

**Resolution to Disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church  
and Affiliate with the United Church of Christ**

*Whereas, Bering Memorial United Methodist Church desires to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church pursuant to ¶2553 of the 2016 Book of Discipline for reasons of conscience regarding its provisions related to human sexuality; and*

*Whereas, the United Methodist Church has been discriminating against the LGBTQ+ community for 49 years and continues to do so in **The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church (2016)**, ¶¶ 161G, 304.3, 341.6, 613.19, 806.9, 2702.1(b); and*

*Whereas, Bering Memorial United Methodist Church's ongoing affiliation with the United Methodist Church is causing harm to LGBTQ+ persons, their families, and allies and to the witness of the Gospel; and*

*Whereas, the United Church of Christ is an Open and Affirming denomination in which Bering Memorial United Methodist Church can continue to live out its Wesleyan heritage and fully welcome and celebrate ALL people as made in the image of God in all their identities, including their sexual orientation and gender identity; and*

*Whereas, the Administrative Council of Bering Memorial United Methodist Church has unanimously recommended the Bering Memorial United Methodist Church disaffiliate with the United Methodist Church and affiliate with the United Church of Christ;*

*Now therefore, be it resolved that:*

*Bering Memorial United Methodist Church shall disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church to affiliate with the United Church of Christ, effective upon release from the United Methodist Church and admission into the United Church of Christ, on or after June 2, 2021;*

*Be it further resolved that the Bering Church Administrative Council be authorized to take all steps necessary to effectuate this resolution.*

1 **RESTATED ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION**  
2 **BERING MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF HOUSTON**  
3 **NOW KNOWN AS**  
4 **BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF HOUSTON**

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5  
6 These restated Articles of Incorporation, authorized by a two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ )  
7 affirmative vote of the Church Conference of Bering Memorial United Methodist  
8 Church on April 18, 2021, amend the original Articles authorized by the Charge  
9 Conference of Bering Memorial United Methodist Church on February 21, 1979.

10 **ARTICLE ONE**

11 **NAME**

12 The name of the Corporation is Bering Memorial United Church of Christ of  
13 Houston. The Corporation was formerly named Bering Memorial United  
14 Methodist Church of Houston.

15 **ARTICLE TWO**

16 **NONPROFIT CORPORATION**

17 The Corporation is a nonprofit corporation.

18 **ARTICLE THREE**

19 **DURATION**

20 The period of its duration is perpetual.

21 **ARTICLE FOUR**

22 **PURPOSES**

23 The purpose or purposes for which the Corporation is organized are:

- 24 1. The maintenance of a church in accordance with the teachings,  
25 rules, customs, laws, and regulations of the United Church of  
26 Christ and the provision of a place of public worship therefore;
- 27 2. The general promotion and maintenance of Christian charitable,  
28 religious, missionary, or educational activities of the  
29 Corporation or of the United Church of Christ; and
- 30 3. Conducting activities authorized by the rules, customs, laws,  
31 and regulations of the United Church of Christ.

32 **ARTICLE FIVE**

33 **REGISTERED OFFICE AND REGISTERED AGENT**

34 The street address of the registered office of the Corporation is:

35 1440 Harold Street, Houston, Texas 77006

36 and the Senior Pastor is the registered agent at such address. As of March 2021,  
37 this is: The Reverend Paula Diane McGehee.

38 **ARTICLE SIX**

39 **RESTRICTIONS ON USE OF PROPERTY AND PROCEEDS**

40 All property—real, personal, or mixed—of the Corporation and the proceeds  
41 therefrom shall be used exclusively in furtherance of the purposes of the  
42 Corporation and no part of such property or the proceeds therefrom shall be  
43 contributed to any association, entity, or group whose income or any part thereof

1 inures to the benefit of any person; nor shall any part of the income of the  
2 Corporation be distributed to the Directors, Officers, or Members of the  
3 Corporation. Salaries paid to employees are not “distributions.” Directors and  
4 Officers cannot be employees; other Bering Members may be Bering employees.  
5 The foregoing shall not limit restrictions, if any, contained in the Texas Business  
6 Organization Code.

7 **ARTICLE SEVEN**

8 **MEMBERS**

9 The Members of the Corporation are the Active Full and Associate  
10 Members as defined in the Bylaws.

11 **ARTICLE EIGHT**

12 **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

13 *Section 1:*

14 The Board of Directors of the Corporation shall be the body vested with  
15 the power and authority to manage, administer, deal with, and serve as  
16 custodian for the property—real, personal, and mixed—of the Corporation  
17 in accordance with the Bylaws.

18 *Section 2:*

19 The authority of the Board of Directors of the Corporation shall be  
20 subordinate in all respects to the authority of the Members, and shall be such  
21 authority as is expressly or implicitly delegated by the Members in accordance  
22 with the Bylaws.

23 *Section 3:*

24 The number of Directors may be increased or decreased from time to time in  
25 the manner provided in the Bylaws, except that no decrease shall have the effect  
26 of reducing the number of Directors to fewer than three (3) Directors or  
27 shortening the term of any incumbent Director.

28 **ARTICLE NINE**

29 **DISSOLUTION**

30 In the event of the dissolution of the Corporation, title to all of its property—  
31 real, personal, and mixed—shall by recommendation of the Board of Directors and  
32 affirmed by the Members, as provided in the Bylaws, be vested, to the extent not  
33 inconsistent with the terms and provisions of any bequest or endowment or  
34 inconsistent with the Texas Business Organizations Code, in the Houston  
35 Association of the United Church of Christ and/or the South Central Conference of  
36 the United Church of Christ and/or any Internal Revenue Code qualified 501(c)(3)  
37 organization.  
38

**CONSTITUTION  
BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
HOUSTON, TEXAS**

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**ARTICLE 1**

**NAME AND HISTORY**

The name of this church shall be Bering Memorial United Church of Christ (Bering). Bering was formed in 1848 by German-speaking immigrants. It was begun as a mission congregation of the Methodist denomination and remained within the Methodist denomination until 2021 when it disaffiliated from the United Methodist Church to stop the harm to LGBTQAI+ persons by its ongoing affiliation with the United Methodist Church. Upon disaffiliation from the UMC, Bering affiliated with the United Church of Christ (UCC) and became Bering Memorial United Church of Christ. Bering is located in the City of Houston, Harris County, Texas.

**ARTICLE 2**

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CONGREGATION**

Bering is a member congregation of the United Church of Christ. It shall sustain that relationship by covenanting with the Associations, Conferences, Boards, Missions, and General Synod of the United Church of Christ.

**ARTICLE 3**

**MISSION AND VISION**

1. Bering's mission is to joyfully share God's love for all the world through our committed word and action as seekers of Jesus Christ. Bering seeks to tear down walls that separate children of God.
2. Bering's vision is to be: a spiritual home for every person; a people of service; a sanctuary of love, peace, and justice; and a reconciling, inclusive family for all persons.
3. Bering:
  - Seeks out and welcomes all people by sharing our experiences and stories;
  - Builds community through spiritual formation, fun-filled activities, and opportunities for service;
  - Serves God's people through acts of justice, mercy, and love; and
  - Celebrates God through varied forms of joyful worship.

**CONSTITUTION  
BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
HOUSTON, TEXAS**

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**ARTICLE 4**

**OPEN AND AFFIRMING CONGREGATION**

Bering is an Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation. ONA is the United Church of Christ designation for congregations that make a public covenant of welcome to all into the full life and ministry of the church. Bering proclaims that all people are created in the image of God and affirms that each person—regardless of age, economic status, faith history, ethnicity, gender, mental or physical ability, marital status, sexual orientation, or gender identification—is a beloved child of God and worthy of God’s love and grace. Bering supports the full participation of all persons in every phase of church life. Through education and informal discussion, we strive to better understand those who are different from ourselves to bring about a more just and accepting society.

**ARTICLE 5**

**FAITH**

1. With Christians of other communions, we confess belief in the triune God—Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. This confession embraces the biblical witness to God’s activity in creation, encompasses God’s gracious self-involvement in history, and anticipates the consummation of God’s kingdom.
2. Bering brings with it to the United Church of Christ its Wesleyan heritage, with its emphasis on the all-pervasive grace of God and salvation in Jesus Christ freely available to all. All who desire salvation will give evidence to that desire by doing no harm, by avoiding evil of all kind; doing good, by being merciful, doing good of every possible sort to all; and attending to the ordinances of God, including public worship, the ministry of the Word, Holy Communion, private prayer, reading Scripture, and fasting.
3. The created order is designed for the well-being of all creatures and as the place of human dwelling in covenant with God. As sinful creatures, however, we have broken that covenant, become estranged from God, wounded ourselves and one another, and wreaked havoc throughout the natural order. We stand in need of redemption.
4. We hold in common with all Christians a faith in the mystery of salvation in and through Jesus Christ. At the heart of the gospel of salvation is God’s incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth. Scripture witnesses to the redeeming love of God in Jesus’ life and teachings, his atoning death for all, his resurrection, his sovereign presence in history, his triumph over

**CONSTITUTION**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

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1 the powers of evil and death, and his promised return. Because God truly  
2 loves us in spite of our willful sin, God judges us, summons us to  
3 repentance, pardons us, receives us by that grace given to us in Jesus  
4 Christ, and gives us hope of life eternal.

5 5. We share the Christian belief that God’s redemptive love is realized in  
6 human life by the activity of the Holy Spirit, both in personal experience  
7 and in the community of believers. This community is the Church, which  
8 the Spirit has brought into existence for the healing of the nations.

9 6. Through faith in Jesus Christ we are forgiven, reconciled to God, and  
10 transformed as people of the New Covenant.

11 7. “Life in the Spirit” involves diligent use of the means of grace such as  
12 reading Scripture, praying, fasting, attending upon the Sacraments, and  
13 inward searching in solitude. It also encompasses the communal life of  
14 the church in worship, mission, evangelism, service, and social witness.

15 8. We understand ourselves to be part of Christ’s universal church when by  
16 adoration, proclamation, and service we become conformed to Christ.  
17 We are initiated and incorporated into this community of faith by  
18 Baptism, receiving the promise of the Spirit that recreates and transforms  
19 us. Through the regular celebration of Holy Communion, we participate  
20 in the risen presence of Jesus Christ and are thereby nourished for faithful  
21 discipleship. We pray and work for the coming of God’s kingdom to the  
22 world and rejoice in the promise of everlasting life that overcomes death  
23 and the forces of evil. We recognize two sacraments: Baptism and Holy  
24 Communion. We affirm: both infant and adult baptism; the sufficiency  
25 of a single baptism of an individual; and a Communion table fully open  
26 to all regardless of church membership, creed, or whether an individual  
27 has been baptized.

28 9. With other Christians, we recognize that the kingdom of God is both a  
29 present and future reality. The church is called to be that place where the  
30 first signs of the kingdom of God are identified and acknowledged in the  
31 world. Wherever persons are being made new creatures in Christ,  
32 wherever the insights and resources of the Gospel are brought to bear on  
33 the life of the world, God’s kingdom is already effective in its healing and  
34 renewing power.

35 10. We also look to the end time in which God’s work will be fulfilled. This  
36 prospect gives us hope in our present actions as individuals and as the  
37 Church. This expectation saves us from resignation and motivates our  
38 continuing witness and service.

**CONSTITUTION**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

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1 11. We recognize the authority of Scripture. We understand Scripture as not  
2 necessarily understood as being literal or inerrant. We believe that God  
3 continues to speak to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. And that  
4 the understanding of Scripture can be informed through the application of  
5 reason, tradition, and experience.

6 12. We share with many Christian communions the confession that our  
7 justification as sinners is by grace through faith, and the sober realization  
8 that the church is in need of continual reformation and renewal.

9 13. We affirm the general ministry of all baptized Christians who share  
10 responsibility for building up the Church and reaching out in mission and  
11 service to the world.

12 14. With other Christians, we declare the essential oneness of the Church in  
13 Christ Jesus. This rich heritage of shared Christian belief finds  
14 expression in our hymnody and liturgies. Our unity is affirmed in the  
15 historic creeds as we confess one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. It  
16 is also experienced in joint ventures of ministry and in various forms of  
17 ecumenical cooperation.

18 15. Nourished by common roots of this shared Christian heritage, the  
19 branches of Christ's Church have developed diverse traditions that  
20 enlarge our store of shared understandings. Our avowed ecumenical  
21 commitment is to gather our own doctrinal emphases into the larger  
22 Christian unity, there to be made more meaningful in a richer whole. If  
23 we are to offer our best gifts to the common Christian treasury, we must  
24 make a deliberate effort as a church to strive for critical self-  
25 understanding. With all other faithful humans, we declare the essential  
26 unity of all who seek to live according to the will of the Creator and to  
27 bring forth the kingdom of the Creator.

**ARTICLE 6**

**MEMBERSHIP**

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29  
30 1. Membership in this church shall be open to any person who has been  
31 baptized, has been confirmed or has made public confession of faith in  
32 Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior or has been received by letter of transfer  
33 of membership from another UCC congregation or another  
34 denomination.

35 2. Members shall pledge themselves to attend the services of Bering,  
36 observe its sacraments, share in its work, support its operations and  
37 benevolences, and endeavor to make it a fruitful body of Christians

**CONSTITUTION  
BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
HOUSTON, TEXAS**

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1 through their prayers, their presence, their gifts, their service, and their  
2 witness that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

**ARTICLE 7**

**GOVERNANCE**

- 5 1. The governing body of Bering shall be the Active Full and Associate  
6 Members assembled at a duly called Church Conference as provided in  
7 the Bylaws.
- 8 2. The governance of Bering is facilitated by a Church Council, committees,  
9 ministries, and boards as provided in the Bylaws.

**ARTICLE 8**

**A CORPORATION**

12 Bering may, in its corporate name, sue or be sued; acquire, by purchase,  
13 gift, devise, bequest, or otherwise, and own, hold, invest, reinvest, or dispose  
14 of property real, personal, and mixed for such work as the church may  
15 undertake. It may purchase, own, receive, hold, manage, care for and  
16 transfer, rent, lease, mortgage, or otherwise encumber, sell, assign, transfer  
17 and convey such property for the general purposes of the church. It may  
18 receive and hold in trust both real and personal property and invest and  
19 reinvest the same and make any contracts promoting the objectives and  
20 purposes of the church. Bering pledges all its assets for use in the  
21 performing of its religious and nonprofit functions.

**ARTICLE 9**

**NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION**

- 24 1. Bering is a nonprofit corporation incorporated in the State of Texas.
- 25 2. The church is organized and operated exclusively for religious,  
26 educational, and other charitable purposes. It does not participate or  
27 intervene in any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any  
28 candidate for public office.
- 29 3. All property—real, personal, or mixed—of the Corporation and the  
30 proceeds therefrom shall be used exclusively in furtherance of the  
31 purposes of the Corporation and no part of such property or the proceeds  
32 therefrom shall be contributed to any association, entity, or group whose  
33 income or any part thereof inures to the benefit of any person; nor shall  
34 any part of the income of the Corporation be distributed to the directors,  
35 officers, or members of the Corporation. The foregoing shall not be  
36 construed to limit further restrictions, if any, contained in the Texas  
37 Business Organizations Code.

**CONSTITUTION  
BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
HOUSTON, TEXAS**

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**ARTICLE 10**

**DISSOLUTION**

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3       In the event of the dissolution of Bering for any reason, as provided in  
4 the Bylaws, after debt satisfaction, title to all of its property and assets—real,  
5 personal, and mixed—shall by recommendation of the Church Council and  
6 affirmed by the Active Full and Associate Members at a duly called Church  
7 Conference, as provided in the Bylaws, be vested, to the extent not  
8 inconsistent with the terms and provisions of any bequest or endowment or  
9 inconsistent with the terms and provisions of the Texas Business  
10 Organizations Code, in the Houston Association of the United Church of  
11 Christ and/or the South Central Conference of the United Church of Christ  
12 and/or any Internal Revenue Code qualified 501(c)(3) organization.

**ARTICLE 11**

**AMENDMENTS**

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14  
15       This Constitution may be amended by any duly called Church  
16 Conference. The text of the proposed amendments must be distributed (via  
17 email, website, USPS, church newsletter, or worship bulletin) to the Active  
18 Full and Associate members at least fourteen (14) days prior to the date of  
19 such meeting. Amendments to this Constitution are made by  
20 recommendation of the Church Council and affirmation by two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ )  
21 affirmative vote of the Full and Associate members present at the Church  
22 Conference.

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

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**ARTICLE 1**

**NAME AND PURPOSE**

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2  
3 This Church, gathered in 1848 as a Methodist church, affiliated with the  
4 United Church of Christ in 2021 and is incorporated under the Texas  
5 Business Organizations Code. It shall be known as the Bering Memorial  
6 United Church of Christ, hereafter referred to as “Bering.” The purpose of  
7 Bering is to engage in religious, educational, and charitable activities within  
8 the meaning of the Texas Business Organizations Code and Section  
9 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, as amended, and the applicable  
10 rules and regulations thereunder.

**ARTICLE 2**

**HEADQUARTERS AND FISCAL YEAR**

11  
12  
13 **2.1** The Church home and corporate business offices shall be on the church  
14 property located at 1440 Harold Street, Houston, Texas 77006.

15 **2.2** The fiscal year shall be January 1 to December 31.

**ARTICLE 3**

**COVENANT**

16  
17  
18 **3.1** Bering has a free and voluntary relationship with the Houston  
19 Association of the United Church of Christ (UCC) and the South Central  
20 Conference of the UCC, the General Synod of the UCC, and Covenanted,  
21 Affiliated, and Associated Ministries of the UCC.

22 **3.2 Houston Association (HAUCC).** Bering shall contribute towards the  
23 support of the HAUCC through an annual per member fee (to be set by the  
24 HAUCC in conversation with Bering). Delegates (the number is determined  
25 by the HAUCC) for the Spring and Fall meetings of the HAUCC shall be  
26 selected by the Church Council and affirmed by the Church Conference.  
27 Expenses involved in attending the HAUCC meetings shall be covered for  
28 Lay Delegates and Pastors as approved by Church Council. Delegates are  
29 encouraged to make a report of the meetings’ proceedings to the  
30 congregation.

31 **3.3 South Central Conference (SCC).** Delegates and Alternates (the  
32 number is determined by the SCC) to the SCC Annual meeting shall be  
33 selected by the Church Council and affirmed by the Church Conference.  
34 Expenses involved in attending the Annual meeting shall be covered for Lay  
35 Delegates and Pastors as approved by Church Council. Delegates are

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

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1 encouraged to make a report of the meeting's proceedings to the  
2 congregation.

3 **3.4 General Synod (GS).** The UCC GS is held on a bi-annual basis at  
4 various locations across the USA. Bering shall attempt to send one or more  
5 pastors and laypersons to the GS. Expenses involved in attending GS shall  
6 be covered for Lay Delegates and Pastors as approved by Church Council.

7 **ARTICLE 4**  
8 **MEMBERSHIP**

9 **4.1 Eligibility.** Membership in Bering shall be open to any person who has  
10 been baptized, has been confirmed, or has made public confession of faith in  
11 Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior or has been received by letter of transfer of  
12 membership from another UCC congregation or another denomination.

13 Bering is an Open and Affirming (ONA) Congregation. ONA is the  
14 United Church of Christ designation for congregations that make a public  
15 covenant of welcome to all into the full life and ministry of the church.  
16 Bering proclaims that all people are created in the image of God and affirms  
17 that each person—regardless of age, economic status, faith history, ethnicity,  
18 gender, mental or physical ability, marital status, sexual orientation, or  
19 gender identification—is a beloved child of God and worthy of God's love  
20 and grace.

21 **4.2 Membership Responsibility.** Members shall pledge themselves to  
22 attend the services of Bering, observe its Sacraments, share in its work,  
23 support its operations and benevolences, and endeavor to make it a fruitful  
24 body of Christians through their prayers, their presence, their gifts, their  
25 service, and their witness that in everything God may be glorified through  
26 Jesus Christ.

27 **4.3 Membership Classifications.** There are three classifications of  
28 membership at Bering: Full; Associate; and Inactive. Only Active Full and  
29 Associate Members may vote in Church Conferences, be members of  
30 Church Council or hold other elective offices, or exercise any of the rights  
31 and privileges of Members set forth in these Bylaws. Nonmembers may be  
32 members of committees.

33 **4.4 Full Members.** Full Members shall be all persons uniting with Bering  
34 by confession of faith, by reaffirmation of faith, or by letter of transfer.

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

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1 **4.5 Associate Members.** Associate Members shall be those who wish to  
2 retain their membership in another church while formally associating  
3 themselves with Bering by confession of faith or by reaffirmation of faith.

4 **4.6 Inactive Members.** Prior to the Annual Church Conference, the  
5 Secretary will submit to Church Council a report on those Full or Associate  
6 Members whose whereabouts have long been unknown or who for a period  
7 of two (2) years, despite efforts to locate them or provide spiritual care, have  
8 not attended the Bering's worship or contributed to its support. Such  
9 Members may, by recommendation of the Church Council to the Annual  
10 Church Conference, be removed from the Active Member Roll and placed  
11 on the Inactive Member Roll. Each year's additions to the Inactive Roll will  
12 be affirmed at the Annual Church Conference. If a member who has been  
13 placed on the Inactive Member Roll resumes attendance and the work of the  
14 church, such a member will so inform the Secretary and may be reinstated to  
15 active Full or Associate Membership by the Church Council.

16 **4.7 Transfer of Membership.** Any Member may, upon request, be granted  
17 a letter of transfer. If wishing to join a body not in fellowship with Bering,  
18 they may be dismissed with a certificate of Bering membership.

19 **4.8 Discipline and Revocation of Membership.** Upon recommendation of  
20 the Senior Pastor, the Church Council is empowered to remove any Member  
21 or take appropriate disciplinary action for cause. The action of the Church  
22 Council may be appealed to the next Annual Church Conference or a Special  
23 Church Conference called for that purpose. The decision of Church  
24 Conference is final. Pending the outcome of the appeal of discipline, the  
25 disciplined Member shall remain under discipline and shall retain the right to  
26 vote at Annual and Special Church Conference, except at the Church  
27 Conference considering the appeal. The appealing member does have the  
28 right to voice at that Church Conference.

29 **4.8.1 Appeal Process.** The request for an appeal shall be submitted to the  
30 Secretary within thirty (30) days following the date when the Member was  
31 dropped from the Bering Member Roll.

32 **4.8.1.1** The Church Council may consider the appeal and reverse its earlier  
33 decision without taking the matter to the Church Conference.

34 **4.8.1.2** Should the Church Council sustain its earlier decision and the  
35 Member wishes the appeal to continue, the request shall be included as an  
36 agenda item for the next Annual Church Conference or a Special Church  
37 Council called for the purpose of considering the appeal.

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

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1 **4.9 Resigning Membership.** There are times when a member may choose  
2 to disassociate from Bering for any reason without requesting a letter of  
3 transfer or a certificate of membership. Members wishing to resign their  
4 membership shall be requested to do so in writing to the Secretary  
5 acknowledging and agreeing to these provisions in the Bylaws. Such a  
6 request shall be honored in all but one situation: should a member be in the  
7 process of disciplinary action by Bering, Bering shall not accept the  
8 resignation of membership until such time as the disciplinary action is  
9 complete and documented.

10 **ARTICLE 5**  
11 **CHURCH CONFERENCE**

12 **5.1 Powers.** Following the long tradition of the United Church of Christ,  
13 the ultimate governing power resides in the Active Full and Associate  
14 Members of Bering as they assemble in Church Conference. These Bylaws  
15 place certain responsibilities and authority in various Bering structures in  
16 order that good management may be achieved. However, the following  
17 powers are reserved to the Church Conference:

18 **5.1.1** Calling and terminating the Senior Pastor and Associate Pastors.

19 **5.1.2** Final action on any major program, including the adoption of the  
20 annual budget, subject to modification by the Church Council.

21 **5.1.3** Election of members to Church Council as well as members of  
22 committees or other bodies as required by the Bylaws.

23 **5.1.4** On a recommendation of Church Council approved by two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ )  
24 of the Church Council's members present and voting, a Church Conference  
25 must approve, by a two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) affirmative vote of the Active Full and  
26 Associate Members present, the purchase, sale, mortgaging, leasing or rental  
27 of non-Bering properties, or renovation of Bering buildings or real property.  
28 This approval must be obtained before any negotiations or actions are taken  
29 on the proposed transaction. On its own authority, the Church Council may  
30 rent or lease Bering buildings or real property to non-Bering entities.

31 **5.1.5** Transfer to the Active Member Roll any Inactive Members who wish  
32 to be restored to Active Membership.

33 **5.1.6** Rule on appeals by Members whose membership has been revoked by  
34 Church Council.

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

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1 **5.1.7** Adoption and amendment of the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, or  
2 the Constitution.

3 **5.2 Types of Church Conferences.** Bering has two types of Church  
4 Conferences: Annual and Special.

5 **5.2.1** Annual Church Conferences are held in the last quarter of the year for  
6 the purposes of electing officers and members of church bodies as provided  
7 by these Bylaws, approving the annual budget, receiving appropriate reports  
8 from Pastors and church bodies, and acting on such other business as the  
9 Church Council has referred to it.

10 **5.2.2** Special Church Conferences may be called to deal with business  
11 requiring Church Conference action between Annual Church Conferences.  
12 Special Church Conferences may be called by the Church Council or by  
13 petition from not less than ten (10) percent of the Active Full and Associate  
14 Members; the business to be transacted must be included in the petition.  
15 Only such business as has been specified in the Notice for a Special Church  
16 Conference may be transacted at said Church Conference. The Church  
17 Council shall call such a Special Church Conference within three (3) weeks  
18 from receipt of the petition.

19 **5.3 Meetings.** Church Conferences may meet in person, electronically, or  
20 online.

21 **5.4 Notice of Conferences.** Notice for Annual or Special Church  
22 Conferences shall be given (via the pulpit at worship, email, website, USPS,  
23 church newsletter, church worship bulletin) to the Active Full and Associate  
24 Members at least fourteen (14) days prior to the date of such Church  
25 Conference. Any related reports, documents, or text to be discussed must be  
26 distributed or provided (via email, website, USPS, church newsletter, church  
27 worship bulletin) to the Full and Associate membership at least fourteen (14)  
28 days prior to the date of the annual meeting. Agenda items may be amended  
29 at an Annual Church Conference by an affirmative vote of the Conference.  
30 Agendas for Special Church Councils may not be amended. Notices for any  
31 Church Conferences shall include whether or not Absentee Voting will be  
32 allowed, and, if it is, the deadline for the Secretary's receipt of them.

33 **5.4 Parliamentary Authority.** *Roberts Rules of Order, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition* (or  
34 most recent).

35 **5.6 Quorum and Voting.** A quorum is the Active Full and Associate  
36 members attending in person, electronically, or online unless otherwise  
37 stated in these Bylaws. A simple majority vote cast by the attending Active

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

---

1 Full and Associate Members shall determine the outcome of any motion  
2 unless otherwise stated in the Bylaws.

3 **5.7 Absentee Voting.** Fundamental concepts of voting rights affirm that  
4 said rights are nontransferable and therefore proxy voting is not permitted.  
5 Absentee ballots may be stipulated by the Church Council and shall be  
6 processed for consideration in such manner as may be prescribed thereby.  
7 Those not present the day of the vote shall miss out on discussion and dialog  
8 surrounding each motion being considered. For some motions this may not  
9 affect the vote. On the other hand, some motions may be completely  
10 inappropriate for absentee voting. If the Church Council determines that  
11 Absentee Ballots are to be permitted, such ballots may be distributed  
12 electronically or in person and the completed ballots must be received by the  
13 Secretary prior to the date of said meeting in order to be counted. Church  
14 Council will decide the appropriateness of Absentee Ballots. The notice of a  
15 meeting must include whether or not Absentee Ballots will be accepted and  
16 the deadline for their submission to the Secretary.

17 **ARTICLE 6**

18 **OFFICERS**

19 **6.1** The officers of Bering Church are also the Officers of the Corporation in  
20 accord with the Articles of Incorporation filed with the Texas Secretary of  
21 State.

22 **6.2 Eligibility, Election, Terms**

23 **6.2.1 Eligibility.** Bering's officers must be Active Full or Associate  
24 Members. Pastors' spouses, Staff Members, and Staff Member spouses may  
25 not be Church Officers. Only one member of a family may be a Church  
26 Officer.

27 **6.2.2 Election.** Officers are nominated by the Church Council and elected  
28 by majority vote of the Annual Church Conference. Nominations from the  
29 floor of a Church Conference are permitted.

30 **6.2.3 Terms.** Officers are elected for terms of three (3) years. They may be  
31 re-elected once for a maximum of two consecutive terms. A period of one  
32 (1) year must then elapse after their second term, before they may be elected  
33 again.

34 **6.2.4 Removal.** An officer may be recommended to a Church Conference  
35 for removal by a two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) vote of Church Council, excluding the  
36 subject officer, when the Church Council deems removal to be in the best

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

---

1 interest of the church. An officer is removed by a two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) vote,  
2 excluding the subject officer, of an Annual or Special Church Conference.  
3 A vacancy caused by removal is filled by a nomination from the Church  
4 Council and a majority vote of an Annual or Special Church Conference as  
5 soon as practicable following removal.

6 **6.3 Officers.**

7 **6.3.1 Church Council Chair.** The Chair is the lay leader of the  
8 congregation and works closely with the Senior Pastor. The Chair presides  
9 over Church Conferences and the Church Council and is an *ex officio*  
10 member of all church committees or other bodies. As President of the  
11 Church Corporation, the Chair exercises the usual executive powers of a  
12 corporation president, such as signing deeds, mortgages, contracts, and other  
13 instruments.

14 **6.3.2 Church Council Vice Chair.** The Vice Chair works with the Chair  
15 as requested and presides over Church Conferences and the Church Council  
16 in the absence of the Chair. The Vice Chair does not automatically become  
17 Chair if the position of Chair becomes vacant; such a vacancy is filled by a  
18 Church Conference as provided by these Bylaws. The Vice Chair may  
19 choose to be an *ex officio* member of any church committees or other bodies.  
20 The Chair and the Vice Chair may agree among themselves to divide such *ex*  
21 *officio* memberships among themselves.

22 **6.3.3 Secretary.** The Secretary is the recording secretary of Church  
23 Conferences and the Church Council, taking and maintaining minutes; is the  
24 custodian of all official church records; gives notice of Church Conference  
25 meetings; and receives any Absentee Ballots. The Secretary maintains the  
26 church membership rolls and makes annual recommendations to the Church  
27 Council for moving members to the Inactive Member Roll. As Corporation  
28 Secretary, the Secretary signs deeds, mortgages, contracts, and other  
29 instruments when requested by the Council Chair or required by law or  
30 regulations.

31 **6.4.4 Treasurer.** The Treasurer has custody of all church funds; receives  
32 and disburses funds; maintains all financial records; issues financial  
33 statements to members, church bodies, and donors; and oversees restricted  
34 funds, endowments, and investments. The Treasurer will work with the  
35 Church Council Finance Liaison in the oversight of financial affairs. The  
36 Treasurer, in consultation with the Senior Pastor, will have oversight of any  
37 Church financial staff members, such as a Financial Secretary or

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

---

1 bookkeepers; however, the Senior Pastor or his or her delegate will provide  
2 daily supervision.

**ARTICLE 7**

**CHURCH COUNCIL**

5 **7.1 Responsibilities.** As the leadership body of Bering and the  
6 representative of the Bering Congregation between Church Conferences, the  
7 Church Council shall provide leadership, set policy, advise, and coordinate  
8 the activities of Bering to ensure that all Bering's work, both internal and  
9 external, is accomplished in a coordinated, professional, and fulfilling way.  
10 The Church Council itself is fully responsible for all matters relating to the  
11 administrative areas of (1) personnel, (2) finance, (3) property and facilities,  
12 and (4) lay leadership development and selection.<sup>1</sup>

13 **7.2 Corporate Board of Directors.** The Church Council serves as the  
14 Board of Directors of the Corporation. As provided by the Texas Business  
15 Organizations Code, the Church Council may not have fewer than three (3)  
16 members.

17 **7.3 Members.** The members of the Church Council are:

- 18 • Council Chair
- 19 • Council Vice Chair
- 20 • Secretary
- 21 • Treasurer
- 22 • Delegates to the Houston Association and South Central Conference
- 23 • Personnel Liaison
- 24 • Finance Liaison
- 25 • Property and Facilities Liaison
- 26 • Three At Large Members
- 27 • The Senior and Associate Pastors (*ex officio*, with voice but not vote)
- 28 • Bering Connect Chair (*ex officio*, with voice but not vote)
- 29 • Open Gate Chair (*ex officio*, with voice but not vote)
- 30 • Second Blessings Chair (*ex officio*, with voice but not vote)

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<sup>1</sup> Areas that in Bering's previous United Methodist polity were handled by separate, non-Church Council, bodies, *i.e.*, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, Finance Committee, Board of Trustees, and Nominations Committee, respectively.

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

---

- 1       • Other Committee Chairs (*ex officio*, with voice but not vote)

2       **7.4 Eligibility.** Church Council members with voice and vote must be  
3 Active Full or Associate Members. Pastors' spouses and Staff Members and  
4 their spouses may not serve on Church Council. Only one member of a  
5 family may serve as a voting member on Church Council.

6       **7.5 Election.** Church Council members are nominated by the Church  
7 Council and elected by majority vote of the Annual Church Conference.  
8 Nominations from the floor of a Church Conference are permitted.

9       **7.6 Terms.** The officers are elected for terms of three (3) years. They may  
10 be re-elected once for a maximum of two consecutive terms. A period of  
11 one (1) year must then elapse after their second term, before they may be  
12 elected again.

13       **7.7 Removal for Cause.** A Church Council member may be recommended  
14 to a Church Conference for removal by a two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) vote of Church  
15 Council, excluding the subject member, when the Church Council deems  
16 removal to be in the best interest of the church. A member is removed by a  
17 two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) vote, excluding the subject member, of an Annual or Special  
18 Church Conference. The vacancy is filled by the Church Council until the  
19 next Annual meeting of the Church Conference, when a replacement will be  
20 nominated by Church Council and elected by the Church Conference.

21       **7.8 Vacancies.** Vacancies on the Church Council are filled by the Church  
22 Council until the next Annual meeting of the Church Conference, when a  
23 replacement will be nominated by Church Council and elected by the  
24 Annual Church Conference. The elected replacement will complete the term  
25 of the member who vacated the position. If the remainder of the vacated  
26 term is six months or less, the replacement may be re-elected for a maximum  
27 of an additional two consecutive terms.

28       **7.9 Meetings.** Church Council may meet in person, electronically, or  
29 online. Unless determined otherwise by the Church Council Chair,  
30 generally owing to sensitive personnel, property, or finance issues, all  
31 Church Council meetings, or parts thereof, are open to whomever would like  
32 to attend.

33       **7.10 Committees.** The Church Council can create committees, and select  
34 their members and chairs to assist with areas of specific Church Council  
35 responsibility, ministries, special projects or programs, *etc.* Committees  
36 may meet in person, electronically, or online. Unless determined otherwise

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

---

1 by the Church Council Chair, all committee meetings are open to whomever  
2 would like to attend.

3 **7.11 Personnel.** The Church Council shall have responsibility for all  
4 Clergy and Staff personnel matters. One member of the Church Council  
5 acting as the Personnel Liaison will steward personnel matters for the  
6 Church Council. The Church Council may select a Working Group of  
7 Active Full or Associate Members to assist the Personnel Liaison who will  
8 lead the Group. As determined by the Church Council Chair, Church  
9 Council and Personnel Working Group meetings at which personnel matters  
10 are discussed will be deemed confidential and closed to non-Church Council  
11 and non-Working-Group members. Responsibilities:

- 12 • To encourage, strengthen, nurture, support, and respect the Pastor(s)  
13 and Staff and their families.
- 14 • To confer with and counsel the Pastor(s) and Staff on the matters  
15 pertaining to the effectiveness of ministry; relationships with the  
16 congregation; conditions that may impede the effectiveness of ministry;  
17 and to interpret the nature and function of the ministry.
- 18 • To confer with, consult, and counsel the Pastor(s) and Staff on matters  
19 pertaining to priorities in the use of gifts, skills, and time and priorities  
20 for the demands and effectiveness of the mission and ministry of the  
21 congregation.
- 22 • To carry out annual performance reviews for Pastors and Staff.
- 23 • To develop and approve written job descriptions and titles for Associate  
24 or Assistant Pastors and other Staff Members in cooperation with the  
25 Senior Pastor. The term “Associate Pastor” is used for any called  
26 pastor other than the Senior Pastor. The term “Assistant Pastor” is used  
27 for clergy who are hired rather than called.
- 28 • To consult with the Pastors and Staff concerning continuing education,  
29 leaves of absence, work-life balance, dimensions of personal health and  
30 wellness, and spiritual renewal, to arrange with the Church Council for  
31 the necessary time and financial assistance for the attendance of the  
32 Pastors and Staff at such continuing education, self-care, and spiritual  
33 renewal events as may serve their professional and spiritual growth, and  
34 to encourage Staff to seek professional certification in their fields of  
35 specialization.

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

---

- 1       • To enlist, interview, evaluate, review, and recommend to the Annual  
2       Church Conference persons for candidacy for ordained ministry or  
3       missionary service.
- 4       • To confer with the called Pastor(s) if it should become evident that the  
5       best interests of the Church and the called Pastor(s) will be served by a  
6       change of called Pastor(s).
- 7       • To recommend, after consultation with the Senior Pastor, the  
8       professional and other staff positions (whether employee or contract)  
9       needed to carry out the work of the Church.
- 10      • To educate the church community on the value of diversity of selection  
11      in clergy and lay staff and develop a commitment to same.
- 12      • To consult on matters pertaining to pulpit supply, proposals for  
13      compensation, travel expense, vacation, health and life insurance,  
14      pension, housing, and other practical matters affecting the work and  
15      families of the Pastors and Staff, and to make annual recommendations.

16      **7.12 Finance.** The Church Council will have responsibility for all church  
17      monies: stewardship giving and donations, restricted funds, endowments,  
18      bequests, and investments. The Church Council shall have charge and  
19      oversight of all monies received and all expenses owed; keep all financial  
20      records; institute best financial practices; provide for annual financial audits;  
21      issue financial statements to Church Conferences, Church Council,  
22      committees, and to all members and donors; propose an annual budget;  
23      ensure that Bering complies with all applicable tax guidelines. The Church  
24      Council will oversee the annual Stewardship Campaign. One member of the  
25      Church Council acting as the Financial Liaison will steward general finance  
26      matters for the Church Council and lead any Finance Working Group. The  
27      Church Treasurer will steward financial operations. The Financial Liaison  
28      and the Church Treasurer shall be the primary signers of all checks  
29      (electronic or paper) for payment of expenses, salaries, and other financial  
30      responsibilities. The Church Council may select a Finance Working Group,  
31      all of whom are Active Full or Associate Members of Bering with the  
32      exception that specialists such as investment advisors do not need to be  
33      Bering Members, to assist with financial duties, including investment  
34      planning and counting weekly offerings immediately following the final  
35      Sunday worship service or other congregational gatherings. Offering  
36      counters may not be related. As determined by the Church Council Chair,  
37      Church Council and Finance Working Group meetings at which matters are

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

---

1 discussed that may materially affect the purchase and sale of property or  
2 investments will be deemed confidential and closed to non-Church Council  
3 members and non-Finance Working Group members.

4 **7.13 Property and Facilities.** The real property and facilities of the church  
5 shall be under the care of the Church Council. The Church Council will  
6 keep the church buildings adequately insured and in proper repair, and  
7 manage the purchase or sale of property and the remodeling and erection of  
8 new buildings. One member of the Church Council acting as the Property  
9 and Facilities Liaison will steward property and facilities matters for the  
10 Church Council. The Church Council may select a Property and Facilities  
11 Working Group, led by the Property and Facilities Liaison, to work with the  
12 Liaison. Members of this Working Group are not required to be Church  
13 members, especially if they provide relevant expertise and experience. As  
14 determined by the Council Chair, Church Council and Working Group  
15 meetings at which matters are discussed that may materially affect the  
16 purchase, rental, sale of property, *etc.*, will be deemed confidential and  
17 closed to non-Church Council and non-Working-Group members.

18 **7.14 Lay Leadership Development and Selection.** Throughout the year  
19 The Church Council will foster programs for developing lay leadership skills  
20 and seek out suitable persons for lay leadership positions. Each year prior to  
21 the Annual Church Conference, the Church Council shall assemble and  
22 approve a slate of nominees for open Bering Offices, Church Council  
23 positions, and committee members and chairs. The Church Council may  
24 appoint a Nominating Committee consisting of at least three (3) Active Full  
25 or Associate Members to assist in developing and selecting candidates.  
26 Other nominations may be made from the floor at a Church Conference,  
27 providing that the nominees agree to serve and, if required by these Bylaws,  
28 are Active Full or Associate.

**ARTICLE 8**

**CALLED PASTORS**

29  
30  
31 **8.1 Rights.** The Called Pastor(s) shall be the sole provider(s) of religious  
32 ceremonies in the church unless another person has been invited by the  
33 Senior Pastor or Church Council in consultation with the Senior Pastor.  
34 During the absence of the Pastor(s), invitation by the Church Council shall  
35 suffice. The Pastors' salaries shall be paid promptly and shall be sufficient  
36 to relieve them of temporal cares as far as possible and to preserve the  
37 dignity of their calling, subject, however, to the provisions of the contract  
38 between the Pastor(s) and Bering. The Pastors' moving expenses, *etc.*, when

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

---

1 they take up their position, shall be borne by Bering as provided by Church  
2 Council policy, unless other arrangements are made before the date of  
3 moving between the Pastors and Bering. The Senior Pastor is entitled to five  
4 (5) weeks of vacation each year. Associate Pastor(s) vacation time shall be  
5 determined by the Senior Pastor and Church Council at the time of hire.

6 **8.2 Standing.** All Pastors shall be in good standing with the United Church  
7 of Christ or shall have received or be in the process of receiving a “privilege  
8 of call” in the United Church of Christ or seeking Dual Standing from the  
9 Houston Association.

10 **8.3 Senior Pastor.**

11 **8.3.1 Duties.** It shall be the duty of the Senior Pastor to:

12 **8.3.2** Abide by the Ordained Ministers Code of the United Church of Christ.

13 **8.3.3** Provide overall leadership to Bering.

14 **8.3.4** Be in charge of the spiritual welfare of the Bering by preaching the  
15 Gospel; administering the Sacraments; overseeing all services of public  
16 worship; conducting weddings and funerals; providing pastoral care and  
17 counseling; visiting the sick and homebound; encouraging religious  
18 education; and overseeing or providing for the instruction of children, youth,  
19 adults, and prospective and new Bering members.

20 **8.3.5** Be an *ex officio* member of the Church Council and all church  
21 committees.

22 **8.3.6** Direct, coordinate and supervise the Church Staff and Associate  
23 Pastors.

24 **8.3.7** Attend meetings of the Houston Association (HAUCC), the South  
25 Central Conference (SCC), and the UCC General Synod as required,  
26 likewise, denominational and ecumenical bodies as needed. Any expenses  
27 incurred shall be covered by Bering.

28 **8.3.8** Regularly report to the Church Council. Submit to the Annual Church  
29 Conference a report of pastoral work for the past year, the condition of the  
30 Bering community, and projections of and recommendations for the future.

31 **8.4 Associate Pastors.**

32 **8.4.1 Duties.** It shall be the duty of Associate Pastors to:

33 **8.4.2** Abide by the Ordained Ministers Code of the United Church of Christ.

34 **8.4.3** As directed by the Senior Pastor, provide leadership to assigned  
35 ministry areas.

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

---

1 **8.4.4** As directed by the Senior Pastor, assist in the care for the spiritual  
2 welfare of Bering by preaching the Gospel; administering the Sacraments;  
3 overseeing public worship; conducting weddings and funerals; providing  
4 pastoral care and counseling; visiting the sick and homebound; encouraging  
5 religious education; and, at the direction of the Senior Pastor, providing for  
6 the instruction of children, youth, adults, and prospective and new Bering  
7 members.

8 **8.4.5** Be an *ex officio* member of the Church Council and, as assigned by  
9 the Senior Pastor, of any church committee.

10 **8.4.6** As directed by the Senior Pastor, direct, coordinate, and supervise  
11 Church Staff.

12 **8.4.7** Attend meetings of the Houston Association (HAUCC), the South  
13 Central Conference (SCC), and the UCC General Synod as required,  
14 likewise, denominational and ecumenical bodies as needed. Any expenses  
15 incurred shall be covered by Bering.

16 **8.4.8** Regularly report to the Church Council. Submit to the Annual Church  
17 Conference a report of pastoral work for the past year and projections of and  
18 recommendations for the future ministry.

19 **8.5 Bering's Obligations to the Pastors.**

20 **8.5.1** Provide time, funding, and encouragement to participate in continuing  
21 education (which is separate from spiritual renewal leaves or vacation time).

22 **8.5.2** The Church Council will provide terms (including possible funding),  
23 durations, encouragement, and assistance for annual and longer-duration  
24 quadrennial spiritual renewal leaves (which are separate and distinct from  
25 vacation time) and, taking into consideration performance and the timing of  
26 past spiritual renewal leaves, for sabbatical leaves of up to one year for  
27 Pastors following each period of six consecutive years of full-time service.

28 **8.5.3** Encourage Pastors to join in the affairs and activities of the  
29 community at large as it pertains to Bering's needs and its ability to provide  
30 mission and outreach.

31 **8.5.4** Encourage Pastors to join in larger UCC denominational activities.

32 **8.5.5** Respect the time and talents of the Pastors' families.

33 **8.5.6** Not require Pastors' families to assume roles of leadership or levels of  
34 involvement beyond their wishes.

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

---

1 **8.5.7** Allow and respect Pastors' and Pastors' families' privacy and their  
2 need for time together away from Bering.

3 **8.6 Discipline** . If serious issues or divisive conflicts arise between the  
4 members of Bering and its ministerial leadership, the Church Council shall  
5 seek the assistance of the Houston Association Committee on Ministry.  
6 Should the Houston Association have reason to question the fitness for  
7 ministry of any of the leaders of Bering, every effort shall be made to  
8 cooperate fully in any investigation, to remain in covenant with all parties,  
9 and to provide appropriate leadership and nurture for the congregation  
10 during and after any fitness review. The Church Council has recourse to  
11 oral or written reprimands, probation, paid or unpaid leaves of absence, or  
12 termination as options for discipline.

13 **8.7 Resignation.** A resignation of a Pastor shall be made in writing to the  
14 Church Council with a minimum of sixty (60) days' notice. Notice of this  
15 resignation shall be sent to the Houston Association Committee on Ministry  
16 and the South Central Conference Minister within three (3) days. The  
17 Church Council shall act upon the resignation within one (1) week.

18 **8.8 Termination.**

19 **8.8.1** A recommendation by the Church Council to the Church Conference  
20 that a Pastor be terminated must be affirmed by a two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) vote of the  
21 Church Council members present. The Pastor being considered for  
22 termination may not vote.

23 **8.8.2** The Houston Association Committee on Ministry and the South-  
24 Central Conference of the UCC must be immediately notified of a  
25 recommended termination of a Pastor.

26 **8.8.3** A Special Church Conference shall be called to act upon the  
27 recommended termination. The length of time to decide upon termination  
28 shall not exceed one month.

29 **8.8.4** Termination must be affirmed by a two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) vote of the Active  
30 Full and Associate Members of the Church present at the Church Conference  
31 called to decide on a termination. Ballots shall be cast in writing or  
32 electronically and those voting must be present—no absentee ballots shall be  
33 permitted.

34 **8.8.5** Notice of such termination shall be sent by the Church Council Chair  
35 to the Pastor, the Houston Association Committee on Ministry and to the  
36 UCC Conference Minister.

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

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**ARTICLE 9**

**CALLING A PASTOR**

1  
2  
3 **9.1 Search Committee.** A Search Committee shall be formed to fill  
4 permanent vacancies for Senior and Associate Pastors or to secure an  
5 Interim Pastor during a period of a vacancy, either temporary or permanent.  
6 Securing an Interim Pastor in a timely manner helps provide the time needed  
7 to identify replacement Called Pastors. The Search Committee and its Chair  
8 shall be appointed by the Church Council. The Committee shall consist of  
9 Active Full or Associate Members, at least two of whom are Church Council  
10 Members, and its Chair shall be an Active Full or Associate Member.  
11 Should the called pastoral vacancy be that of an Associate Pastor, the Senior  
12 Pastor shall also be a member of the Search Committee. The Search  
13 Committee shall seek the counsel of the Committee on Ministry of the  
14 Houston Association and the South Central Conference. The Search  
15 Committee may meet in person, electronically, or online and may carry out  
16 interviews in person, electronically, or online.

17 **9.2 Duties.** The Search Committee is responsible for fully understanding  
18 the ministerial needs for the vacant position. This should be done by  
19 thoroughly engaging with existing clergy, the congregation, and the Church  
20 Council. The Search Committee shall compile all necessary documentation  
21 and information for posting and listing said positions with the Houston  
22 Association, the South Central Conference, and national United Church of  
23 Christ entities.

24 **9.3 Candidates.** All candidates shall be in good standing with the United  
25 Church of Christ or shall have received or be in the process of receiving a  
26 “privilege of call” in the United Church of Christ or seeking Dual Standing  
27 from the Houston Association.

28 **9.4 The Search Process.**

29 **9.4.1** An initial slate of candidates drawn from responses to listings, a  
30 canvas of available UCC pastors, individual enquiries, recommendations,  
31 *etc.*, shall be compiled.

32 **9.4.2** The Search Committee shall narrow the initial slate of candidates by  
33 such methods as they deem useful, including, but not limited to: evaluation  
34 of any paperwork received (*e.g.*, resumes, letters of recommendation);  
35 thorough criminal, financial, and other background checks, including social  
36 media and other online sources; confirmation of references; online or in

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

---

1 person reviews of worship services and preaching; interviews with  
2 candidates; *etc.*

3 **9.4.3** The Search Committee shall select a single candidate to present to the  
4 Church Council for approval. They shall also recommend initial  
5 compensation.

6 **9.4.4** The candidate recommended by the Search Committee, having been  
7 affirmed by a two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) vote of the Church Council, will be invited to  
8 lead a Sunday worship service and preach at Bering. Within three (3) weeks  
9 following that Sunday, a Special Church Conference, having been duly  
10 called, will meet to affirm the Pastoral Call by a vote of two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) of the  
11 Active Full and Associate Members present.

12 **9.5 Pastoral Call.** The terms of the call shall be presented to the Houston  
13 Association Committee on Ministry, and the call format shall be agreed on  
14 by the Association Committee on Ministry. The contents of the call shall  
15 name participation in the Pension Fund of the United Church of Christ,  
16 health insurance, and any additional terms agreed upon between the  
17 candidate and the Search Committee. In the case of a Call for an Associate  
18 Pastor, the terms may include pastoral duties, if appropriate. The Pastor-  
19 elect, Church Council, the Houston Association and the South Central  
20 Conference Minister shall each receive a copy of the call letter.

21 **9.6 Installation.** Upon acceptance of a call to Bering, the church and the  
22 Pastor-elect shall join in requesting the Houston Association for a service of  
23 installation or recognition. A report of this service shall be signed by the  
24 proper officer(s) of the Association and the Conference Minister; copies  
25 shall be sent to the Secretary of the United Church of Christ and all  
26 appropriate offices and committees as described in the United Church of  
27 Christ Manual on Ministry.

**ARTICLE 10**

**SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY**

28  
29  
30 **10.1** The Church Council shall maintain, implement and enforce a Safe  
31 Sanctuary Policy, including, but not limited to: a policy against sexual  
32 abuse or harassment; a policy and training to ensure safe Pastoral, Staff and  
33 Volunteer practices for the prevention of sexual abuse or harassment;  
34 procedures for providing safe facilities; and procedures for handling  
35 complaints of sexual abuse or harassment. Safe Sanctuary applies to  
36 Pastors, Staff, and Volunteers.

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

---

1 **10.2** The Church Council has recourse to oral or written reprimands,  
2 probation, paid or unpaid leaves of absence, or termination as options for  
3 disciplining violations of Safe Sanctuary. When Termination is deemed  
4 necessary, see Bylaws 8.6 and 8.8 in the case of Pastors and Bylaw 4.8 in the  
5 Case of Members. Nonmember employees and nonmember volunteers may  
6 be terminated for cause by the Church Council without recourse to a Church  
7 Conference.

8 **10.3** Bering will strictly follow all laws and governmental and UCC  
9 regulations concerning child abuse and sexual misconduct.

**ARTICLE 11**

**EMPLOYMENT POLICIES**

10  
11  
12 **11.1 Equal Employment and Affirmative Action.** Bering affirms its  
13 moral commitment to support and implement a program of equal  
14 employment opportunity that, in accordance with federal and state laws,  
15 does not discriminate against any employee or applicant because of race,  
16 color, national origin, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, age,  
17 sexual orientation, disability, marital status, genetic information, or religion  
18 (except when religion is a bona fide occupational requirement).

19 Bering shall administer personnel policies, procedures and practices,  
20 including those governing compensation, benefits, transfers, performance  
21 reviews, promotions, and training, in such a way that the principle of equal  
22 employment opportunity is furthered.

**ARTICLE 12**

**FINANCES**

23  
24  
25 **12.1** The policies and procedures required to provide adequate controls for  
26 the receipt, disbursement and management of Bering's finances are the  
27 responsibility of the Church Council and its Finance Liaison and Working  
28 Group. The Treasurer administers those policies and procedures, stewards  
29 Finance operations, and has oversight, in consultation with the Senior Pastor,  
30 of any Church Financial Staff.

31 **12.2 Financial Best Practices.**

32 **12.2.1** Bering's financial accounts shall be maintained in an online  
33 accounting system based on generally accepted accounting principles as  
34 approved and accepted by the Church Council. Said system shall be backed  
35 up regularly with offsite storage including, but not limited to, online backups  
36 and paper copies of annual financial reports.

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

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1 **12.2.2** All offerings collected at worship services or other gatherings shall  
2 be counted immediately following the gathering or the last Sunday worship  
3 service by at least three (3) members of the Church Council Finance  
4 Working Group who are not related.

5 **12.2.3** Monthly finance reports shall be furnished to the Church Council and  
6 Bering's various committees and ministries.

7 **12.2.4** When necessary paper checks may be utilized with a single signature  
8 by the Church Council Finance Liaison, the Treasurer, or such other  
9 individuals authorized by the Treasurer. All authorized signers will be  
10 registered with Bering's bank according to the bank's policies. Church  
11 financial staff may not be signers.

12 **12.3 Income.** The Church Council will seek income sources that include,  
13 but are not limited to, pledges from members, offerings gathered at services  
14 and events, general donations, building use fees for outside groups, and  
15 leasing or rental agreements for building and parking facilities. The  
16 Treasurer shall be responsible for handling any tax ramifications of any  
17 income sources deemed taxable by the IRS.

18 **12.4 Court Actions.** Bering shall not assert any claim in a court of law  
19 against any person (or the estate of any person) who has pledged to Bering  
20 to collect the amount so pledged. Notwithstanding the foregoing, Bering  
21 reserves the right to make any claim it determines necessary or appropriate  
22 to collect any amounts other than pledges due and owing to Bering.

23 **12.5 Endowments.** Bering may from time to time establish reserved funds  
24 or endowments as approved by the Church. The Church Council shall state  
25 the purposes and define any terms and restrictions applying to the funds or  
26 endowments. The Church Council reserves the right to refuse receipt of  
27 memorials, benevolences, bequests, donations, and trusts should they be  
28 deemed to be against Bering's principles, mission, vision, or objectives or to  
29 impose onerous or impracticable administrative or other burdens on the  
30 church.

31 **12.6 Investments.** Bering shall make every attempt to invest excess funds  
32 beyond an operating budget and invest them in socially responsible  
33 investment options that reflect Bering's principles, mission, and vision.

34 **12.7 Audit.** On an annual basis, the Church Council's Finance Liaison  
35 shall establish an Audit Committee, not including the Liaison or Treasurer,  
36 consisting of three (3) Active Full or Associate members who are not  
37 members of the Church Council, Finance Working Group, or Financial Staff

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

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1 who shall audit all pertinent church financial practices, records, and  
2 statements. Alternatively, it is desirable that, whenever it is practicable, the  
3 Church Council engage a professional audit firm or auditor.

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**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

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**ARTICLE 13**

**AMENDMENTS**

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2  
3       These Bylaws may be amended at any duly called Church Conference  
4 upon recommendation of the amendments by Church Council or by petition  
5 of not less than ten (10) percent of the Active Full and Associate Members.  
6 The text of the proposed amendments must be distributed (via email,  
7 website, USPS, church newsletter, worship bulletin, or printed copies  
8 provided) to the Active Full and Associate Members at least fourteen (14)  
9 days prior to the date of such meeting. Amendments to these Bylaws may  
10 be made by two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) affirmative vote of the Active Full and Associate  
11 Members present.

**ARTICLE 14**

**INITIAL ORGANIZATION OF CHURCH OFFICERS AND BODIES**

12  
13  
14 **14.1** This Article provides for the staging, by Church Council, of Church  
15 Officers and Church Council Members into term classes so there will be a  
16 rotation of persons to provide continuity.

17 **14.2** This Article applies solely to the original organization of Bering’s  
18 governance upon affiliating with the United Church of Christ. This Article  
19 expires upon the completion by Church Council of the organization or on  
20 July 31, 2021—whichever occurs first.

21 **14.3** The Bering Church Council in place at the time of Bering’s affiliation  
22 with the UCC will nominate the Officers and Church Council members for  
23 the new UCC organization and will assign nominees for Offices and Church  
24 Council to classes whose terms of service end at the end of 2022, 2023, and  
25 2024. For this initial assignment, the three (3) year terms provided in these  
26 Bylaws shall not include 2021. The following template is only intended to  
27 aid in this process. Names are not to be supplied in the template for  
28 inclusion in this Bylaw.

<b>Positions</b>	<b>2022 Class</b>	<b>2023 Class</b>	<b>2024 Class</b>
Council Chair			
Council Vice Chair			
Secretary			

**BYLAWS**  
**BERING MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**

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Treasurer			
UCC Delegates (2)			
Personnel Liaison			
Finance Liaison			
Property Liaison			
At Large Members (3)			

1

2 **14.5** The Church Council's nominees shall be approved at a duly called  
3 Church Conference held as soon as practicable following affiliation with the  
4 UCC. Nominations may be made from the floor of the Church Council,  
5 provided that the nominees agree to serve and are Active Full or Associate  
6 Members as provided by these Bylaws.

7 **14.6** The Church Council may also stage Working Group and Committee  
8 members as it deems useful.

Resolution to Call Rev. Paula Diane McGehee as the Senior Pastor of Bering Memorial United Church of Christ

*Be it resolved that Rev. Paula Diane McGehee, current Senior Pastor of Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, shall continue as the Senior Pastor of Bering Memorial United Church of Christ, under the current terms of her appointment and Article 8 of the Bylaws.*

## AGENDA

Called Church Conference for Bering Memorial United Methodist Church

April 18, 2021

11:45 am

*via zoom*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| A. Meeting Called to Order and Opening Remarks  | Dr. Elijah Stansell                                      |
| B. Guidelines - re: Zoom participation and voting   | Rev. Diane McGehee                                       |
| C. Business Session   |  |
| 1. Election of Recording Secretary  | Ken Malone, Chair,<br>Bering Administrative Council      |
| 2. Prayer and Pastoral Address  | Rev. Diane McGehee                                       |
| 3. Resolution to Disaffiliate and Affiliate<br>Bering Administrative Council                  | Ken Malone, Chair  |
| • Introduction to United Church of Christ   | Rev. Lynette Ross  |
| 4. Adoption of Corporate Documents  | David K Johnson, Member<br>Bering Administrative Council |
| • Amended Articles of Incorporation   |  |
| • Constitution  |  |
| • Bylaws  |  |
| 5. Resolution Calling Rev. Paula Diane McGehee<br>as the Senior Pastor of Bering Memorial UCC | David Hanks, Chair SPRC                                  |
| D. Next Steps   | Rev. Diane McGehee                                       |
| E. Words of Grace and Closing Prayer  | Dr. Elijah Stansell                                      |

Meeting Adjourned

## Called Church Conference

April 18, 11:45

### Zoom Guidelines

- *Please remain on mute unless instructed otherwise.*
- *Voting in this Church Conference is for **Professing Members Only**. If you were allowed access and are not a professing member, please inform us IMMEDIATELY by typing your full name & non-member in “chat” room.*
- *Limit chat room to questions/comments directed to Host ONLY and for second person voting.*
- *For questions, type full name and the word “question” in the chat room and wait to be recognized.*
- *Once recognized to speak, unmute yourself, verbally state question/comment, then mute yourself.*
- *Once discussion is closed and vote has been called, no more questions/comments will be taken until voting is complete and counts have been finalized.*