

**CONSTITUTION**  
**Oakland Christian United Church of Christ**  
*October 2019*

**ARTICLE I**

**Name**

The name of the church shall be Oakland Christian United Church of Christ, located in the Chuckatuck Borough of Suffolk, Virginia.

**ARTICLE II**

**Purpose and Covenant**

The purpose of this church, and the covenant we make in the presence of God with each other through Sacred Scripture, shall be to walk together in all God's ways, to share God's love with all people, to serve the Lord with humility and kindness, and to grow with the Lord's guidance in wisdom and strength.

**ARTICLE III**

**Membership**

1. Membership in this church shall consist of the individuals who are members at the time of the adoption of this constitution, baptized individuals who unite with this church by confession of faith, and those who transfer membership upon the reaffirmation of their confession of faith.
2. Members shall pledge themselves to attend the regular worship of the church and the celebration of the Lord's Supper, to live a Christian life, to share in the life and work of the Church, and to contribute to its support and benevolences.
3. Any member may, upon request, be granted a letter of transfer to another church from the Pastor or Pastor's designee, or Board of Deacons.

**ARTICLE IV**

**Polity and Government**

1. The government of this church is vested in its members, who exercise the right of control in all its affairs by way of the Congregational Conference (hereinafter "Congregational Conference") subject to the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia relating to not-for-profit or ecclesiastical corporations.
2. This church shall be a part of the United Church of Christ and it shall sustain that relationship to the United Church of Christ described in those portions of the constitution and the by-laws of the United Church of Christ relating to the local churches.

**ARTICLE V**

**Congregational Conference**

1. The Congregational Conference shall be the overarching authority for the business and well-being of the church. It shall have the exclusive authority to call a Pastor, elect all officers and members of the Council and boards as set forth in this constitution, adopt a budget, make decisions on major capital expenditures, and set policy for the church.
2. The Congregational Conference shall hold an annual meeting in November of each year for the purpose of electing officers and members of the Council and boards, approving a budget for the upcoming year, and setting limits on the Council's authority for non-budgeted expenditures that might arise in the coming year. The Congregational Conference may also meet at other times during

the year as deemed desirable or necessary. All such meetings shall be called and scheduled pursuant to the provisions of Article IX of this constitution.

3. The Congregational Conference grants authority to the Council and to the Pastor to act on its behalf to conduct the business of the church on matters that are not exclusively reserved to the Congregational Conference. The Council and the Pastor shall exercise this authority pursuant to the provisions of this constitution pertaining to them.

## **ARTICLE VI**

### **Church Governance and Ministry**

#### **1. Council**

##### **A. Composition of the Council.**

1. The Council shall be composed of eight (8) members of the church: Moderator; Assistant Moderator; Treasurer; Deacon Representative; Christian Education Representative; and three (3) members-at-large. The Pastor shall be a non-voting member. The Church Moderator shall be the Chair. Five (5) members shall constitute a quorum.
2. The Deacon and the Christian Education Representatives shall be elected annually by their respective Boards. To be eligible, each shall have been elected to serve on their Board for the year during which they will also serve on Council.
3. Members-at-large shall be members of the church elected by the Congregational Conference annually on staggered three (3) year terms.
4. No person may be elected to Council as the Deacon Representative, the Christian Education Representative, or as a member-at-large if their election would result in them serving more than six (6) consecutive years on the Council.
5. Paid staff of the church shall not be eligible for election to Council regardless of their status as members of the church.

##### **B. Duties of the Council**

1. It shall define, develop, and present the strategic plan of the church to the Congregational Conference for approval.
  - a) It shall execute the approved strategic plan of the church.
  - b) It shall measure progress in meeting the strategic plan.
  - c) It shall report to the Congregational Conference no less than annually on the progress and status of the plan.
2. It shall propose the annual budget for the church.
3. It shall provide oversight for all aspects of the daily business of the church.

4. It may create such Committees and Task Groups as circumstances and good practice may dictate for the performance of its duties. Committees and Task Groups will be created in accordance with the provisions of this Article and will operate according to by-laws enacted by the Congregational Conference.
5. It shall provide oversight of the Boards enumerated in this constitution and of such Committees and Task Groups as may be established.
6. It shall establish a Nominating Committee which shall present a list of candidates for Officers, Council members, and Board members at the annual November meeting of the Congregational Conference.
7. It shall study the constitution and by-laws, and make appropriate recommendations for amendments and modifications.
8. It shall be responsible for all delegated personnel matters related to the Pastor's employment, including supervision and evaluation.
9. It shall set interim policy and act on behalf of the Congregational Conference in situations that require prompt action.

## **2. Boards**

### **A. Board of Christian Education**

1. Composition of the Board of Christian Education.
  - a) The Board of Christian Education shall consist of no fewer than five (5) members of the church elected by the Congregational Conference. Members shall serve a two-year term with the exception of the first election to be held after the adoption of this constitution when three (3) members will be elected for two-year terms and two (2) members will be elected to a one-year term. Thereafter, all elected members will serve two-year terms.
  - b) Officers shall be a Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. These officers shall be elected annually by the board at the January meeting.
2. No person shall serve on the Board of Christian Education for more than six (6) consecutive years.
3. Duties of the Board of Christian Education
  - a) The Board of Christian Education shall be responsible for the general direction of educational work of the church. In cooperation with the Pastor and the Director of Christian Education, it shall coordinate the program of Christian Education, supervise the church school, and promote the development of Christian character in all organizations throughout the congregation.



**b) Specific duties shall include:**

- i. Securing and training teachers and leaders for all Church School classes and youth groups,
- ii. Selecting and acquiring curriculum and related materials for church school classes,
- iii. Informing teachers and leaders of the church school curriculum and the materials available to assist them,
- iv. Selecting, guiding, and supervising directors and/or advisors when needed for Children's Church, Bible School, Youth Fellowship, Youth Camping, Youth Music Programs, and other programs as deemed necessary and appropriate, and
- v. Performing other duties as requested by the Congregational Conference, Council, and Pastor.

**B. The Board of Deacons**

**1. Composition of the Board of Deacons**

- a)** The Board of Deacons shall be composed of twelve (12) members of the church elected by the Congregational Conference.
- b)** Deacons should possess the highest Christian character.
- c)** Officers shall be a Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. These officers shall be elected annually by the Deacons at the January meeting.
- d)** Deacons shall serve a term of three (3) years, with four (4) new Deacons elected annually.
- e)** A Deacon may be reelected for additional three-year terms.

**2. Duties of the Board of Deacons.**

- a)** The Board of Deacons shall meet at least quarterly and more often as necessary.
- b)** One-half of the membership of the board shall constitute a quorum.
- c)** The Deacons shall:
  - i. Cooperate with the Pastor in ministering to the spiritual interests of the church and community,
  - ii. Consult with the Pastor on the character of the religious services,

- iii. Assist the Pastor in helping the church to envision and achieve its spiritual possibilities, and to fulfill its ministerial obligations,
- iv. Assist in the preparation and administration of the Sacraments,
- v. Provide a Shepherd Program which fosters spiritual care for the sick, shut-in, and those in need,
- vi. Provide four (4) names annually to the Nominating Committee for consideration to serve as members of the Board of Deacons to be voted on by the Conference,
- vii. Provide a warm and welcoming spirit in the church,
- viii. Seek to enlist new members for the church,
- ix. Record and distribute copies of worship services to those who may be unable to attend,
- x. Provide a supply for the pulpit in the absence of the Pastor, and
- xi. Perform other duties as requested by the Congregational Conference, Council, and Pastor.

### **C. The Board of Trustees**

#### **1. Composition of the Board of Trustees**

- a)** The Board of Trustees shall consist of six (6) members of the church, two of whom shall be elected annually to serve a term of three (3) years. Trustees shall be elected by the Congregational Conference and registered with the Circuit Court, as required by the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- b)** A Trustee may be reelected for additional three-year terms.
- c)** The Board of Trustees shall meet in January of each year and thereafter as needed.
- d)** The Board of Trustees shall elect officers at each January meeting. Officers shall be Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary.

#### **2. Duties of the Board of Trustees**

- a)** It shall hold in trust all church property, both real and personal, but shall have no power to sell, buy, mortgage or transfer real property except by a two-thirds vote of the Congregational Conference authorizing same.
- b)** It shall have custody of all legal documents, such as deeds, mortgages, notes, insurance policies, etc.

- c) The Chair shall make a written report to the Council each January giving a list of the property owned and its condition, the amount of insurance carried, mortgage and bonded indebtedness, and such other information as may be requested by the Congregational Conference or Council. The Chair will also present this report at the first meeting of the Congregational Conference each year.
- d) It shall perform other duties as requested by the Congregational Conference or the Council.

### **3. Committees and Task Groups**

- A. The Congregational Conference and the Council are empowered to create such Committees and Task Groups as may be deemed useful in carrying out the mission and business of the church.
- B. Committees shall be created when there is a need to study or investigate topics or issues or create proposals for consideration by the Council and the Congregational Conference. Committees may be standing or ad hoc, as best fits the function.
- C. Task Groups shall be created when there are defined functions to be performed that do not involve deliberation, investigation, or the creation of a proposal. Task Groups may be standing or ad hoc, as best fits the function.
- D. Committees and Task Groups will derive their power and authority from the Congregational Conference, the Council, or the Board to which they report and will be governed by them.

### **4. The Pastor**

#### **A. Duties of the Pastor**

- 1. The Pastor shall be the teacher and spiritual leader of the congregation, with the assistance of the Board of Deacons.
- 2. The Pastor shall preach the gospel, teach the scripture, administer the sacraments, minister to those in need of pastoral care, and enlist others as followers of Christ. The pastor shall be free, within the constraints of Christian love, to preach the truth as he/she interprets it.
- 3. The Pastor shall be a non-voting member of the Council and all Boards, Committees, and Task Groups.
- 4. The Pastor shall be the primary supervisor of all paid church staff.
- 5. The Pastor shall present reports on the life and work of the church to the Council, the Board of Deacons, and the Congregational Conference at such times as are specified in the by-laws.

6. The Pastor may, with the approval of the Board of Deacons, select guest speakers or ministers for regular or special services.

#### **B. Selection of the Pastor**

1. When the pulpit becomes vacant, through the resignation or dismissal of the Pastor, or for any other cause, the Council shall nominate a representative committee of not less than seven (7) or more than nine (9) members to undertake the search for a new pastor.
2. The Search Committee nominated by Council shall be approved or modified at a regular or called conference. The Moderator shall be a non-voting member of the Search Committee and will serve as temporary Chair until the first meeting of the committee. At that time the committee shall elect its own Chair from among its members and shall follow recognized procedures in the selection of a new pastor.
3. When the Search Committee is ready to recommend a candidate to the congregation, there shall be an opportunity provided for the congregation to meet and talk with the candidate, and to attend at least one regular Sunday worship service wherein the candidate will deliver the morning message.
4. Following the activities described above in subparagraph 3 of this section, the new Pastor shall be "Called" at a meeting of the Congregational Conference held especially for that purpose. Notice shall be given in accordance with the provisions of this constitution governing called conferences.
5. The Pastor shall serve as long as is mutually agreeable to the Pastor and the Congregational Conference. In the event either party desires to make a change, a sixty (60) day written notice shall be given by the party desiring the change, unless a shorter term is agreed upon by both parties.

### **5. Church Officers**

#### **A. Moderator**

1. The moderator shall:
  - a) Be a member of the church elected annually by the Congregational Conference for a one year term at the November meeting.
  - b) Preside at all business meetings of the church.
  - c) Serve as Chair of the Council.
  - d) No person shall serve as moderator for more than six (6) consecutive years. The provisions in Article VI concerning consecutive years of service on Council shall not limit the ability of a person to be elected to serve as moderator.



**B. Assistant Moderator**

**1. The assistant moderator shall:**

- a)** Be a member of the church elected annually by the Congregational Conference for a one year term at the November meeting.
- b)** Be prepared to assume the duties of the moderator in his/her absence.
- c)** No person shall serve as assistant moderator for more than six (6) consecutive years. The provisions in Article VI concerning consecutive years of service on Council shall not limit the ability of a person to be elected to serve as assistant moderator.

**C. Treasurer**

**1. The treasurer shall:**

- a)** Be a member of the church elected annually by the Congregational Conference for a one-year term at the November meeting.
- b)** Receive and disburse all money contributed to causes represented in the church budget, and such other funds and contributions as the Congregational Conference or Council may determine.
- c)** Pay all accounts when properly authorized by the Congregational Conference, Council, or Pastor.
- d)** Make a quarterly financial report available to the Council and Congregational Conference.
- e)** Submit all accounts and records to the auditing committee annually and at such other times as the Council and Congregational Conference shall direct.
- f)** Perform other duties as requested by the Congregational Conference and Council.
- g)** There shall be no limit to the number of years that a member may serve as the Treasurer.

## **ARTICLE VII**

### **Elections**

1. Officers, Council Members, and Board Members designated in this constitution shall be elected by the Congregational Conference at a meeting in November of each year.
2. Candidates for these elected positions shall be compiled by the Nominating Committee and presented to the Congregational Conference. Additional nominations for any position will also be accepted from the floor at the November meeting.
3. Elections for all positions shall be by secret ballot. A secret ballot may be waived by a majority vote of the Congregational Conference where there is only one candidate for the office. If a secret ballot is waived, the vote will be by a show of hands.
4. If a quorum is present for the election, candidates will be deemed to have been elected if they receive a majority of the votes for their position. Where there are multiple candidates seeking a position and a sufficient number of candidates fail to receive a majority of the votes on the first ballot, candidates who have received a majority will be removed and the balloting will continue with the remaining candidates until the position is filled. In the event no candidate receives a majority, the candidate with the lowest number of votes will be removed and the balloting will continue with the remaining candidates until the position is filled.
5. Newly elected Officers, Council members, and Board members shall begin their terms on January 1 of the year following their election, with the exception of the first election after the adoption of this constitution when the candidates will take office immediately upon election.
6. In the event an elected Officer, Council Member, or Board Member must be replaced prior to the expiration of their term, a Nominating Committee appointed by Council shall seek candidates and present them to a scheduled or called conference. Elections at such a conference shall be in accordance with sections 2, 3, and 4 of this Article, and any person elected shall begin to serve the remainder of the term of the person they replace immediately upon election.

## **ARTICLE VIII**

### **Removal of Elected Officials**

1. Any Officer, Council Member, Board Member, or Committee Member elected by the Congregational Conference (hereinafter "Elected Official") may be removed from office for cause shown. Grounds for removal shall be specified in the bylaws of the Congregational Conference.
2. The process for removal of an elected official shall be specified in the bylaws of the Congregational Conference.

## **Article IX**

### **Meetings of the Congregational Conference**

1. The Congregational Conference shall meet annually in November of each year and at such other times as the Congregational Conference deems fitting and proper.
2. A called meeting of the Congregational Conference may be initiated by the Moderator or the Council to conduct unscheduled business. A called meeting of the Congregational Conference may also be initiated pursuant to a written request to the Council signed by fifteen (15) members of the church.
3. The members of the church shall be given no less than fourteen (14) days' notice of any called conference. The notice shall include a description of the business to be transacted at the called

conference. The business transacted in a called conference shall be restricted to that description and matters inseparable to it.

4. In case of emergency, the Congregational Conference may transact business at the conclusion of a regular Sunday morning service. The congregation shall be dismissed before said emergency conference is called to order.
5. Twenty-five (25) voting members present at any conference shall constitute a quorum for conducting the business of the church.
6. All members of the church are entitled to vote on any matter considered at a conference. Once a quorum has been established, a majority vote is decisive unless this constitution specifically requires a greater result.
7. With the exception of elections, all business of the Congregational Conference at any meeting shall be by show of hands unless two-thirds of the members present select a different method.
8. Parliamentary Authority. The rules contained in the current edition of The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure shall govern in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with the constitution and any special rules of order the church may adopt.

#### **ARTICLE X** **Amendments**

1. Any proposed amendments to this constitution shall be made in writing to the Council. The proposed amendments will be made available to the Congregational Conference no less than ninety (90) days prior to any action being taken on them.
2. Amendments to this constitution will be voted upon at either a specially scheduled conference for that purpose or at a regularly scheduled conference where the required notice has been given that the amendment(s) will be considered.
3. A ninety (90) day notice must be provided for any conference, either regularly or specially scheduled, where an amendment to the constitution will be considered.
4. If a quorum is present, a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members present is required to amend this Constitution.

#### **ARTICLE XI** **Notice**

1. In any instance where notice is required in this constitution, reasonable and appropriate methods shall be used to reach as many members of the congregation as possible. Depending on the circumstances, these should include the following (as well as other effective and cost-efficient methods that may become available in the future):
  - a. Announcements during Sunday services,
  - b. Announcements in the Sunday bulletin,
  - c. Announcements in the monthly newsletter,
  - d. Email messages,
  - e. Announcement on the church website,
  - f. Announcement on social media being utilized by the church, and
  - g. Mail or telephone when other methods are unavailable.