a permanent judicial commission in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) or an equivalent body of another church.

\*Pending

1. In a criminal court, "pending" means a criminal charge before a grand jury, in the process of being prosecuted, or in a case in which there is not yet a verdict.
2. In a civil court, "pending" means a case in which there has not been a decision or judgment.
3. In an ecclesiastical case, "pending" means an accusation is being investigate by a special disciplinary committee or charges have been filed but have not yet been decided by a permanent judicial commission; or an accusation or charges are in an equivalent state or process in a church other than the PC(USA).

(The following is taken from definitions in the General Assembly *Sexual Misconduct Policy and Its Procedures*, pg. 13)

"Sexual Misconduct is the comprehensive term used in this policy and its procedures to include: 1) Child sexual abuse, as defined above [refers to Policy]; 2) Sexual harassment, as defined above [refers to Policy]; 3) Rape or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation; 4) Sexual conduct (such as offensive, obscene or suggestive language or behavior, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome touching or fondling) that is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another; 5) Sexual malfeasance defined as sexual conduct within a ministerial (e.g., clergy with a member of the congregation) or professional relationship (e.g., counselor with a client, lay employee with a church member, presbytery executive with a committee member who may be a layperson, a minister, or an elder). Sexual conduct includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. This definition is not meant to cover relationships between spouses, nor is it meant to restrict church professionals from having normal, social, intimate, or marital relationships; 6) Sexual abuse as found in *Book of Order* D-7.1100 (see Accuser/Victim)."



## SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY FORM

I hereby acknowledge that on \_\_\_\_\_(Date), I received a copy of the Sexual Misconduct Policy of the first Presbyterian Church of Branchville. I have read the policy, understand its meaning and agree to conduct myself in accordance with the policy. I further understand that our church and the Newton Presbytery has a NO TOLERANCE policy regarding sexual misconduct.

Signature:\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_

Received by:\_\_\_\_\_

Date Received:\_\_\_\_\_

## **Table and Chairs Policy**

***In Review***

## **Wedding Policy**

***In Review***