

**OLMSTED COMMUNITY CHURCH CONSTITUTION**  
**Approved by Congregation March 19th, 2017**

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## ARTICLE 1 - NAME

- 1.1 The name of this church is The Olmsted Community Church, located in Olmsted Falls, State of Ohio (hereinafter known as “the Church.” or OCC).

## ARTICLE 2 – PURPOSE

- 2.1 The purpose of this church is to bind together followers of Jesus Christ in order to share in the worship of God, to study the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, to lead others to a commitment to God through Jesus Christ, to express the gospel of love to the world by our missionary outreach and by our concern for all of the children of God, and to use as a sacred trust the blessings which God has bestowed upon us. This church shall provide services of public worship.

## ARTICLE 3 – FAITH

- 3.1 We, the members of this church, believe in the living God at work in the world today and in Jesus Christ as revealed to us in the Bible. We find the Bible to be our sufficient rule of faith and practice.

### 3.1.A Statement of Faith

We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit, who is made known to us in Jesus our brother, and to whose deeds we testify:

God calls the worlds into being, creates humankind in the divine image, and sets before us the ways of life and death.

God seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

God judges all humanity and all nations by that will of righteousness declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, God has come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the whole creation to its Creator.

God bestows upon us the Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

God calls us into the church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be servants in the service of the whole human family, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

God promises to all who trust in the gospel forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, the presence of the Holy Spirit in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in that kingdom which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto God.

## ARTICLE 4 – GOVERNMENT

- 4.1 The Government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose its membership, and who exercise the right of control in all its affairs subject, however, to the laws of the State of Ohio relating to corporations not-for-profit (O.R.C. 1702.01 et. Seq.). This church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body; however, it maintains ties of interest with its predecessors: the Congregational (now United Church of Christ) and the Methodist (now United Methodist) denominations. This church may also maintain and establish ties of interest and loyalty with other denominational and inter-denominational bodies.

## ARTICLE 5 – MEMBERSHIP

### 5.1 Admission to Membership

5.1.A In extending an open-door welcome to all who desire to unite with this body of believers, membership in this church shall be granted to all persons publicly confessing belief in the living God as revealed to us in the Bible. Prospective members shall be given adequate instruction before being received into membership of this church.

5.1.B New members shall be admitted by:

1. Baptism and confession of faith, if not previously baptized; OR
2. Confession of faith if previously baptized; OR
3. Letter of transfer from another Christian church; OR
4. Reaffirmation of faith.

### 5.2 Full, Associate, and Inactive Members

5.2.A Full Members are those persons who attend the services of worship regularly, and who contribute of their time, talent, and possessions to support the work and missionary outreach of the church.

5.2.B. Associate Members are persons who may:

1. Hold dual membership in another church; OR
2. Be away from the community attending college, serving in a missionary assignment, serving in the military in permanent or temporary residence of another state; OR
3. Be temporarily or permanently confined in a nursing home or hospital or at home; and, for these reasons, may not regularly attend the services of worship or contribute regularly to the support of the work of the church, but who desire to maintain membership with this church through attendance and/or contribution insofar as possible; OR
4. Persons who are permanently or temporarily shut-in are exempt from the attendance and contribution provisions.

5.2.C. Inactive members are those persons who, either by their own initiative, or through the process in 5.4, below, have not attended the services of worship or contributed to the support of the church for a period of one (1) year or more. In the case of a newly inactive member, the church Executive Council shall attempt to contact that person or those persons who have recently become inactive in an effort to determine whether or not they should be classified as inactive.

5.2.D. Those individuals who are not members but regularly attend services on Saturday or Sunday and who regularly give to the church in either financial commitment or time or talent, may serve on non-elected select committees, special committees, or Ministry Teams and they may also attend congregational meetings, contribute to those meetings, but may not vote.

### 5.3 Duties, rights, & privileges of Membership

5.3.A Members of this church are expected to be faithful to the Christian way of life, to attend regularly the services of worship and to contribute their time, talent and possessions to the support of the church and its missionary outreach.

- 5.3.B. Each member of the church, irrespective of the type of membership held, shall have the undisturbed right to follow the Word of God according to his or her own conscience.
- 5.3.C. Full and Associate Members shall have the right to vote at all congregational meetings of the church.
- 5.3.D. Only Full Members shall be eligible for election to the Executive Council, as officers of the church, to Planning Groups, or to elected positions on Select Committees.
- 5.3.E. Employees of the church, irrespective of membership status, are ineligible to vote at congregational meetings or to hold an elected position, but they may hold appointed positions on Ministry Teams.

#### 5.4 **Discontinuance of Membership**

- 5.4.A. Membership in this church may be discontinued by:
  - 1. The member's request for a Letter of Transfer to another Christian church; OR
  - 2. The member's own verified request; OR
  - 3. Recommendation of the Recorder, via the Minister, to the Executive Council; OR
  - 4. Death of the member.
- 5.4.B. In periodically reviewing and revising the church membership rolls (at a minimum every two years), the Church Recorder shall recommend, via the Minister, to the Executive Council for approval, the reclassification to Inactive Member status of those members who, according to church records, have not supported the church with either their fellowship, talents, or financial contributions over the past one to two years.

### **ARTICLE 6 – EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND OFFICERS**

#### 6.1 **The Church Executive Council**

- 6.1.A. Purpose. The leadership and oversight function of the church's ministry shall be vested in the Executive Council. The primary task of the Executive Council shall be to envision the overall mission of the church and to work toward a faithful, unified response to the church's goal of being Christ to the world. The Executive Council shall be responsible for the coordination of the church's ministries, give guidance and support to on-going ministries, give counsel to those planning new ministries, and review recommendations for the addition, revision, or deletion of ministries. The Executive Council shall determine both paid and volunteer staffing necessary for assisting the congregation in this mission commensurate with the financial condition of the church, and shall act as the governing board of the corporation.
- 6.1.B. Composition. The Executive Council shall be composed of the Pastor (non-voting *ex officio*), the President (voting only in case of a tie), the Vice President, the Secretary, the Recorder, and three representatives of the congregation, each of whom shall have a vote.
- 6.1.C. Term. The Congregational Representatives shall be elected for 2 year terms. They may serve no more than 3 consecutive terms.
- 6.1.D. Duties

1. Act as the governing body of the church between meetings of the church membership.
2. Review and approve all legal and fiduciary matters of the church, and obtain outside legal or financial advice when necessary.
3. Review, approve, and enforce all policies and procedures of the Planning Groups of the Church for conducting church operations and insure all appropriate policies and procedures are included or updated in the Church By-laws to this Constitution.
4. Promote an ongoing lay leadership training program which includes both long and short term planning for the needs of the members and the community.
5. Appoint special committees as needed.

## 6.2 Officers

- 6.2.A The elected officers of the church shall be the President, Vice President, Secretary, Recorder, and Treasurer.
- 6.2.B The non-elected officer of the church shall be the Financial Recorder and shall be appointed by the Executive Council.
- 6.2.C The elected officers shall be elected for 2 year terms. Officers may serve no more than 3 consecutive terms.
- 6.2.D The appointed officer shall be appointed to serve indefinitely until a new appointment is made by the Executive Council.

## ARTICLE 7: PLANNING GROUPS, MINISTRY TEAMS, AND COMMITTEES

### 7.1 Planning Groups

- 7.1.A. Purpose. Each of the five areas of Ministry -- Missions, Worship, Congregational Life, Faith Formation, and Administration-Trustees, are administered by a Planning Group. The five Planning Groups report to the Executive Council.
- 7.1.B. Composition. Each Planning Group shall consist of two (2) elected members, except Administration-Trustees which shall consist of four (4) elected members. Elected members of the Planning Groups shall be Full Members of the church and shall be elected from and by the church membership, as terms expire, at a congregational meeting. Each Planning Group shall order its meetings as it sees fit, and may select a leader as it deems appropriate.
- 7.1. C. Term. The term of office of all Planning Group members shall be two (2) years, with approximately half (1/2) of each Group's members being elected each year from a slate of nominees presented by the Spiritual Giving Committee. No person shall be elected to the same Planning Group for more than three (3) consecutive terms. After serving the maximum number of terms, no elected Planning Group member can succeed him/ herself on the same Planning Group without a one (1) year lapse.
- 7.1.D Planning Groups. Planning Groups are as follows:
  1. Administration-Trustees
  2. Missions
  3. Worship
  4. Congregational Life
  5. Faith Formation

7.2 **Ministry Teams.** Ministry Teams will be selected by each Planning Group and Committee to perform the various functions required by each group.

7.3 **Committees**

7.3.A Select Committees. Select Committees are as follows:

1. Personnel
2. Finance
3. Memorials and Endowments
4. Spiritual Giving

7.3.B *Ad hoc* Committees. The Executive Council may create or dissolve temporary, special, or *ad hoc* Committees

**ARTICLE 8 – ORDAINED AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF**

**8.1 The Senior Minister**

8.1.A The Senior Minister shall:

1. Be an ordained minister of the Protestant tradition and be the spiritual leader and pastor of the church;
2. Preach the Gospel, administer the Sacraments, have charge of all services of worship, and administer such programs as are needed for the overall growth and welfare of the church;
3. Be the Chief Operating Officer of the church and supervise and evaluate the activities of the staff as set forth in the Personnel Policy document;
4. Administer, with the assistance of the Secretary, the operating policies and procedures established by the Executive Council, the Personnel Committee, and the Finance Committee.
5. Be a non-voting member of the Executive Council and an advisory member of all other groups of the church.

8.2 **Associate or Assistant Minister(s).** The church membership, at its discretion, may call one or more Associate or Assistant Ministers, the duties of whom shall be prescribed by the Senior Minister in consultation with the Executive Council.

**8.3 Calling or Severance of Senior, Associate, or Assistant Ministers**

8.3. A. In the event of a vacancy in any of the ministerial positions of this Church (Senior Minister, Associate Minister, or Assistant Minister), the Executive Council shall nominate a Pastoral Selection Committee for election by the church membership. It shall be the duty of this Committee to find a suitable candidate for the ministry of the church and submit the name to the church membership for election.

8.3. B. The candidate shall be called by the church membership at a special congregational meeting duly assembled for this purpose by an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds (2/3) of those members present and voting. When called, he/she shall hold office without limit of term.

8.3. C. The salary and other matters incidental to his/ her engagement shall be attended to by the Executive Council upon the recommendation of the Finance Committee.

8.3. D. In accordance with the Minister's preference, he/she may be installed into office by an Ecclesiastical Council of his/her own choosing.

8.3.E. In the event of a desire for severance of the pastoral relationship between a Minister and the church, a sixty (60) day notice in writing shall be given by the Minister to the church members, or by the President acting on behalf of the church membership, to the Minister. This severance action requires a majority vote of approval by those present and voting at a special congregational meeting of the church membership called for the purpose of severing the pastoral relationship.

#### 8.4 **Interim Minister**

In the event of a vacancy in the position of Senior Minister, the Executive Council shall select a candidate for Interim Minister, the duties and responsibilities of, and the compensation arrangements for, shall be determined by the Executive Council in consultation with the Finance Committee.

#### 8.5 **Director of Christian Faith Formation**

8.5.A Duties. The Director of Christian Faith Formation shall initiate and supervise plans for the Christian Faith Formation work of the church under the direction of the Senior Minister in conjunction with the Faith Formation Planning Group. He/she shall be a non-elected, non-voting member of the Faith Formation Planning Group.

##### 8.5.B. Calling or Severance

1. In the event of a vacancy in the office of Director of Christian Faith Formation, the Faith Formation Planning Group shall recommend a suitable candidate to the Executive Council for engagement. Matters of salary and employment shall be attended to by the Executive Council in consultation with the Finance Committee.
2. In the event of a desire for the severance of the relationship between the Director of Christian Faith Formation and the church, a thirty (30) day notice in writing shall be given by the Director of Christian Faith Formation to the Executive Council, or by the President on behalf of the Executive Council to the Director of Christian Faith Formation. This severance action requires an affirmative vote by a majority of the Executive Council.

#### 8.6 **Choir Director and/or Organist**

8.6.A. Duties. The Choir Director and/or Organist shall provide music for the worship services of the church and shall have charge of the church choirs under the direction of the Senior Minister in conjunction with the Worship Planning Team. The Director of Music and/or Organist shall be a non-elected, non-voting member of the Worship Planning Team.

##### 8.6.B. Calling or Severance

1. In the event of a vacancy in the position of Choir Director and/or Organist, the Worship Planning Group shall recommend a suitable candidate for the position to the Executive Council for engagement. Matters of salary and employment shall be attended to by the Executive Council in consultation with the Finance Committee.
2. In the event of a desire for severance of the relationship between the Choir Director and/ or

Organist and the church, a thirty (30) day notice in writing shall be given by the Choir Director and/or Organist to the Executive Council, or by the President on behalf of the Executive Council to the Choir Director and/ or Organist. This severance action requires an affirmative vote by a majority of the Executive Council.

- 8.7 **Other Staff.** The Senior Minister, the Personnel Committee, or the respective Planning Group may recommend to the Executive Council for approval the employment or severance of other staff personnel such as, but not limited to: Christian Faith Formation Director, Youth Director, Administrative Assistant, Custodian, and assistants or substitutes therefore. The job descriptions of these staff members shall be developed by the Personnel Committee and shall be in the possession of the Secretary.

## ARTICLE 9 – MEETINGS

### 9.1 Congregational Meetings

- 9.1.A The President shall preside at all congregational meetings unless special circumstances preclude, in which case the Vice President shall preside. Minutes will be taken by the Recorder.
- 9.1.B Regularly scheduled congregational meetings. Two such meetings will be held each year, one on or near the last Sunday in January and one in March. In addition to the presentation of written reports from at least the Minister, each Planning Group, the Memorials and Endowments Committee (January only), and Olmsted Community Preschool (March only), the following will be the minimum agenda of actions to be taken:
- 9.1.B.1 January meeting. Receive from the Finance Committee and approve or table the annual church budget for operating, building maintenance and improvement, and benevolence expenses, and the transaction of other necessary church business.
- 9.1.B.2. March meeting. Receive from the Spiritual Giving Committee a printed ballot with nominations for election of President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, elected Planning Group, and elected Select Committee members all for expired terms. Nominations from the floor may be added, provided the consent of the nominee is obtained. The slate of nominees prepared by the Spiritual Giving Committee shall be published in the church bulletin, electronic newsletter, and on the church web site, or in a letter mailed to all members at least two (2) weeks prior to the March meeting.
- 9.1.C. Special congregational meetings shall be called by the Executive Council either at the request of the President or by signed written request to the President or Vice President from at least fifty (50) Full or Associate Members of the church. The business to be transacted at a special congregational meeting shall be limited to the purpose for which the meeting was called.
- 9.1.D The following actions require a congregational vote for approval at a regularly scheduled or special congregational meeting:
1. Election of Lay Leadership and officers.
  2. Adoption of annual operating budget.
  3. Calling or removal of ordained staff (minister, associate, assistant minister), except interim minister.
  4. Amendments to the church constitution.
  5. Acquisition, sale, mortgaging, lease, transfer, or disposal of real property.
  6. Approval of special fund raising campaigns in excess of \$99,000.00.
  7. Incurring indebtedness beyond routine revolving commercial credit.



8. Expending M&E discretionary funds on routine operating expenses such as utilities, supplies, insurance, salaries, or employment taxes.

- 9.1.E Notice of meetings. Notice of the regularly scheduled congregational meetings shall be considered as being given when the written notice is published in two weekly church bulletins two to four weeks prior to the meeting OR notice is mailed to each household of members at their last known address OR presented in the church's electronic newsletter. For special meetings of the Congregation, notice shall be mailed to each household as well as being placed in two weekly church bulletins two to four weeks prior to the special meeting, except to call ordained staff, when formal notice deadlines are waived.
- 9.1.F Quorum. The quorum for transaction of business at a regularly scheduled or special congregational meeting shall consist of fifty (50) Full or Associate members of the church.
- 9.1.G Absentee Ballots. Any member of the church who cannot attend a regularly scheduled or special congregational meeting may receive and vote via an absentee ballot on agenda items to be voted on by the church membership. The request for an absentee ballot shall be made to the President or Vice-President. All absentee ballots must be received at the church office prior to the start of the meeting in order to be counted with the ballots cast at the meeting.
- 9.1.H Parliamentary Procedure. "Robert's Rules Of Order" shall be followed for the orderly transaction of business at all regularly scheduled or special congregational meetings.

## 9.2 **Meetings other than Congregational Meetings**

- 9.2.A Meetings of Executive Council, Planning Groups, and Committees shall be open meetings except (1) executive sessions of the Executive Council to discuss matters related to personnel actions, contract bids, and litigation; and (2) meetings of the Personnel Committee. Minutes of Executive Council meetings will be taken by the Recorder. A majority of the voting Executive Council membership shall constitute a quorum.
- 9.2.B Notice of meetings. The Recorder will insure posting the schedule of Executive Council meetings to the church's website events calendar and the church bulletin at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

## **ARTICLE 10 – FINANCES**

- 10.1 **Pledges.** The church shall seek financial support from its members and friends. An opportunity shall be offered annually to all members and friends to make written pledges for operating expenses, including benevolences, and building, maintenance and improvement expenses.
- 10.2 **Special Offerings.** Special offerings may be received and disbursed, and special funds may be raised and disbursed, with the prior authorization of the Executive Council.
- 10.3 **Endowments and Memorials**
- 10.3.A Final acceptance and supervision of all endowments and memorials shall be handled by the Memorials and Endowments Committee as authorized by the Executive Council.
- 10.3.B Requests for disbursement of discretionary funds from the Memorials and Endowments Fund for the

purpose of expending such funds on routine operating expenses such as utilities, supplies, insurance, salaries, or employment taxes shall require approval of the congregation at a regular or special congregational meeting. The funds shall be taken from the Discretionary Fund managed by Memorials and Endowments to the amount necessary and approved by the congregation.

- 10.4 **Fiscal Year.** The Fiscal Year of the church, for all budgeting and accounting purposes, shall be from January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>.
- 10.5 **Fundraisers.** Fundraising events will be coordinated and scheduled with the Financial Recorder, who will maintain the calendar, and the Administration-Trustees Planning Group. Special fund raising campaigns, such as capital campaigns, exceeding \$99,000.00 in total, may be recommended by the Executive Council to the congregation for approval at a congregational meeting.
- 10.6 **Indebtedness.** Incurring of indebtedness beyond routine revolving commercial credit may be recommended by the Executive Council to the congregation for approval at a congregational meeting.
- 10.7 **Audit.** At least annually, an Auditor shall be appointed by the Administration-Trustees Planning Group to examine the financial accounts of all authorized church funds. The auditor shall report the findings of the audit to the appropriate Planning Group for action and further dissemination.

## ARTICLE 11 – PROPERTIES

- 11.1 Title to all property of every kind and nature heretofore or hereafter acquired shall be taken in the name of and all rights thereto vested in the Olmsted Community Church and shall be held and disposed of by the Cabinet thereof in accordance with the Articles of incorporation and Constitution, and in accord with the laws of the State of Ohio, and in particular under the agreements and trusts under which said property is acquired, and as hereinafter set forth.
- 11.2 Title to the Methodist Church property shall be conveyed to the northeast Ohio Conference of the Methodist Church, its successors and assigns, under such conditions, agreements and means as may be agreed upon by the Cabinet and said Conference or conveyed directly or reconveyed to the Olmsted Community Church under an agreement to the general effect that if an in the event the Olmsted Community Church shall cease: (1) to provide a place of divine worship of evangelical character in the territory now consisting of the City of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township, Ohio or (2) to conduct such church in the manner of an interdenominational church associate with the Methodist and Congregational church organizations or their respective successors or with denominational affiliation or affiliations as shall have the approval of the Northeast Ohio Conference of the Methodist Church, its successors and assigns, then and in either event, title to the Methodist Church property shall revert to and become the unrestricted property of said Conference. But provided further that if said conditions are being fulfilled, the Olmsted Community Church shall have the power of sale and ownership generally provided that a proper declaration of trust or contract has been made to the effect that upon future failure to meet sad conditions then all property and funds of the Olmsted Community Church shall be divided equally between said Conference and the Ohio Conference of Congregational Christian Churches or their respective successors or assigns. The particular terms of said agreement and of the methods of handling said property and trusts shall be such as may be agreed upon between said Conference and said Cabinet.
- 11.3 Title to the Congregational Church property shall be conveyed to and vested in the Olmsted Community Church, but same shall be subject to the trust declared and set forth in this Article.

- 11.4 Title to all property of every kind and nature of the Olmsted Community Church heretofore or hereafter acquired and particularly the properties known as the Methodist and Congregational Church properties shall be held, owned, and controlled under the following trust, which is hereby declared, viz:
- A. If an in the event the Olmsted Community Church shall cease:
    - a. To provide a place of divine worship of evangelical character in the territory now consisting of the City of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township, Ohio; or
    - b. To conduct such church in the manner of an interdenominational church associated with the Methodist and Congregational Church organizations or their respective successors or with other denominational affiliation or affiliations as shall have the approval of the Northeast Ohio Conference of the Methodist Church, its successors and assigns, then and in the event of the happening of either event, then all property and funds of the Olmsted Community Church shall be divided equally between the northeast Ohio Conference of the Methodist Church and the Ohio Conference of Congregational Christian Churches or their respective successor and assigns; provided, however, that if said Methodist Church property has reverted to said Conference under the provision of Section 11.2 hereof, then the share of said Conference property under the provisions of this paragraph shall be diminished to the property so reverting and the share of the proper organization of the Congregational Church increased to the entire remaining property and assets of said Olmsted Community Church.

## **ARTICLE 12 – AMENDMENTS**

- 12.1 This Constitution may be amended by a vote of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the church members present at any regularly scheduled or special congregational meeting, provided that a quorum is present, and that the notice of the meeting indicates that an amendment to the Constitution is to be submitted for a vote at the meeting.
- 12.2 A proposed amendment may be submitted by either:
  - 12.2.A A recommendation from the Executive Council by a majority vote (51%) of the Executive Council; OR
  - 12.2.B A written request from not less than twenty-five (25) members of the church submitted to the President.
- 12.3 Proposed amendments shall be made available in the church office to all church members at least two (2) weeks prior to the meeting at which the amendment is to be voted upon, shall also be posted in a conspicuous place in the church for at least two (2) weeks immediately prior to such a meeting, and shall be posted to the church web site for at least two (2) weeks immediately prior to such a meeting. Upon request, a copy of the proposed amendment will be mailed to a member's home address.

## **ARTICLE 13 – BY LAWS**

- 13.1 All Planning Groups, Ministry Teams, and Committees, either select or *ad hoc* Committees, shall follow the duties, procedures, and fulfill the responsibilities provided in the By Laws. By-Laws of the church shall be maintained separately.
- 13.2 Changes to the By-Laws may be proposed to the Executive Council for consideration and approval.