

# Brookline Community Church

Brookline, NH

## CONSTITUTION



Enacted - 1951

Current Revision – January 2023

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**REVISION HISTORY**

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## **PREAMBLE**

We, believers in God, organized for the purpose of spreading the word of God, especially as it has been revealed in the personal life and teachings of Jesus Christ, deem it advisable that we have definite laws to direct us, so that “all things may be done decently and in order,” 1 Corinthians 14:40. We, therefore, adopt the following Constitution.

### **ARTICLE I – Name**

The name of this association shall be BROOKLINE COMMUNITY CHURCH

The name registered with the IRS is CHURCH OF CHRIST

The name registered with the State of New Hampshire is CHURCH OF CHRIST, Brookline NH

### **ARTICLE II – Denominational Affiliation**

Section 1- The local congregation governs this church, but because its parish is worldwide, it recognizes its privilege and need to be affiliated with larger religious bodies having the same general Christian objectives. It shall therefore be affiliated with the New England Conference of the United Methodist Church as a union church and with the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ (Congregational) as a dually aligned congregation.

Section 2 -The assets of the Church of Christ DBA as Brookline Community Church, including but not limited to: Checking, Savings, Buildings, Donations, Trusts and Bequeaths, remain assets of the Brookline Community Church regardless of denominational affiliation, unless otherwise identified by donor.

Section 3- In the case where this church should close by vote of the congregation at a duly called congregational meeting or becomes depleted so that it does not function as an active church in the maintenance of its services of worship and general activities for a period of three (3) years, the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ, or its successors, shall succeed to all rights and titles of the church property and funds with the right to dispose of its real estate and to preserve the proceeds thereof together with the endowments and Trusts of the church, and to administer them as nearly as possible according to the intent of the donors for the upbuilding of the Kingdom of God in Brookline New Hampshire, if practicable, and if not, then the State of New Hampshire. *Adopted Jan 2023*

### **ARTICLE III – Purpose**

The purpose of this church shall be to maintain public services for the worship of God, the teaching and the preaching of the Gospel, and in general to promote the establishment of the Kingdom of God according to the teachings of Christ.

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### **ARTICLE IV – Statement of Faith and Covenant**

#### **Statement of Faith**

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles. In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

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

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of

others, 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.

You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end. Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you.

Amen.

## **Covenant**

Believing as we do, we covenant together:

To gather to worship God regularly.

To ground our faith with knowledge of what has been proclaimed through the Old and New Testament documents, and with our own experience of God in our lives.

To celebrate together the Lord's Supper and Baptism.

To educate and raise our children according to Christian principles.

To support projects of mission, local and distant, that would promote the Kingdom of God.

To view all persons in the world as brothers and sisters under one Fatherhood.

To live in such a way that we liberate the captive, comfort the lonely, sad and sick, accept the rejected, condemn and seek to abolish evil in all its forms; and bring into being persons who are members of the New Creation in Jesus Christ.

## **ARTICLE V – INCLUSIVENESS**

The Church of Christ dba Brookline Community Church of Brookline is a part of the church universal, which is one Body in Christ. Therefore all persons, without regard to race, color, national origin, status, sexual orientation, or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, to participate in its programs, and, when they take the appropriate vows, to be admitted into its membership

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## **ARTICLE VI – MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1, Types of Membership**

#### **A. Covenant Member**

To become a covenant member of this church, one is to be informed through counsel with the pastor and/or the Diaconate Board about the covenant and organization of this church. Sever any and all memberships with previous Churches when applicable, making their membership in this Church their only Church membership

#### **B. Associate Member**

To become an Associate member of this church, one is to be informed through counsel with the

pastor and/or the Diaconate Board about the covenant and organization of this church. An associate membership is extended to persons who do not wish to sever membership with their home church.

### **C. Giver of Record Member**

Persons who over the previous two years, have on a regular and consistent basis committed of their time, talent and resources. Are on the Active membership list of the Diaconate

### **D. Voting Members**

Any Covenant, Associate member on the active membership roll, over the age of 16 is a voting member of this church and eligible to hold office.

A Giver of Record may be a Voting Member with the approval of the Cabinet

All covenant and associate members of this church shall be baptized persons who have been or may be received into the church by one or more of the following:

1. By having given public assent to its confession of faith and promising in covenant to live a Christian life.
2. By presentation of satisfactory letters of transfer or certification from other Christian churches.
3. By reaffirmation of faith if letters are not available.

## **Section 2 – Responsibilities of Members**

Include the following:

- Being a Minister – Every member takes on the mission of the church individually and in community with other members.
- Regularly being part of the worshiping community
- Being a Steward – The offering of money and the investment of time and abilities to the church and its mission are vital acts of membership and signs of faithfulness to the covenant.
- Being a learner. – Commitment is an act of the mind as well as the heart.
- Be faithful to the covenant, as stated in Article IV of this constitution.

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## **Section 3 – Termination of Membership**

One or more of the following may terminate membership in this church:

- A. Death
- B. Any member in good and regular standing who desires a letter of transfer, upon request is entitled to receive it upon recommendation of the Diaconate Board.
- C. Members whose addresses have long been unknown, or who for a period of two years, in spite of kindly approaches, have not communicated with the church or contributed to its support, may by vote of the Diaconate Board be transferred to a retired list. From the date of such transfers such names shall cease to be reported on the active membership roll. If after one year their addresses are still unknown or they are unwilling to renew their active connection with this church, their names

may be dropped from the roll by further vote of the Diaconate Board.

- D. If a member requests to be released from his covenant obligations, the Diaconate Board shall endeavor to secure his continuance in its fellowship; failing, the Board may grant the request and terminate the membership.
- E. A member may be terminated by a 2/3 vote in the affirmative at a duly noticed and called Special meeting of the Church, upon recommendation by the Cabinet.

#### **Section 4 – Reinstatement of Membership**

Persons on the retired list may be reinstated to the active list upon recommendation of the Diaconate Board.

### **ARTICLE VII – BOARDS OF THE CHURCH**

#### **Section 1 – Offices, and Membership**

To hold office on a board of the Church, a person must be a Voting Member of Church as defined in Article VI, Section 1.D

No person shall hold a position on more than one board, with the following exceptions:

1. Any board member may also hold a position on the Cabinet or the Board of Pastoral Relations,
2. Any board member may also hold a position on any ad hoc board, such as the Pastoral Search Committee.
3. If approved by the Church Cabinet due to special circumstances

Members of the Boards shall be elected at the annual meeting by majority vote. The term of all offices is three years unless otherwise noted. The Nominating Committee will make nominations to office prior to the Annual Meeting. Additional nominations may be made from the floor of the annual meeting. If a position is not filled at Annual Meeting, it may be subsequently confirmed by Cabinet vote, with a term to run until the next Annual Meeting.

Non-members are welcome to attend and participate in the work of church boards other than the Diaconate and Pastoral Relations, but may not vote on decisions.

The members of each board except where otherwise designated shall choose the Chairperson of that Board. Chairs must make a good faith attempt to regularly be part of the worshipping community, as first-hand knowledge of church life is essential to serving the congregation in a leadership capacity.

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#### **The Church Cabinet**

In accordance with the Purpose and Covenant of the Church as stated in Article III and Article IV the Cabinet visualizes and directs the purpose and work of the Church; Advises the pastor and the Leadership of the church on the general direction of the activities of the church and cooperate with them in the formulation of policy and fulfillment of a well-rounded program;

Shall consist of:

Non-Voting Members:



1. Pastor
2. Associate Pastor

Voting Members:

1. The Moderator
2. The Assistant Moderator
3. The Clerk
4. The Treasurer
5. The Public Relations Coordinator or Designee
6. The Board of Finance & Property Chairperson or Designee
7. The Board of Trustee Chairperson or Designee
8. The Board of Stewards Chairperson or Designee
9. The Board of Deacons Chairperson or Designee
10. The Board of Christian Education Chairperson or Designee
11. The Board of Outreach Chairperson or Designee
12. The Board of Pastoral Relations Chairperson or Designee

**The Pastor**

In accordance with the Purpose and Covenant of the Church as stated in Article III and Article IV, It shall be the duty of the pastor to preach the Word, to care for the stated services of public worship, to administer the sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and leadership, and to promote the spiritual welfare of the church and those whom it serves. The pastor shall endeavor to be a faithful servant of Jesus Christ and seek to lead people to a fuller understanding of and a deeper commitment to the will of God.

A Pastor shall be chosen and called by the church for an indefinite period of time or whenever a vacancy occurs. The pastor of this church will normally be obtained through the efforts of the United Church of Christ (Congregational), New Hampshire Conference and the United Methodist Church, New England Conference.

Candidates for the position of Pastor will be selected by the Pastoral Search Committee and recommended to the membership of the church. The membership shall vote on the recommended candidate at a duly called special meeting that meets the quorum requirements. An affirmative vote of 2/3 of those present and qualified to vote to call the candidate shall be necessary to call the candidate to the office of Pastor.

During the “in between” period when the position of Pastor is vacated and another pastor is called, it shall be the responsibility of the Board of Deacons to provide for the Interim ministry. Any interim pastor shall not be eligible to be a candidate for the position of Pastor.

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**The Associate Pastor:**

In accordance with the Purpose and Covenant of the Church as stated in Article III and Article IV, It shall be the duty of the Associate Pastor to assist in preaching the Word, to assist in the care for the stated services of public worship, to assist in administering the sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and leadership, and to promote the spiritual welfare of the church and those whom it serves. In all the Associate Pastor shall endeavor to be a faithful servant of Jesus Christ and seek to lead people to a fuller understanding of and a deeper commitment to the will of God. The exact duties of the

Associate Pastor shall be determined by the Associate Pastor Search Committee and the Pastor, and shall be approved by the Cabinet

An Associate Pastor shall be selected when the Annual Meeting or a Special Meeting has approved the position. The Associate Pastor Search Committee shall make a recommendation to the Cabinet, the Cabinet shall vote on the recommended candidate. An affirmative vote of two thirds (2/3) of Cabinet, shall be necessary to Call the candidate. Until the next Annual or Special Meeting of the congregation.

The Associate Pastor shall be re-confirmed at each Annual Meeting by vote of the congregation.

**Moderator**

Serve as Chairperson of the Church Cabinet and may participate ex-officio on all other standing boards and Presides at all business meetings of the Church. And is the link between the Cabinet and the congregation and between the Cabinet and the Pastor.

Term is for (3) Three Years

**Assistant Moderator**

Serve as Chairperson of the Pastoral Staff Relations Committee, Conduct the monthly Church Cabinet meetings and preside over any specially called meetings in the absence of the Moderator and may participate ex-officio on all other boards.

Term is for (3) three years

**Clerk**

Records the activities of the church for the official record. Telling, who, what, when, where and, if possible, why. Ensures that the records are stored for future reference

Term is for (3) three years

**Public Relations Coordinator**

Shall make public the activities of the church, conferring with the pastor and all boards and/or committee chairmen, coordinating the release of information to the congregation and to the general public.

Term is for (3) three years

**Nominating Committee**

It is the responsibility of the Nominating Committee to screen and recommend people for nomination who are willing to serve on the various boards of the Church and abide by the Purpose and Covenant of the Church as stated in Article III and Article IV, for all vacant positions of the various Church Boards.

Shall consist of a total of three (3) members, two members from the congregation and the third is the Pastor. One member's term will expire each year. One member of the Nominating Committee will be elected annually from nominations made by the Church Cabinet or from nominations at the Annual Meeting.

### **The Board of Finance & Property**

In accordance with the Purpose and Covenant of the Church as stated in Article III and Article IV, under the direction of the Cabinet shall have the overall responsibility for the church's financial affairs and upkeep maintenance & management of the Churches physical Property

#### ***Finance Members***

In accordance with the Purpose and Covenant of the Church as stated in Article III and Article IV, under the direction of the Cabinet shall have the overall responsibility for the church's financial affairs.

Shall consist of total of three (3) members. Three (3) members elected with one member's term expiring each year.

#### ***Trustees***

In accordance with the Purpose and Covenant of the Church as stated in Article III and Article IV, under the direction of the Church Cabinet shall have the responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of all the Churches physical property.

Shall consist of at least three (3) trustees. One Trustee's term shall expire each year.

#### **Parsonage Committee**

May be appointed by the Trustee's to be responsible for the routine care, maintenance and upkeep of the Parsonage and to work directly with the Pastor and his/her family.

#### ***Stewards***

In accordance with the Purpose and Covenant of the Church as stated in Article III and Article IV, Accepting on behalf of the church all memorial gifts, trusts, special funds and other monetary gifts. Educates the members of the Congregation concerning their biblical and historical responsibilities as managers of time, money and resources to serve God's purpose. Plans and implements programs for members to pledge, or other means of soliciting monies, coordinates the various fund raisers of the church to ensure the most benefit from each activity.

Shall consist of seven (7) members (2) two that are elected for 3 years each. And one (1) representative from each of the following: Trustee's, Finance, Deacons, Christian Education, and Outreach.

#### ***Treasurer***

Responsible for proper receipt of all church money, keeping the church's financial records and disbursing the money in accordance with the budget and the direction of the Board of Finance &

Property.

Term is for (3) Years

***Assistant Treasurer***

Responsible for proper receipt of all church money, keeping the church's financial records and disbursing the money in accordance with the budget and the direction of the Board of Finance & Property in the absence of the Treasurer.

Term is for (3) three years

**The Board of Deacons**

In accordance with the Purpose and Covenant of the Church as stated in Article III and Article IV, and working with the Pastor shall be responsible for the planning and implementing all aspects of the Churches worship services and rituals, the spiritual life of the church and its members; and assist the pastor in carrying out his/her pastoral duties;

Shall consist of:

- ◆ At least six (6) members to run for three (3) years. Three member's terms shall expire each year
- ◆ One (1) or more youth members, appointed by the Board of Deacons

**The Board of Christian Education**

In accordance with the Purpose and Covenant of the Church as stated in Article III and Article IV, the Board of Christian Education shall plan and implement a Christian Education program that includes all ages, both new Christians and mature Christians, in their faith journey. The Board shall provide resources, based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, that encourage members of the congregation to:

- Worship and learn together;
- Grow in their relationship with God;
- Grow in their relationship with each other;
- Make a connection between church and home;
- And make a connection between faith and everyday life

Shall consist of:

- ◆ Nine (9) members, each elected for a one-year term.
  - ◆ Vacation Bible School Director
  - ◆ Administrator
  - ◆ Intergenerational Worship Coordinator
  - ◆ Cradle Roll
  - ◆ Librarian
  - ◆ Children's Area Coordinator
  - ◆ Adult Area Coordinator
  - ◆ Youth Area Coordinator
  - ◆ Member at Large
  - ◆

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- ◆ Terms of office for the Board of Christian Education shall run from July to June
- ◆ One (1) or more Youth Fellowship Advisor(s), appointed by the Board of Christian Education

- ◆ One (1) Youth member, appointed by the Board of Christian Education

### **The Board of Outreach**

In accordance with the Purpose and Covenant of the Church as stated in Article III and Article IV, plans and implements programs for local and distant missions for the church; raising the awareness of the congregation to the role of our church beyond its doors and plan programs to this end, such as special projects at Thanksgiving and Christmas, and particular needs as they arise, this in association with the minister and the Board of Deacons, be in touch with the Missions organizations of the UCC and UMC and plan programs accordingly which will emphasize the particular areas of the concern each year; Be a Churches liaison with various local, regional and national civic groups and organizations to coordinate the churches efforts for individuals and families in need.

Shall consist of six (6) members. Two (2) members' terms shall expire each year.

### **The Board of Pastoral Relations**

In accordance with the Purpose and Covenant of the Church as stated in Article III and Article IV, Perform a continuous, mutual, integrated function built on trust, by supporting and maintaining an open relationship between the Pastoral staff and members of the congregation. It helps the pastor and members of the church share ideas, hopes, dreams and interpretations of mission. It lets the pastor know what the people in the church are thinking. It gives a framework for dealing with conflict creatively. Works with the Pastoral Staff, by counseling and advising them, in an effort to meet the goals and objectives that have been set for them, resolving issues of concern arising from the church members and community. Works with the Board of Deacons to help clarify congregational needs and expectations of the pastor and the staff; and consults with the Conference Minister(s) to check perceptions and receive guidance regarding the pastoral staff;

Shall consist of three (3) members, one of whom shall be the Assistant Moderator, who will act as Chairperson of this committee. Another member shall be by consent of the pastor, to serve as the pastor's advocate. One of the elected member's terms will expire each year. To be eligible for election to the Board of Pastoral Relations, a candidate must have served a minimum of one full term on any other standing board, and attends church services on a regular and consistent basis while a member of this Board. Members of the Board of Pastoral Relations may concurrently hold a position on any other board.

## **Section 2 - Special Committees, Appointments & Organizations**

### **The Pastoral Search Committee**

In accordance with the Purpose and Covenant of the Church as stated in Article III and Article IV, plans and implements the process for filling the position of the permanent Pastor whenever the position is vacated

Shall be appointed by the Cabinet when a vacancy occurs in the office of Pastor. The committee shall consist of no less than seven (7) members, including one (1) youth member, (1) member of the Board of Pastoral Relations and the Moderator or Assistant Moderator.

The Pastoral Search Committee shall be in existence for (30) thirty days after the new Pastor is in office.

### **The Associate Pastor Search Committee**

In accordance with the Purpose and Covenant of the Church as stated in Article III and Article IV, plans and implements the process for filling the position of Associate Pastor when the position is approved by the membership of the church

Shall be appointed by the Cabinet when a vacancy occurs in the office of Associate Pastor. The committee shall consist of at least five (5) members, including one (1) youth member and the Moderator or Assistant Moderator

### **Conference Delegates**

- To serve as Lay Member and Alternate Lay Member to the New England Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

The term for the office of Conference Delegate is for one year. The quantity of delegates elected shall conform to conference guidelines.

### **Church Organizations**

All organizations formed for the purpose of ministration and which use the facilities of the church property, shall be regarded as integral parts of the church and shall be expected to make a written report at the Annual Meeting

## **Section 3 – Vacancies**

When a vacancy occurs in any office before the end of a term, a candidate shall be approved by the Cabinet, to fill the office until the next Annual Meeting of the church.

## **Section 4 – General Provisions**

### **Bonding**

The Treasurer and the Assistant Treasurer and anyone else charged with handling church funds shall be bonded or insured in a sum fixed by the Board of Finance & Property.

### **Auditors**

The Auditor shall carefully examine the accounts of the Church at the end of each fiscal year and at such times, as they shall be requested to do so by the Board of Finance & Property. They shall audit the accounts of any organization of the Church when requested to do so. The audit shall be done prior to the Annual Meeting of the Church.

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### **Quorums for Church Boards or Committees**

The Church Cabinet a quorum for the transaction of business is 50 % + 1 (fifty percent plus one) of the total number of voting members of the Cabinet

Annual and Special Church meetings a quorum for the transaction of business shall be: 50 % + 1 (fifty percent plus one) of the average adult Sunday attendance for the 6 months (excluding any special holiday Sunday services i.e. Easter, Christmas etc.) prior to the date that the Cabinet sets for the meeting. With a two-thirds (2/3) vote in the affirmative of those present and qualified to vote shall be necessary to pass any resolution.

A quorum for all other church boards or committees is a simple majority of the total number of elected or appointed members to that board or committee.

### **Termination of Call**

If at any time the pastor shall make application to be released from the pastorate, the relationship shall be terminated ninety-days (90) from the date of the notice of intention or in a shorter period of time if mutually agreed by the Pastor and the members of the church;

If at any time the relationship between the pastor and the church becomes detrimental to the welfare of the parish, the relationship may be terminated by the members of the church ninety-days (90) from the notice of intention or in a shorter period of time, if mutually agreed upon.

The Cabinet shall have the authority to consider this matter and make recommendations to the church.

Termination of Call by the Church shall require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of those present and entitled to vote at a constitutionally called meeting;

### **Fiscal Year**

The fiscal year shall begin on January 1 and close on December 31 of each year

### **Balanced Budget**

The Board of Finance & Property shall submit to the Annual Meeting a balanced budget for approval

In keeping with this policy, the Cabinet's authority to approve changes to the budget is limited to

changes that do not create a real or projected deficit. Approval of such requested changes shall require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of those present and entitled to vote at a constitutionally called cabinet meeting

### **Use of Church Buildings by Outside Organizations**

The Board of Finance and Property shall be responsible for establishing the General Guidelines and fees for the use of Church buildings by outside organizations.

Any organizations or group using the church buildings for free or for a fee must agree that all persons, without regard to race, color, national origin, status, sexual orientation or economic condition, shall be eligible to for membership in its organization and, to participate in its programs.

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An exception may only be made at the Annual meeting or a duly called Special Meeting, and must pass by a 2/3 vote in the affirmative.

This exception may be for a time limit of up to 5 years and then must be reviewed and voted upon again at the Annual Meeting 1 year before the expiration date.

However if unusual circumstances arise a duly notified Special Meeting may be called by the Cabinet to cancel or modify the exception immediately.

### **Sponsorship of Organizations by the Church**

Any organizations or group seeking to be sponsored by the Church of Christ dba Brookline Community Church of Brookline must agree that all persons, without regard to race, color, national origin, status, sexual orientation or economic condition, shall be eligible to for membership in its organization and, to participate in its programs.

An exception may only be made at the Annual meeting or a duly called Special Meeting, and must pass by a 2/3 vote in the affirmative.

This exception may be for a time limit of up to 5 years and then must be reviewed and voted upon again at the Annual Meeting 1 year before the expiration date.

However if unusual circumstances arise a duly notified Special Meeting may be called by the Cabinet to cancel or modify the exception immediately.

## **ARTICLE VIII – Meetings**

### **Worship**

- A. Public services shall be held on each Lord's Day and on such other occasions as the Church, pastor, or Diaconate shall determine;
- B. The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated on the first Lord's Day of each month, and/or such other occasions as the church, pastor, or Diaconate Board shall determine;



## **Business**

All meetings with the exception of meetings of the Board of Pastoral Relations and the Pastoral Search Committee shall be open to the church membership and/or the public at the discretion of the board conducting the meeting.

- A. At any of the regular meetings for worship the Church may, without special notice, act upon the reception of members.
- B. The Moderator of the Church Cabinet shall announce from the pulpit and place in the weekly bulletin notice of the Annual Meeting and any Special business meetings, the particular object of the meeting being clearly stated in the notice; at least fourteen (14) days before the date of the meeting, and on at least the two (2) regularly scheduled Sunday Services immediately preceding the date of the meeting. No special meeting shall be held on the same day the notice is given. Notice and brief agenda shall be placed on the church's homepage fourteen (14) days in advance of such special meetings. Announcements of such special meetings will be posted on the media deemed by the

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Cabinet most likely to reach the wider Brookline community. Notice of such meetings will also be announced on the church's sign fourteen days in advance of such special meetings;

- C. Special meetings of the Church may also be called by the clerk, upon the written application of any five (5) members, specifying the object thereof, which notice shall be read at the public service on at least the two (2) regularly scheduled Sunday Services immediately preceding the date fixed for such a meeting. No special meeting shall be held on the same day the notice is given. Notice and brief agenda shall be placed on the church's homepage fourteen (14) days in advance of such special meetings. Announcements of such special meetings will be posted on the media deemed by the Cabinet most likely to reach the wider Brookline community. Notice of such meetings will also be announced on the church's sign fourteen days in advance of such special meetings;
- D. The Annual Meeting shall be held within the first sixty (60) days of each January 1, the exact date to be determined by the Church Cabinet, at which time the annual reports shall be presented in writing and officers elected, and any other business transacted.

## **ARTICLE IX - Sexual Exploitation, Ministerial Conduct, and Youth Protection**

### **Sexual Exploitation and Harassment.**

Church of Christ dba Brookline Community Church of Brookline is committed to creating and maintaining a worship and work community in which members, friends, staff, and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Specifically, all persons associated with Church of Christ dba Brookline Community Church of Brookline should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention and responsibility of the church to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior, which is contrary to this policy, and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

### **Ministerial Conduct**

All persons engaged in the ministry of Church of Christ dba Brookline Community Church of

Brookline (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and authorized ministers) are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions in ministering to the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority. Sexual harassment or sexual exploitation of parishioner(s) or other individual(s) by anyone engaged in the ministry of Church of Christ dba Brookline Community Church of Brookline is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

Because ministers (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and authorized ministers) often deal with individuals who are emotionally and psychologically fragile or otherwise personally vulnerable, it is imperative that those engaged in the ministry of this church maintain their own psychological, emotional, and spiritual health and that they have adequate preparation and education for helping those individuals they seek to serve in ministry. It is the policy of Church of Christ dba Brookline Community Church of Brookline to encourage its leaders, authorized ministers, employees, and volunteers to nurture safety within ministerial relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources. It is also expected that those engaged in providing ministry will complete and submit a Disclosure/Liability Waiver Form similar to the one included in the appendix.

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### **Youth Protection Policy**

The Church of Christ dba Brookline Community Church, Brookline, New Hampshire is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. In order to ensure this, the Board of Christian Education will exercise their rights, in accordance with Megan's Law, to gain public access to information regarding Registered Sex Offenders. On a quarterly basis (September, December, March and June), the Board will verify that the names of all persons working with minors in the church are not included on the Registered Sex Offenders list. Furthermore, it is the policy of the church to provide adequate supervision for all youth activities.

All persons engaged in the educational ministry of The Church of Christ dba Brookline Community Church of Brookline (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and authorized ministers) are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions in ministering to the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority. Specifically, all persons associated with The Church of Christ dba Brookline Community Church of Brookline should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and harassment and that such behavior is unethical and unprofessional and will not be tolerated within this congregation. It is also expected that those engaged in providing ministry will complete and submit a Disclosure/Liability Waiver Form similar to the one included in the appendix.

### **Reporting of Abuse or Neglect**

In accordance with the law of New Hampshire, those in helping professions (e.g. teachers, medical personnel, clergy) are obligated to report all situations in which a person under 18 is suspected of being abused or neglected. It is important in this regard that we do not confuse confidentiality with our obligations before God to protect the well being of all people, especially the most vulnerable.

### **Definitions**

- **Minister:** a person engaged by the church to carry out its ministry. Minister includes elected or

appointed leaders of the church, employees, and volunteers, as well as authorized ministers. •

**Authorized minister:** a person who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an association of the United Church of Christ.

- **Ministerial relationship:** the relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the church and the one being served by that ministry.
- **Sexual exploitation:** sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a minister engaged in the work of the church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior with the minister.
- **Sexual harassment:** repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person's sexuality or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when: Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity; Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual; or Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment. Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, particularly: Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, or

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invitations; Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, sexual propositions; Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome and using sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It is impermissible to suggest, threaten, or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person's job prospects, church leadership, or comfortable participation in the life of the church. For example, it is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition; or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

### **Pastoral Misconduct**

When there are allegations of clergy misconduct (sexual, financial, or any other behavior that undermines the trustworthiness of our ministry) The Board of Pastoral relations will follow the procedures as outlined in the most current United Church of Christ Fitness Review.

The Fitness Review process is designed to evaluate the “fitness for ministry” of the pastor whose behavior is in question. The Fitness Reviews follow a careful protocol of data gathering and investigation meant to uncover all of the facts while providing pastoral care for both the alleged victims and the accused person

Nothing in the Fitness Review process is intended to circumvent civil or criminal action should it be appropriate.

## **ARTICLE X – Amendments**

### **Constitution**

Amendments to this Constitution may be made at any duly called Church meeting by a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of the voting members present, public announcement of the text of the proposed amendment(s) having been made two weeks prior to the meeting, in the manner described in Article VIII, Business, section B.

### **Appendix**

Amendments to the Appendix may be modified by a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote at any duly authorized Cabinet meeting