**CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS**

**OF**

**OAK HILLS CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

**(Disciples of Christ)**

**Butler, Pennsylvania 16002**

**Preamble**

We the members of the Oak Hills Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Butler, Pennsylvania, a congregationally governed body, in order to promote the work of the Church in the Spirit of Christ, and thus advance God’s kingdom, do hereby adopt this Constitution and Bylaws on

May 16, 1999. Last amended June 2nd, 2019.

**ARTICLE I – NAME**

The name of this organization shall be Oak Hills Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Butler, Pennsylvania, affiliated with and an integral part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

**ARTICLE II – PURPOSE AND MISSION STATEMENT**

**The purpose of this body is set forth in our Mission Statement:**

OAK HILLS CHRISTIAN CHURCH (Disciples of Christ) is a family-oriented community of Disciples of Jesus Christ belonging to the communion of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). We believe God’s mission for the church is to BE and to SHARE the Good News of

Jesus Christ, witnessing and serving from our doorsteps “… to the ends of the earth”. Acts 1:8

Through the warmth of our fellowship we share this GOOD NEWS of Jesus Christ through evangelism, worship, education and service. We adhere to the principles of our early church leaders that “We are not the only Christians, but Christians only,” and strive toward the unity of all believers.

**ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP**

**SECTION A: MEMBERSHIP**

Membership of this congregation, as a part of the whole family of God on earth, shall consist of those who have publicly confessed their acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and their Lord and Savior, and who identify themselves as members of the congregation and meet the following criteria: belief in Jesus Christ as the leader of the Church and the teachings of biblical Scripture.

**SECTION B: BAPTISM**

We believe that immersion was the mode of baptism practiced by the early church and submitted to by our Lord Jesus Christ in the Jordan River. Children raised in the Oak Hills Christian Church will be taught baptism by immersion, and received into membership by immersion. A new believer in Christ, seeking membership, must be baptized by immersion, in obedience to Christ. Baptism is at the discretion of the Minister. Should any individual be deemed not ready for Baptism by the Minister, the Minister is to notify the General Board.

**SECTION C: TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP**

Persons desiring to unite with this congregation by transfer of membership may do so by reaffirmation of their faith and commitment to Christ. Anyone not previously baptized by immersion is required to complete membership classes. Membership classes focus on basic Disciples of Christ practices and beliefs with an emphasis on why we believe in immersion.

Persons may terminate their membership by requesting in writing the removal of their name from the membership roster.

**SECTION D: DUAL MEMBERSHIP**

Those desiring associate membership in this and another church in dual status, having previously accepted Jesus Christ and attending the Membership classes if not immersed, shall do so by going before the congregation and making their desires known.

**SECTION E: VOTING**

Voting privileges shall be accorded to all recorded and documented members.

Absentee votes may be requested prior to a scheduled vote.

The absentee ballot may be requested by contacting the office prior to any congregational vote. Votes must be returned to the church prior to the congregational vote. Absentee ballots shall be available upon request to active, recorded and documented members of the church. Active, recorded and documented membership shall include any member who has attended church four (4) times in the last one (1) year prior to voting, or who is a member of the church but cannot attend due to physical limitations. Special exception may be made for members if they live outside of the state.

**SECTION F: NEW MEMBER SHIP REQUIREMENTS**

Six (6) months of regular attendance, active participation and financial support. Membership requires the Minister and Board approval.

**ARTICLE IV – RIGHTS, PRIVILEGES**

**AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF**

**THE CONGREGATION**

The congregation shall manage its affairs under the Lordship of Jesus Christ; determine its faithfulness to the gospel with respect to the basis of membership; own, control and encumber its property; organize and carry out the mission and witness of the congregation. Establish its budgets and financial policies; call its Minister(s) and other staff; and participate, through voting representatives, in Regional and General in Regional and General Assemblies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in forming the corporate judgments of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The congregation shall demonstrate voluntarily its mutual concern for the nurture, mission and witness of the whole church and, among other responsibilities, it shall: to proclaim the Gospel, administer baptism and the Lord’s Supper; provide for the spiritual nurture of its members; grow in understanding that the church is a universal fellowship; transcend all barriers within the human family such as race, gender and culture; be faithful in Christian stewardship, striving to share proportionately in providing resources for the total life, work and witness of the Christian Church(Disciples of Christ); choose voting representatives to the general and regional assemblies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); and seek to realize the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ through cooperation with other churches of the community and with present and emerging ecumenical structures. The congregation shall sustain its Minister(s) in faithfulness and honor, and in matters pertaining to relationships with the Minister(s) seek counsel from the Executive Pennsylvania Regional Minister.

The congregation shall exercise and enjoy all other rights, privileges and responsibilities requisite or appropriate to carrying out its purpose.

**ARTICLE V – OFFICERS, GENERAL BOARD,**

**ELDERS, DIACONATE, JUNIOR DIACONATE,**

**ACOLYTE, HONORARY OFFICERS,**

**TRUSTEES AND COMMITTEES**

**SECTION A: OFFICERS**

The members of the congregation, as defined in Article III, shall elect from among its members a Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and Recorder. These officers shall be elected at the annual meeting of the congregation and shall serve as officers of the congregation and the General Board as set forth in the Bylaws.

**SECTION B: GENERAL BOARD**

The congregation shall have a General Board acting as its Official Board which shall be responsible to the congregation and have authority to act on behalf of the congregation when it is not in a congregational meeting. The General Board shall be composed of members and terms of office as set forth in the Bylaws. The General Board shall be responsible for receiving reports from its Minister(s), Officers and the various organizations within the congregation. It shall establish, by its action, the program and budget of the congregation, subject to action by the congregation at its annual meeting. It shall be responsible also for conducting all legal business matters of the congregation, and carry out such other responsibilities as may be defined in the Bylaws.

1. The church year shall begin on the first day of January.
2. Stated meetings of the General Board shall be held monthly.
3. The Board shall, at its first meeting in January, determine the schedule of regular

meetings through the following January.

Special meetings of the General Board may be called by the Moderator or Vice-Moderator, or upon request of ten members of the congregation, or upon request of the Minister(s). Notice of special meetings shall be made by telephone or by announcement at a Sunday morning worship service or by mail, or email. The purpose, date, time and place of the meeting shall be indicated in each notice.

**SECTION C: ELDERS, DIACONATE, JUNIOR DIACONATE,**

**HONORARY OFFICES AND ACOLYTE**

The congregation shall have Elders, Diaconate, Junior Diaconate and Acolytes. Their election, qualifications and responsibilities shall be as set forth in the Bylaws.

**SECTION D: TRUSTEES**

The congregation shall have Trustees. Their election, qualifications and responsibilities shall be as set forth in the Bylaws.

**SECTION E: COMMITTEES**

The congregation, through its General Board, shall establish standing committees and other organization necessary for the conduct of the work of the congregation as set forth in the Bylaws.

**ARTICLE VI – CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS**

At a minimum, congregational meetings will be held annually in the month of November. Notice of all stated or special congregational meetings shall be announced at a regular Sunday morning worship service of the congregation, at least one week in advance of the meeting, and by means of the church newsletter or a written notice sent through the mail or email, postmarked at least ten days before the meeting. Purpose, date, time and place of meeting shall be indicated in each notice.

**ARTICLE VII - CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**

This constitution may be amended at any congregational meeting by two-thirds vote of the members voting on the amendment, provided written notice of the proposed amendment has been sent through the mail or email to members of the congregation, at least ten days prior to the time the vote is to be taken, and the proposed amendment has been read at or following two successive Sunday morning worship services immediately prior to the time the vote is taken.

**BYLAWS**

**ARTICLE I - OFFICERS OF THE CONGREGATION**

**A: ELECTION AND TERM OF OFFICE**

1. The congregation, at its annual meeting, shall elect for terms of two years the following officers who may only serve two (2) years without a break of one (1) year: Moderator of the congregation, who also shall serve as Moderator of the General Board.
2. Vice-Moderator of the congregation, who also shall serve as Vice-Moderator of the General Board.
3. Treasurer of the congregation, who also shall serve as Treasurer of the General Board.
4. Assistant Treasurer of the congregation, who also shall serve as Assistant Treasurer of the General Board.
5. Recorder of the congregation, who also shall serve as Recorder of the General Board.
6. If a replacement for an officer cannot be found, the General Board by a majority vote, can extend an officer term by two (2) years.

**B: QUALIFICATIONS**

1. Officers must be members of the congregation for a minimum of one (1) year.
2. Officers must be active in the congregation’s life and give evidence of seeking to grow in their understanding and practice of the Christian life. Such evidence would include the following:
3. Conduct of one’s life in light of the teachings of Jesus Christ.
4. Promotion of good will and Christian fellowship in the congregation and community.
5. Attendance at the worship services and stated meetings of the congregation.
6. Regular contributions to the support of the congregation and its outreach program.
7. Willingness to fulfill assignments on behalf of the congregation.
8. Demonstrated skills or evident potential in carrying out responsibilities of the particular office.

g. Failure to fulfill one (1) or more of these obligations for a 6-month period will result in a motion before the Board for removal from office (except in the case of extenuating circumstances).

1. Qualification requirements to fill the vacated Congregational offices, Elders and Diaconate positions may be waved under special circumstances. Any interim position would require nomination by the General Board and shall stand for election for the remainder of the calendar year at the next congregational meeting.

4. Procedure for counting ballots. Ballots are to be counted by three (3) individuals not on the current ballot. At least one (1) current board member and one (1) Church member (non-board member).

**C: RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. The **Moderator** shall preside at all stated and special called meetings of the congregation, General Board and perform such other duties normally associated with the office of Moderator.
2. The **Vice-Moderator** shall serve to support the Moderator, preside in the absence of the

Moderator at meetings of the congregation, general board, and perform such other duties normally associated with the office of Vice-Moderator.

1. The **Treasurer** shall receive all income of the congregation from the Assistant Treasurer, pay all accounts of the congregation as authorized by the budget or special action of the general board when such items are not in the budget, provide accurate records of all expenditures, make regular written reports to the General Board, provide for an annual audit of both income and expenditures for action by the General Board and the congregation.
2. The **Assistant Treasurer** shall be responsible for receiving all income of the congregation, keeping accurate records of the source and amount of such income, depositing such income to its proper accounts, providing the treasurer of the congregation with copies of all deposit receipts, and making regular written reports of income received to the general board. The Assistant Treasurer, by the virtue of his office, has the authority to endorse bank checks in the Treasurer’s absence or unavailability. The Assistant Treasurer is to fulfill the Treasurer’s responsibilities during periods of extended absence or incapability.
3. The **Recorder** shall keep accurate minutes of all meetings of the congregation, General Board and provide for these minutes to be reviewed and approved by their respective bodies.

**ARTICLE II - GENERAL BOARD**

**A: MEMBERSHIP**

1. Membership of the General Board shall be composed of the officers of the congregation, who shall serve the same office on the General Board for their current term of office, elders, elders emeritus, diaconate, trustees and congregational members who serve as chairpersons of standing committees or the chief elected officer of major constituency groups of men, women and youth for their current terms of office.
2. Junior Diaconate and youth representatives shall serve as members of the Board without voting privileges.
3. The Minister(s) of the congregation shall serve as member(s) ex officio without voting privileges.

**B: AUTHORITY**

1. The General Board shall perform its duties according to the authority granted in the Constitution or otherwise delegated to it by the congregation.
2. In keeping with the traditions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the ultimate authority is the congregation. All organizations within the congregation shall be responsible to and report regularly to the General Board and through it to the congregation.
3. The General Board shall concern itself with policy and administrative matters, taking into full account the responsibility of the congregation to the total nurture, witness and mission of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the needs of the community in which the church resides. A policy manual shall be adopted and amended from time to time by action of the General Board.
4. All business meetings of the General Board shall be governed by *Robert’s Rules of Order (Revised).*
5. General Board shall consider five (5) or more members of the official Board as constituting a quorum.

**C: RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. The General Board shall conduct its affairs in harmony with the Constitution and the Bylaws of the congregation.
2. The General Board shall be responsible for conducting the business affairs of the congregation and providing for the planning, coordination, resourcing, evaluation, and implementation of the work and activities of the congregation.
3. At the first meeting in January, the General Board shall establish standing committees related to the basic characteristics of the congregation as Church, such as **Worship, Evangelism and Renewal, Christian Education, Christian Action and Community Service, Outreach, Stewardship and Finance, Property and other standing or ad hoc committees.**
4. Members of the above-mentioned committees shall be nominated by a committee of five that includes the Minister, Moderator-elect, Vice-Moderator-elect, Recorder and one Elder (appointed by the Moderator-elect and Minister) and presented to the Board for action at the January meeting. The committee shall function to enhance or promote congregational life. The committee shall select a spokesperson or chairperson to report to the General Board.
5. The General Board shall establish, when necessary, a Pulpit (Search) Committee for the purpose of securing a minister for the congregation. Membership and responsibilities of the Pulpit Committee shall be as described in Bylaw III, B-1.
6. The Board has the authority to hire paid staff with the exception of the Minister. The General Board shall establish a Personnel Committee for the purpose of establishing working agreements with all staff of the congregation except the Minister(s). This committee shall prepare job descriptions, hold annual reviews of all staff of the congregation, recommend salaries and benefits, including Minister(s) and serve to counsel and advise all staff in personnel relationships. Membership of the Personnel Committee shall not be less than three and include an Elder and a member of the Diaconate.
7. The General Board shall receive regular written reports from its committees and from other organizations within the congregation; and it shall act upon such reports with approval, disapproval, modification or referral back to the respective committee or other organization.
8. The General Board shall receive the proposed annual budget of the congregation from the Stewardship and Finance Committee and recommend its approval or approval with amendment to the congregation at its annual meeting. Subsequent over-expenditure or requests for additional funds from organizations within the congregation shall be approved or disapproved by the General Board.
9. The General Board shall recommend to the congregation the calling of the Minister(s).

**ARTICLE III - MINISTER(S)**

**A: RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. The Minister (Senior) of the congregation shall be the Chief “Administrator of” the congregation, and, in cooperation with the Moderator of the congregation and the General Board, encourage orderly procedures in the life and work of the congregation in compliance with the congregation’s constitution, and Bylaws, and the policies and procedures of the congregation and the General Board.
2. The Minister (Senior) shall give special attention to the selection and training of the congregation’s leaders.
3. The Minister (Senior) shall be an ex officio member, without vote, of all boards, committees, departments, commissions, task groups and constituency groups of the congregation.

**B: SELECTION**

1. The Minister(s) shall be chosen by the congregation as hereinafter described: A representative committee of at least seven nominated by the Moderator and elected by the official Board shall serve as the Pulpit (Search) Committee and be responsible for recommending a prospective Minister to the official Board. At least two Elders shall be assigned to this committee.
2. The Pulpit (Search) Committee may utilize the services of the congregation’s Executive Regional Minister for information and counsel concerning prospective candidates.
3. The Pulpit (Search) Committee shall consult only one prospective Minister at a time; however, information may be secured on several persons in a given period.
4. The Pulpit (Search) Committee shall recommend a prospective Minister to the General Board.
5. The General Board, at a stated or called meeting, may approve the recommendation of the Pulpit (Search) Committee by at two-thirds voting.
6. In regard to the pulpit, the congregation, in a stated or called meeting, may approve the recommendation of the General Board by at least two-thirds majority of members voting. The vote shall be by secret ballot in a regular Sunday morning service of the church after proper notice is given as provided for in special meetings.
7. Upon approval, on behalf of the congregation, a call shall be extended to the prospective Minister by the General Board, in behalf of the congregation.

**C: TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT**

1. An agreement of employment setting forth the salary to be paid to the Minister and other conditions of the call shall be provided to the Minister, with a copy to be filed in the church office and with the regional office.
2. The term of his or her ministry shall be for a contracted period and subject to termination by either party upon sixty (60) days notice or upon such other time as is mutually agreed upon.

**D: RESIGNATION**

1. Voluntary resignation of the Minister shall be submitted to the General Board in writing, after consultation with the Moderator and the Elders.
2. Involuntary resignation of the Minister shall be dealt with confidentially between the Minister, the Moderator, the Elders and the Regional Executive Minister.
3. The General Board shall approve the resignation, voluntary or involuntary, of the minister, by at least two-thirds majority of members voting, and recommend approval to the congregation.
4. The congregation, in a stated or called meeting, shall take final action in approving or disapproving the resignation of the minister by at least two-thirds majority

of members voting by secret ballot.

**ARTICLE IV - ELDERS, DIACONATE, JUNIOR DIACONATE,**

**ACOLYTE, TRUSTEES AND HONORARY OFFICES**

**A: ELECTION AND TERMS OF OFFICE**

The congregation, at its annual meeting, shall elect the following:

1. **Elders**: A total of not more than ten shall serve for a term of five years, two to be elected each year. At the January meeting they shall select from their members a coordinator for the purpose of leadership and scheduling.
2. **Diaconate**: Not more than 20 in number No more than half of whom shall be elected each year for a term of two years. At the January meeting they shall select from their

members a coordinator for the purpose of leadership and scheduling.

1. **Junior Diaconate**: No more than ten in number shall be elected each year for a term of one year.
2. **Acolyte**: No more than ten in number shall be elected each year for a term of one year.
3. **Trustees**: Three in number, one-third of whom shall be elected each year for a term of three years.
4. **Honorary Officers**: Those who, because of infirmities or advanced age, and whose service and consecration to the church merit this honor, may be retired from active responsibility. These to be known respectively as Elder Emeritus or Deacon Emeritus. The Honorary Offices will have no regular assigned duties but may, if agreeable and available, serve when called upon. Honorary Offices will be selected as follows: names of prospective Honorary Officers will be submitted to the Elders; the Elders will make recommendations to the General Board; and the General Board will recommend to the congregation for approval.

**B: QUALIFICATIONS**

1. The qualifications for Elders, Deacons and Trustees shall be the same as described for the officers of the congregation in Bylaw I, B.
2. Elders shall have served a minimum of one term as a Diaconate of this congregation.
3. Diaconate shall have been members of this congregation for at least one year prior to election.
4. Junior Diaconate are ages 14-18 and are members of the congregation.
5. Acolytes are age 6 (within first year of service) -13. By virtue of their age, Acolyte shall not be required to be members of the congregation.

**C: RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. **Elders** primarily shall be responsible for the spiritual life and development of the congregation, preside at the Lord’s Table, assist and share with the Minister(s) in the conduct of his or her pastoral functions and provide supportive counsel for the Minister(s) regarding the spiritual life and development of the congregation. Elders maintain congregational membership roster and perform such other duties as may be assigned.
2. **Trustees** shall hold title to all properties of the congregation, which shall normally include all trust funds belonging to the congregation and shall manage the same under the direction of the General Board of the congregation; and shall perform such other duties as may be required of Trustees by the laws of the state of Pennsylvania and perform such other duties as may be assigned.
3. **Diaconate** primarily shall be responsible for the maintenance and growth of the

congregation through its individual members in witness in the community and perform such other duties as may be assigned.

1. The **Junior Diaconate** shall assist the Diaconate in their assigned duties.
2. **Acolyte** will participate in worship service by lighting candles and at the end of the service by carrying the light of Christ forth into the world.

**ARTICLE V - NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

1. A Nominating Committee that consists of three (3) members, at least two from the Official Board and one from the congregation shall be appointed by the Moderator, approved by the Official Board, and announced to the congregation on or before the first Lord’s Day in September.
2. Nomination Procedures and Ballot Preparation
3. Signed suggestions from members of the congregation for the nominees to the General Board (Elders, Trustees and Diaconate) should be solicited and presented to the Nominating Committee no later than fifteen (15) days after naming of the committee. The Nominating Committee shall explain the duties of each office to proposed candidates secure consent and prepare a ballot consisting of at least one nominee for each vacancy. Upon completion of the ballot of nominees, it shall be presented to the Elders for review at their next meeting. The Elders will then submit the ballot to the General Board at the November Board Meeting. The Board-approved ballot will be presented to the congregation as promptly as possible. The annual election of General Board members shall be held by secret ballot at the annual congregational meeting.
4. A second ballot prepared by the nominating committee shall be presented to the congregation, after verification of eligibility from the first ballot, of nominees for officers of the congregation. The election shall be by secret ballot at the annual congregational meeting.
5. A nominee receiving a majority of the votes cast, for a vacant position, shall be declared elected.
6. An unfulfilled term in a congregational office (Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer and Recorder) shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term by nomination of the Board Moderator and election by said Board.
7. A vacancy among the Elders, Trustees, or Diaconate will be filled by nomination of the Elders and election by the Board until the next congregational election. These appointees shall stand for election at the next congregational meeting for the remainder of the original term.

**ARTICLE VI – REQUIREMENTS TO BE MARRIED IN THE CHURCH**

1. (Deleted June 2nd, 2019)

**ARTICLE VII - BYLAW AMENDMENTS**

1. The Bylaws may be amended, upon a majority vote of the General Board recommending amendment(s) to the congregation and by a two-thirds vote of the congregation in stated or special meeting, provided the proposed amendment(s) has been circulated to the congregation by mail or email and read before the congregation at two consecutive worship services beginning two weeks prior to the meeting of the congregation at which the amendment(s) is to be considered.

This Constitution and Bylaws supersedes and nullifies all previous editions by Oak Hills Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

**ARTICLE VIII - REVIEW REQUIREMENT**

1. This document shall be reviewed at least every five years for relevancy.