

# **Constitution and By-laws**

## **The Oasis United Church of Christ, Jefferson City, MO**

### **I. Name of Church. Affiliation.**

The name of this corporation shall be The Oasis United Church of Christ (UCC) of Jefferson City and will be referred to hereafter as "The Oasis", "Oasis" and/or the "congregation." The Oasis is affiliated with the Western Association and the Missouri Mid-South Conference of the United Church of Christ

### **II. Purpose (Mission Statement)**

The Oasis UCC is a diverse community of action-oriented followers of Jesus, who humbly strive through worship, faith formation and the practice of Jesus' teachings to love God and our neighbors as God loves us.

God calls us to care for and meet people where they are; share a life of prayer and joyful service with all; and together--worship, rest in, and serve God. We are seekers of justice and lovers of all of God's creation. Through the community formed by the Holy Spirit, we are consoled, forgiven, refreshed and inspired.

We extravagantly welcome all people; believers, non-believers, doubters, questioners, no matter who they love, their gender identity or expression, their marital standing or family structure, their race, culture, ability or their economic or social circumstance. All are a blessing to our journey of faith and we seek to share God's love and grace with all.

### **III. Membership**

- A. Membership in this congregation is open to all people in accordance with the congregation's practices. Members are baptized persons who the Leadership Council affirms for membership and who unite with Oasis UCC by a public declaration of faith and commitment.
- B. Membership may be terminated by the Leadership Council in the following ways: transfer of membership; at the request of the member; death; inactivity; or a failure to honor Membership Responsibilities. Members to be terminated due to inactivity will be sent a written notice when possible and given an opportunity to request that their membership be preserved.
- C. Membership Responsibilities:
  - 1. Members are expected to support the mission and purpose of Oasis; vote, serve on committees, and share in the life and work of the congregation; contribute to its support and benevolences through commitments of time, talent and treasure; and care for its spiritual welfare.
  - 2. Members are to refrain from actively recruiting members from other UCC churches.
  - 3. Upon becoming a member of The Oasis, an individual will resign his/her membership in any other faith community.
  - 4. Members choosing to leave the church for any reason will inform the church office.

#### IV. Meetings of the Congregation

- A. The congregation shall meet at least twice a year: once in an Annual Congregational Business Meeting to do the business of the church; and another in an Annual Congregational Visioning Meeting to dialog and discern the goals and vision for the future of the church and to vote on the following year's budget and slate of candidates for the Leadership Council and Nominating Committee. Special Congregational Meetings may be called by the Leadership Council to address situations or opportunities that require congregational vote, and may be called by a written petition signed by 10 members and presented to the Leadership Council.
- B. The Annual Congregational Business Meeting shall be held no later than the First Sunday of March, the purpose of which is to:
  - 1. Report on the previous year's ministry and finances; and
  - 2. Conduct any other church business as identified by the Leadership Council or members of the congregation. Any additional business, including any proposed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws must be brought forward to the Leadership Council in advance and must be approved by that body by consensus or majority vote as a relevant matter of congregational discussion and/or vote, or by a petition of 10% (or ten) members, which ever is lesser.
- C. The Annual Congregational Visioning Meeting shall be held prior to October 31, the purpose of which is to:
  - 1. Discuss and approve the recommended budget for the upcoming year, brought forth to the congregation by the Leadership Council, having been drawn up for review by the Lead Pastor in collaboration with the Stewardship and Finance Committee.
  - 2. Vote on a slate of candidates for the Leadership Council and the Nominating Committee. A written ballot will be provided to each member.
  - 3. Develop, review and assess the congregation's mission, ministries, objectives and goals.
  - 4. Make adjustments to the congregation's priorities as called for based on the dialogue and discernment.
- D. Written notice of any Meeting of the Congregation will be given by email and bulletin announcements not less than 14 days in advance, and will specify the place, day, and hour of the meeting. In an emergency situation, the Leadership Council may call for a special meeting with a minimum of 10 day's notice.
- E. A quorum for all Congregational meetings shall consist of 25% of the membership of The Oasis as reported to the Conference in the most recent annual report, or at least 10 members, whichever is greater.
- F. Each Member will have one vote. Voting is available to those who are present either in person or via electronic means, if available, whereby the member is able to listen and participate in discussion. No proxies are allowed.
- G. Decision-making at The Oasis UCC will be by consensus, where possible, otherwise a simple majority of the voting members present is required. However, any changes to this constitution and by-laws, changes to denomination affiliation, or dissolution of the congregation will require a two-thirds affirmative vote. The decision to call or terminate pastoral staff will require a three-quarters vote. At the discretion of the Leadership Council President voting can be done by a voice vote, show of hands, or written ballot.

- H. In addition to the matters defined above, the following must come before the congregation at a duly called congregational meeting:
1. Calling staff to serve as Pastor and Teacher. This would include Lead Pastor, Associate pastor(s), or any position that requires ordination.
  2. Terminating pastoral staff (as defined in Section VIII) except in cases of misconduct.
  3. The borrowing of money or capital improvements in excess of 10% of the yearly church operating budget.
  4. Any commitment to acquire, lease, or dispose of real property.
  5. Any extra budgetary program or project, excluding repair or replacement, using over \$10,000 of endowed funds or investment income.
- I. Minutes will be taken of every congregational meeting and saved in the church office.

## **V. Leadership Council**

- A. The Leadership Council is elected by the Congregation and serves as its governing body.
- B. The Leadership Council will consist of seven to nine members. Members are chosen by a vote of the congregation at the Annual Congregational Visioning Meeting on a rotating basis—at least two members are elected for staggered three-year terms, so that each year, at least 2 members of the Leadership Council are voted upon by the congregation.
- C. Each member of the Leadership Council serves a three-year term and can be re-elected once and, after a one-year hiatus, can be elected again and re-elected once. This process may be repeated. In the event of a vacancy on the Leadership Council, the Leadership Council may appoint someone to serve until the next Annual Congregational Business Meeting.
- D. Called pastoral staff serve as ex-officio, non-voting members of the Leadership Council.
- E. The responsibilities of the Leadership Council include:
1. Provide general oversight of all the activities of the church, insure that mission and purpose of the church drives decision making, supports the development of ministry teams required for pursuit of the mission and purpose and plan for the church's future.
  2. Provide a forum of communication among the various ministry teams, officers, pastor, and staff of the church and address differences among them.
  3. Select and remove officers.
  4. Manage the financial health of the church and her assets and investments; implement the church's investment, endowment and stewardship policies; borrow money and incur indebtedness for purposes of the church, and to execute and deliver, in the church's name, evidence of such debt.
  5. Oversee the church's business agreements and responsibilities.
  6. Oversee and provide direction to pastoral staff; choose interim pastor in the case of a vacancy.

7. Design, facilitate and disseminate a yearly evaluation of the church's ministries Including the pastor(s), staff and all ministries and present findings to the Pastor(s), Leadership Council, and Pastoral Relations Committee, and prepare a written report on the summary findings available to all members.
8. Investigate any situations involving allegations or proof of misconduct by pastoral staff, and if appropriate, suspend or terminate the pastor or staff member, and communicate with the congregation and the denomination as appropriate.
9. Develop personnel policies and procedures that provide the Lead Pastor, as general supervisor of all staff, with guidance regarding their hiring, supervision, and termination; and approve the hiring and termination of all Lay staff.
10. Accept for review petitions brought from the congregation.
11. Evaluate and offer recommendations regarding any changes to by-laws that may come up for congregational review.
12. Ensure that an Annual Report on the past year is presented to the congregation at the time of the Annual Congregational Business Meeting.
13. Appoint delegates to represent our congregation at Western Association and Missouri Mid-South Conference functions and meetings.

F. Meetings of Leadership Council:

1. A simple majority of the total number of the Leadership Council shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.
2. Decisions of the Leadership Council shall be made by consensus of all members present at a meeting. If, however, a consensus cannot be reached, the President shall so declare and action shall be taken by majority vote of the Council members present.
3. Every act or decision made by a majority of the members present at a duly held meeting, which may be in person or teleconference, at which a quorum is present, shall be regarded as the act of the Leadership Council, unless a greater number is required by law.
4. The Leadership Council will schedule meetings to be held at least ten times per year. These meetings will be published on the church calendar.
5. All Leadership Council meetings are open to members of the congregation except Executive Sessions which may be closed but which must be posted in the bulletin in advance.
6. Minutes will be taken at all Leadership Council meetings. Minutes from the preceding meeting will be approved at the beginning of the following meeting. With the exception of minutes from Executive Sessions, minutes will be shared with the congregation within two weeks of approval.
7. A file will be kept in the church office of all Leadership Council meeting minutes as well as minutes from all congregational meetings.

## **VI. Officers**

A. From the members of the Leadership Council, the following roles will be elected by the Leadership Council:

1. **President:** The primary duties include coordinating, facilitating and presiding at meetings of the Leadership Council and the congregational meetings; sign legal documents as required on behalf of the congregation; enforce the bylaws and perform other duties as assigned by the congregation.
2. **Vice President:** The primary duties include supporting the President and coordinating and facilitating meetings of the Leadership Council and the congregational meetings and other duties in the President's absence.
3. **Secretary:** Primary duties include recording or delegating the recording of minutes of all Leadership Executive Sessions are made available to the congregation.
4. **Treasurer:** Primary duties include oversight of financial procedures and collaborating with the Lead Pastor and Stewardship and Finance Committee in the preparation and implementation of a responsible budget; keep and preserve accurate financial records; insure timely payment of financial obligations.

B. Officers serve one-year terms, which come up for review and/or renewal yearly by the Leadership Council.

## **VII. Standing Committees**

The following are the committees required to be active in the congregational life of The Oasis UCC. These Committees shall consist of members with appropriate gifts and interests. These members will be chosen by either the Leadership Council or the Congregation as specified below, in collaboration with the Lead Pastor and Nominating Committee.

### A. Nominating Committee

The nominating committee develops job descriptions for various volunteer positions as needed, canvasses the congregation in search of volunteers to serve on standing committees and ministry teams, and brings forward names of member candidates to fill positions on the Leadership Council, Nominating Committee and Pastoral Search Committee preceding any elections to these bodies by the congregation.

1. The Nominating Committee will be comprised of three to five members elected yearly by the congregation at its Annual Visioning meeting. The Leadership Council President is an ex-officio, non-voting member.
2. Nominating Committee members may serve for more than one year, but each year's nominations for the following year's Nominating Committee should include at least two people not currently serving on the Nominating Committee.

### B. Pastoral Relations Committee

The Pastoral Relations Committee shall seek to achieve and maintain an open, effective, and trusting relationship, and two way-communications between the Pastor(s) and the congregation. The Committee will meet at least quarterly. The deliberations of the Pastoral Relations Committee are confidential and meetings are not open to others in the congregation for general participation.

1. The Committee will be comprised of three to five members chosen by the Nominating Committee in

collaboration with Leadership Council and the Lead Pastor. At least one member of the Search Committee shall serve on the Pastoral Relations Committee for the first year of a pastor's ministry.

2. Duties include:

- Listening to, collaborating and supporting the pastor(s).
- Responding to any issues and concerns brought by the Pastor, staff and/or congregation.
- Providing a middle ground to discuss and resolve concerns.

C. Stewardship and Finance Committee

In partnership with the Lead Pastor, the Stewardship and Finance Committee manages and oversees the financial affairs of the church and provides leadership for the congregation's ongoing stewardship efforts.

1. The committee will be comprised of three to five members, including the Treasurer. Members will be recommended by the Nominating Committee and appointed by the Leadership Council. The committee will select a co-chair; the Treasurer will serve as the other co-chair. No members of the same family will serve on this committee at the same time.

2. Duties of the committee include:

- Receiving the recommended budget for the forthcoming year from the Lead Pastor and collaborating with him/her to determine the total anticipated revenue. After appropriate review and consideration, the committee will submit to the Leadership Council a budget based on anticipated revenues and the congregation's identified priorities, goals and objectives.
- Organizing and facilitating an ongoing stewardship program for The Oasis, including an annual stewardship drive and seeking other forms of income.
- Developing and overseeing sound financial procedures to be used by the church.
- Creating and submitting regular monthly and year-end financial reports to the Leadership Council.

D. Ministry Coordinating Committee

The Ministry Coordinating Committee will work with the Lead Pastor and the Leadership Council to insure that any activity planned by ministry teams fit with the mission and vision of the church as defined by the congregation. A ministry is any activity that expresses or spreads faith, builds community and/or allows members to share God's love and grace in the world. Whether a member or not, all are welcome to serve on ministry teams based on interest, passion and gifts. Ministries can be recommended by the Leadership Council, the Lead Pastor, or members of the congregation.

1. The committee will be comprised of three members recommended by the nominating committee and appointed by the Leadership Council. The committee would select its own chairperson.

2. Duties and Responsibilities:

- Providing assistance to a ministry team as it determines its organizational structure, recruits members, set goals and objectives, creates action and evaluation plans, and determines its budgetary needs.
- Encouraging ministries to prepare for the congregation's Annual Visioning Meeting by establishing priorities and goals related to its ministry for the forthcoming year.

- Working with the ministries to ensure appropriate and timely reporting of all ministry activities.
- Making recommendations to the Leadership Council about the feasibility of starting a new ministry based on the activity's fit with the church's vision, mission, and goals, the activity's anticipated budget needs and the church's current budget.
- Arranging at least two meetings a year of all Ministry Team Leaders to provide direction, promote communication, and encourage coordination between the Ministry teams.

#### E. Pastoral Search Committee

Upon the request of the Leadership Council, a Search Committee shall be formed to screen, interview, and recommend individuals to serve as called clergy for the congregation.

1. The Search Committee shall consist of five to seven members; one member each of the Leadership Council and the Pastoral Relations Committee chosen by those respective bodies, and three to five other Members elected by the Congregation to represent the interests and goals of the congregation.
2. The Search Committee shall work with the Missouri Mid-South Conference and follow its process when calling a pastor.
3. Committees searching for Called Associate Pastors shall seek the advice of the Lead Pastor, who shall serve as an ex officio member of the Search Committee.
4. The Search Committee will present one candidate to the Leadership Council, which will then consider the candidate and, if acceptable, present the candidate to the congregation for approval at a congregational meeting.

#### F. Ad-Hoc Committees

The Leadership Council, as it deems appropriate, can create Ad-Hoc Committees.

### **VIII. Pastoral Staff**

A. The Lead Pastor will be called as spiritual leader and head administrator of Oasis supported and empowered by the congregation to freely lead the community as guided by the Holy Spirit and the congregation's mission and vision. Additional pastoral staff may be called as per the search process defined in (VII. B). He/she would report to the Lead Pastor and be accountable to the Lead Pastor and Leadership Council. The duties and responsibilities for any called pastoral position will be defined during the search process.

B. Pastor(s) should maintain high moral standards, feel commitment to a growing spiritual life, be ordained, hold a Master of Divinity degree, and have sufficient training and experience for the needs of The Oasis.

C. The Leadership Council will arrive at an adequate compensation package to offer the pastor on a yearly basis that can adequately be met by the church budget; taking into consideration the Conference's recommended guidelines.

D. The pastor shall attend all Leadership Council meetings, keep the congregation informed of his/her activities, bring to the church news and issues relating to the wider Church, participate in discussion and planning and provide spiritual direction.

E. Dismissal of Called Clergy. If a member of the pastoral staff loses the support or confidence of the congregation or the Leadership Council, or if other serious problems arise that may ultimately warrant the dismissal of the pastor or a change in the call agreement, the Leadership Council shall seek the advice of the Missouri Mid-South Conference and initiate whatever procedures it deems appropriate to solve the problem or restore support or confidence in the pastor. If such procedures are unsuccessful, the Leadership Council shall make appropriate recommendations and seek guidance from the congregation.

## **IX. Lay Staff**

- A. Lay Staff with the requisite skills and experience may be chosen to lead specific ministries via a search process defined by the Leadership Council and Lead Pastor. These staff members would report to the Lead Pastor, and be accountable to the Lead Pastor and Leadership Council. The duties and responsibilities for each position would be defined during the search process.
- B. Lay Staff currently employed by any other UCC church who voluntarily terminate that employment will not be eligible for employment with The Oasis for six months after a voluntary termination.

## **X. Finances**

- A. Fiscal year is the same as the calendar year – January through December.
- B. Budget process:
  - 1. The annual budget process starts by committees and ministries proposing financial and staffing needs for the upcoming year to the Lead Pastor and Stewardship and Finance Committee.
  - 2. The Stewardship and Finance Committee in collaboration with the Lead Pastor defines goals and objectives for income; and implements the annual Stewardship drive.
  - 3. Accounting for projected income, the Lead Pastor and the Stewardship & Finance Committee develop a workable budget and submit it to the Leadership Council.
  - 4. The Leadership Council reviews the draft budget, makes any changes it may deem necessary and submits it to a congregational vote at the Annual Congregational Visioning Meeting.
  - 5. The Congregation defines through their vote, the operating budget and ministry priorities. Any changes between line items must be approved by the Leadership Council. Any additions to the bottom line of the annual budget exceeding 10% of the total budget must be approved at a Special Congregational Meeting.
  - 6. A minimum of 10% of projected annual income should be tithed to the congregation's mission and outreach budget. It is recommended that The Oasis practice the United Church of Christ's guidelines and distribute the tithe as follows: 50% of that budget to the wider church through Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM), 15% to the wider church through designated gifts, and 35% to local mission.
- C. Audit & Financial Control:
  - 1. Check signing: At all times, there shall be at least two, but no more than four individuals, who are authorized to sign checks. Those authorized to sign checks shall be designated by the Leadership Council.
  - 2. Internal Audit: An internal audit should be conducted annually. The audit shall consist of a review of all

of the financial records of The Oasis UCC. The Leadership Council President shall appoint an individual or a committee to conduct the internal audit, but the conductor of the audit must not be one of the elected Leadership Council members.

3. External Audit: An external audit should be completed every three years. The external audit shall be completed by a Certified Public Accountant. The Leadership Council shall budget appropriate funding to accomplish this provision.

4. Monthly Financial Reports: The Treasurer or designated Co-Chair of the Stewardship and Finance Committee shall provide to the Leadership Council monthly financial reports for all meetings. The Leadership Council shall make monthly financial reports available to members on request.

#### **XI. Dissolution of the Church**

Upon dissolution of the church, its assets including any property shall be transferred to the Missouri Mid-South Conference of the United Church of Christ.

#### **XII. Amending Constitution and By-laws:**

This Constitution and By-laws may be amended only by a two-thirds vote of the membership eligible to vote at the Annual Congregational Business Meeting or Special Congregational Meeting called to make the Constitution and Bylaws change.

**END**

*This Constitution/Bylaws was approved by The Oasis Congregation on July 29, 2018 and will take effect on July 29, 2018*