

Mission Statement:

The Waterford Congregational Church is an open and loving congregation of seekers of spiritual growth and knowledge of God. Together we worship God, share community, honor our history and endeavor to heed Jesus' call to minister to **all people** everywhere through our local, national, and global outreach

By-Laws of Waterford Congregational Church

***PROPOSED BY-LAW CHANGES HIGHLIGHTED
JANUARY 2025***

A HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Congregational Church in Waterford was founded by eighteen people under the ministerial leadership of Reverend Lincoln Ripley on October 2, 1799. He was followed by the Reverend John A. Douglas, who served for 52 years, the church's longest pastorate.

The original Meeting House was built on Kingman Hill in 1802, approximately ½ mile up the hill on Plummer Hill Road. The Meeting House was owned by the Town and town taxes paid the minister's salary. The Meeting House was used for Town Meetings and Congregational Church services as well as other denominational services. The Meeting House was torn down in 1843 and the lumber was used to build the old Town House, presently the Waterford Historical Society building. After much discussion regarding the new location of the Congregational Church (now a separate entity from the town) the current location in the village was chosen. A distinctive New England style church building, similar to the present one, replaced it in 1843. This structure was destroyed by fire in 1928. The plaques, pulpit, and distinguished fixtures were among the items rescued from the fire.

The church's historic Paul Revere Bell was shattered by the fire and the metal sent to Meneely and Company in New York to be recast. The Bell has a history of its own. Some four years before the fire it cracked and had been recast. Mabel Gage contributed the cost of the Bell's renewal both times in memory of her father, Thomas Hovey Gage, M.D. A new building then replaced the old one, and on November 29, 1929, twenty-seven people stood on a hill across the lake and listened to the ringing of the bell in the new church building.

Organizationally the Waterford Congregational Church federated with the South Waterford Methodist and Universalist Churches in the year 1906, one of the oldest federations in the country. In 1925 under the imaginative leadership of the Reverend, Dr. Hilda Ives, the church became a partner in the Oxford County United Parish. In 1964 the Waterford and South Waterford churches separated from the United Parish, but kept their federation until 1983, when that relationship dissolved.

The following bylaws are a revision of those adopted by the church membership in 1989, and approved by the church membership on October 15, 2006, June 20, 2010, May 24, 2015, 7/2/17 January 28, 2024. **PROPOSALS FOR NEW ADDITIONS/CHANGES ARE HIGHLIGHTED IN RED**

THE BYLAWS
WATERFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
A MEMBER OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

STATUTES

Article I- COVENANT

The corporate life of the Waterford Congregational Church is established in a covenant relationship of mutual service among its members, which is determined by a common purpose rather than a statement of belief, a scriptural precedent. The Covenant of the church is as follows:

“Trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, and believing in the life of love and service as taught and practiced by him, and called by him THE KINGDOM OF GOD:

Seeking to be in spiritual fellowship with all who truly love and follow Jesus Christ, while holding dear our historic rights of freedom of worship, thought and speech;

Humbly confessing our sins, and ever praying for God’s gracious help to enable us to make our lives more effective in advancing the life of love and service in all the world;

We do, in the presence of God, solemnly covenant with **God**, and one another, in the fellowship of this church, to exalt the worship of God, and to promote the service of humanity.”

Article II-OFFICERS

The officers of this corporation shall consist of an elected Moderator, **Diaconate of three or four elected Council members, three or four elected Council Trustees**, an elected Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer, an elected Clerk and an elected Communication Coordinator. Other officers include appointed individuals including: **a Finance Director**, a Church Activity Committee Chair (CAC), Local/Global Mission Committee Chairs, **a Church School Director, an Historian, a Stewardship Committee Representative, and a Music Director, The Pastor is an ex-officio member of the Council (and all other committee meetings.)** Preferably, each board shall have at least one man and one woman on it. Vacancies may be filled by the Trustees until the next annual meeting. Members, associate members, and non-members may serve as officers.

Article III-MEETINGS

An Annual Meeting shall be held in January. Its purpose shall be for the election of officers for the coming year, to hear reports from the committees on activities of the previous year; to present a budget for the operation of the church, and any other business as shall come before the membership. In the event of inclement weather, the meeting will be held the following Sunday.

A **Budget Review**, comprised of all the Officers of the church, shall be held in October to prepare a budget to be presented at the Annual Meeting in January.

Special Meetings may be called by a majority of the Trustees, Deacons, or by the Clerk upon petition of seven members of the Congregation.

The Clerk shall post notice of all church member meetings seven days before the time of the meeting through electronic mailings to our Members, Associate Members, and friends. Notice of the meetings shall also be posted in the Sunday Church Bulletin. Only those articles to be acted upon shall be listed in the call. Any members desiring to present an article for consideration shall give the article to the Clerk or Council member in writing, nine days before the annual or special meeting. In such a case, the article shall be included in the call by the Clerk.

Article IV-MEMBERSHIP

Membership in this church, either by transfer letter or on confession of faith, shall be open to anyone who applies and accepts its covenant of mutual service. Prospective members must be interviewed by the Diaconate and/or the Congregation at a called meeting. The membership shall consist of Covenant Members and Associate Members, each to have full privileges except where otherwise specified in these bylaws. Voting privileges shall be limited to those members **and officers** eighteen years of age or older.

Covenant Members

- Those persons holding membership on April 23, 1956, in the Waterford Congregational Church.
- Those persons requesting membership by confession of faith or by transfer letter who affirm the covenant heretofore in use in the Waterford Congregational Church.

Associate Members

- Those persons holding Associate Membership on April 23, 1956, in the Waterford Congregational Church.
- Those persons living within the area served by the Waterford Congregational Church who wish to maintain church membership elsewhere, yet who wish and request in writing active affiliation with the Waterford Congregational Church while living here.
- Associate Members have full voting privileges.

Inactive Members

- Those who have not attended a service of worship or participated in the organizational life of the church or contributed to its budget for a period of two years may be voted by the Diaconate to the Inactive Membership list. An attempt shall be made to notify the member of this change in membership status.
- An inactive Member shall not be entitled to vote or to hold office, but shall be granted a letter of transfer to another church upon request.
- An Inactive Member shall be restored to Active Membership by the Board of Deacons upon the resumption of active participation in the life of the church.
- Inactive Members shall be listed separately from active membership categories and shall not be considered a statistical part of the church.

Article V-DUTIES OF OFFICERS

The MODERATOR shall be elected at the annual meeting and may serve consecutive terms. The Moderator shall act as Chairperson of all church meetings. **DELETE : The Moderator shall be a Covenant Member.** The Moderator shall be an ex officio member of all committees and boards. In case of a tie vote, the Moderator shall cast the deciding vote.

The CLERK shall be elected annually and may serve consecutive terms. The Clerk shall keep a record of the business meetings of the church, a chronological list of its members showing the time and mode of their admission and dismissal. The Clerk shall keep a record of the year's church activities and make a report at the annual meeting of the numerical condition of the church in the following particulars: number of members, male and female, with the number of active and inactive; additions during the preceding year by confession and by letter; removal by death and by letter; baptisms; and the membership of the Church School and the average attendance. Minutes of the annual meeting shall be sent out upon request. The Clerk shall serve as the Secretary of the Council.

The TREASURER shall be elected annually and may serve consecutive terms. The Treasurer shall take charge of all the money belonging to the organization, keeping written records of same, including contributions for religious and charitable purposes. The Treasurer shall pay such designated contributions to the authorized agents. *The Treasurer shall present written reports monthly to the Church Council of the status of the Church*

finances and budget. A summary of the same shall be reported at the annual meeting. The Treasurer shall meet with and report regularly to the Finance Committee and shall be bonded. (Amended July 2, 2017)

The ASSISTANT TREASURER shall be elected annually and may serve consecutive terms. The Assistant Treasurer shall assist the Treasurer with the collection, recording and disbursement of monies.

The FINANCE CHAIR shall be approved annually and may serve consecutive terms. The members of the Finance Committee will bring forth a nominee to be chair of their committee to be placed for advisory purposes on the slate of officers voted on at the Annual Meeting. The Finance Chair shall work in concert with the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer and make regular reports to the Church Council.

STEWARDSHIP shall be a subset of the Finance Committee and shall consist of a chair and four to eight members at large. The members of Stewardship will bring forth a nominee to be chair of their group to be placed for advisory purposes on the slate of officers voted on at the Annual Meeting. The Stewardship chair shall attend church council meetings on a regular basis and shall make a report of Stewardship work at the annual meeting.

There shall be a DIACONATE of **three or four elected representatives**, each of whom shall hold office for **three** years. The term of office shall be arranged so as to provide for the election of a least one member each year. No member may succeed himself/herself. It shall be the duty of the Diaconate to:

- prepare for and assist in the observances of the ordinances,
- make provision at all services of worship, for preaching, ushering and music,
- assist the pastor in spiritual development of the church

The MUSIC DIRECTOR, appointed by the Council, as a member of Worship, is responsible for coordinating all music presentations for the congregation and therefore serves as an officer of the church.

The CHURCH ACTIVITY COMMITTEE CHAIR shall be approved annually and may serve consecutive terms. The members of the Church Activities Committee will bring forth a nominee to be chair of their committee to be placed for advisory purposes on the slate of officers voted on at the Annual Meeting. The Church Activity Committee Chair shall make regular reports to the Church Council.

The MISSION COMMITTEE CHAIR(s) (Local /National & Global) shall be approved annually and may serve consecutive terms. The members of the Mission Committee will bring forth a nominee(s) to be chair of their committee(s) to be placed for advisory purposes on the slate of officers voted on at the Annual Meeting. The Mission Committee Chair shall make regular reports to the Church Council.

The CHURCH SCHOOL **DIRECTOR** shall be appointed annually by the Council and be the school's highest executive officer, having general supervision of the school's activities and shall make a report of the school's work at the annual meeting. **The Council will bring forth a nominee to be Church School Director to be placed for advisory purposes on the slate of officers voted on at the Annual Meeting.**

The TRUSTEES shall be elected custodians of the church property with the authority and responsibility for making minor repairs to the buildings or other church properties, not to exceed **\$5,000** per item. All major repairs shall be proposed to the Council for a vote of approval with the exception of emergencies. They shall arrange for a janitor, and perform other duties as seem necessary for the welfare of the property. **All deeds and records in the safe deposit box shall be accessible to the Moderator, Historian, Clerk or the Treasurer accompanied by one Trustee.** No contents of the safe deposit box shall leave the bank unless authorized by a vote of all **THREE** Trustees. The congregation shall be advised of such removals. One member of the Trustees shall be elected each year for a term of **THREE** years. The Trustee whose term expires in the current year shall be Chairperson of the Trustees unless the eligible Trustee declines. Trustees may serve consecutive terms. A Trustee shall have the authority to sign all checks, if the Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer is unable to perform the duties of office. **DELETE this sentence: The Trustees shall meet at least once a month.**

The COMMUNICATION COORDINATOR shall be elected annually and may serve consecutive terms. The Communication Coordinator shall attend church council meetings on a regular basis, and coordinate news and publicity of church events.

The Historian, nominated by the Council. shall be approved annually and placed for advisory purposes on the slate of officers voted on at the Annual Meeting. The historian may serve consecutive terms. The historian is an individual with responsibility for archiving congregational records and memorabilia and shall make regular reports to the Council and a report summary of highlights at the annual meeting.

The CHURCH COUNCIL shall consist of all the officers of the church. It shall encourage the cooperation of the committees and boards and encourage the activities of the church, and promote the missionary concerns of the church. A quorum shall consist of five members and the Clerk shall serve as the Secretary of the Council.

Article VI-QUORUM

A Quorum of an official meeting of the church body shall be constituted of at least seven Covenant or Associate Members **or regular participant** or combination thereof.

Article VII-ELECTION

Following the report of the Nominating Committee the election of officers shall take place. Nominations from the floor shall be with the consent of the nominee. If there is more than one person running for an office, the election of that officer shall be by written ballot. Delegates to Association meetings and Conferences may be elected at meetings called following any regular church service or may be appointed by the Moderator.

Article VIII-COMMITTEES

MISSION

(CHURCH ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE (CAC), LOCAL MISSION, NATIONAL & GLOBAL MISSION, AND CHURCH SCHOOL)

The **CHURCH ACTIVITY COMMITTEE (CAC)** endeavors to support the Waterford Congregational Church's mission statement by sponsoring social events and programs as an outreach to the church family and the wider community.

Local Mission and National/Global Mission shall identify community needs and where appropriate, National and Global needs and direct available resources to them.

CHURCH SCHOOL

The Church School Director shall create and administer a youth ministry during the time of Sunday services. The purpose of the Church School shall be to introduce children in attendance at our Sunday services with an opportunity to learn about our religious beliefs in age appropriate lessons.

WORSHIP

(DIACONATE, MUSIC)

DIACONATE

There shall be a DIACONATE of **three or four elected persons**, each of whom shall hold office for **three** years. The term of office shall be arranged so as to provide for the election of a least one member each year. No member may succeed himself/herself. It shall be the duty of the Diaconate to:

- **prepare for and assist in the observances of the ordinances,**
- **make provision at all services of worship, for preaching, ushering and music,**
- **assist the pastor in spiritual development of the church.**

MUSIC

The **MUSIC DIRECTOR** shall make provisions for the choir/special music programs of the church.

PASTORAL RELATIONS Our Pastor selects one Deacon and two members-at-large who will serve to assist in the smooth functioning of pastor/parish relationships or in other capacities as needed. *Pastoral Relations shall schedule meetings once quarterly and when requested by the Pastor or a member of Pastoral Relations.*

FINANCE

The FINANCE COMMITTEE *shall be* comprised of a Trustee selected by the Trustees, the Moderator or designated Council member, *the Stewardship Chairperson, a Member at Large, the Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer and the Pastor (Ex officio).* *The Committee shall oversee all finances and salaries of the church and the work of the Treasurer. The Committee will appoint one member as the Chair of the committee annually. (Amended 7.2.2017)*

STEWARDSHIP shall consist of a chair and four to eight persons at large. The goals of **STEWARDSHIP** shall be to educate church members about the financial needs of the church and seek ways to increase giving and build the endowment.

The **BUDGET REVIEW** shall consist of all elected officers of the church. A **Budget Review** meeting shall be held in October. The budget shall be submitted at the Annual Meeting for approval by the church membership.

COMMUNICATIONS

(PUBLICITY, HISTORIAN, CLERK)

PUBLICITY Those charged with spreading the word of church activities, announcements, and promotions in the local, regional and national media.

HISTORIAN The individual with responsibility for archiving congregational records and memorabilia.

CLERK The individual with responsibility as Secretary of the Council who announces meeting dates and times, takes and disseminates minutes of meetings, maintains annual records of the congregation, and maintains contact and mailing lists.

TRUSTEES

The TRUSTEES shall be custodians of the church property with the authority and responsibility for making minor repairs to the buildings or other church properties, not to exceed \$5,000 per item. All major repairs shall be proposed to the Council for a vote of approval with the exception of emergencies.

The **PASTORAL EVALUATION PROCESS (scheduling responsibility of the Trustees)** comprised of one Deacon, one trustee and one person at-large shall conduct an annual evaluation of the Pastor **before the end of February each year**. The evaluation outcome will be constructive feedback on the Pastor's performance and a recommendation to the Finance Committee on salary status. The Finance Committee will take their decision to the Council for approval. Each year the Evaluation will generally follow the guidelines as outlined in the Appendix of the By-Laws.

The **NOMINATING COMMITTEE (annually initiated and appointed by the Moderator by November 16)**, shall be composed of one Deacon **whose term is ending** and one Trustee whose term does not expire at the Annual Meeting and one person at large.. It shall also include the Clerk in an advisory capacity to supply the committee with the official membership list. The Minister and Moderator are members ex officio of this and all other committees.

The following officers are to be elected each year: Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and a Communications Coordinator. In addition, the Nominating Committee will nominate a Deacon for a **THREE-YEAR** term and a Trustee for a **THREE-YEAR** term. The Officers for: CAC, Mission (Local & Global), Music, Historian, Church School Director, Stewardship, and Finance will be brought **forth as nominees to be chair of their respective groups to be placed for advisory purposes on the slate of officers voted on at the Annual Meeting**.

SPECIAL COMMITTEES may be appointed by the Council and/or elected by the congregation and particularly a **SEARCH COMMITTEE** when the church anticipates calling a Minister.

Article IX-MINISTER

The MINISTER shall:

- be the spiritual leader of the church;
- fulfill the role of pastor, teacher and counselor
- be in charge of all services of public worship, the administration of the sacraments, the performance of all rites and ceremonies observed in the church building.
- be an advisor to all Boards and Committees and organizations of the church.

- be called by a two-thirds majority vote of the church members present at a legally-called meeting of the church, upon the recommendation of the Search Committee.
- be called for an indefinite period of time.
- The Minister's term can be terminated either by his/her resignation or by the majority vote of the members present at a legally-called meeting, the purpose of which has been announced.
- The latter action will preferably be taken on the recommendation of the Diaconate following a hearing with the Minister.
- A forty-five-day notice period shall be required unless a shorter one is mutually satisfactory.
- A call will include a statement of financial remuneration, housing provisions, annuity and insurance benefits, expense allowance and provision for vacation time.

Article X-BYLAWS AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended at any regular or special meeting by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at such meeting, provided notice of the proposed amendment is contained in the call for the meeting.

These Bylaws as revised shall supersede all previous Bylaws and amendments as of the date of approval by the Council and the church membership.

Article XI

Roberts Rules of Parliamentary Procedure shall be followed at all meetings.

Appendix of the By-Laws

Evaluation Committee Procedure

- The Evaluation Committee will review the evaluation from the previous year and will meet with the Pastor to discuss his or her performance for the current year. At minimum, the Committee and the Pastor will discuss the following:
 1. Did the Pastor improve his/her performance based on the constructive feedback from the previous year?
 2. Were there any additional performance improvements?
 3. From the Pastor's perspective, what is the "spiritual climate" of the church?
- In addition to the committee, as per the By-Laws, the evaluation process will include input from at least 12 congregation members.
- Congregation members will be asked the following general questions as well as any additional specific questions the committee or the Council may feel pertain to the Pastor's and the Church's overall performance.
 1. What aspects of the Pastor's ministry to the church are really strong? What does our Pastor do well?
 2. What has the Pastor done or said in her/his ministry that has personally moved you?
 3. What could she/he do differently, more of, less of, or better to improve her/his performance as a minister?
- The evaluation team will make a salary recommendation to the Finance Committee, who will evaluate it, and then make a recommendation to the Council.
- The evaluation committee will also meet with the Pastor to discuss all constructive feedback.
- The Pastor Call Agreement will be updated annually by the Moderator and the Treasurer based on this evaluation and salary recommendation.

Motion to Amend the By-Laws – January 28,2024

Ted C. made a motion, seconded by Dodi, to accept the Council recommended amendment to the By-Laws in Article II Officers:

Current Wording

"All officers shall be covenant or associate members, as hereinafter defined, except that no fewer than two of the Trustees shall be covenant members."

Proposed Amended Wording

" Members, associate members, and non-members may serve as officers."

The motion passed with a unanimous vote of those who cast votes.