

**UNION CHURCH
BIDDEFORD POOL, MAINE**

FOUNDED IN 1864

CONSTITUTION
(incorporating amendments through June 2017)

ARTICLE 1. NAME

This Church shall be called the Union Church of Biddeford Pool, Maine. This speaks of two things: of wanting to be a community church and of our union in Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE II. ESTABLISHED SERVICES

Services shall be established by the Pastor and the Deacons of the Church.

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH

1. **Admission to Membership.**
 - a. **Admission to Full Membership.** Any person desiring to become a member of the Church shall 1) attend the Pastor's orientation in church membership; 2) express the wish to journey with the congregation as we seek to receive and follow God's sacred spirit and the ethical teachings of Jesus Christ; and 3) profess agreement with the 2005 Church covenant. When the Deacons are in agreement, they shall recommend the candidate to the Church Members. A person shall be considered a member from the date on which the Church welcomes him or her into membership. Item one (1) may be waived by the Pastor's recommendation to the Deacons.
 - b. **Admission to Associate Membership.** Any person desiring to become an Associate Member of the Church shall comply with the requirements for membership enumerated in paragraph (a) above, except that item one (1) pertaining to the Pastor's orientation may be waived by the Deacons upon recommendation of the Pastor. Associate Members are non-voting members of the congregation.
2. **Dismissal from Membership.** The following modes are recognized.
 - a. **By the Member's Request.** Any Member of the Church in good and regular standing may, at his/her own request, be dismissed from membership. If the Member so desires, he or she may be granted a letter to join some other church. A Member, at his or her request, may have the option of becoming an Associate Member of Union Church.

- b. **By Action of the Church Members.** Union Church is an open, welcoming and diverse community. It would be very rare for the Church to initiate any action to remove a Member from the Church rolls. However, should a case arise in which a Church Member, through his or her public behavior, significantly and seriously damages the life of the Church community, and after appropriate counseling continues to act publicly in a way that is contrary to the church covenant, the Deacons, after prayerful discussion, may present a recommendation to the Church Members for action. The Church Members may, by two-thirds vote, instruct the church Clerk to remove that Member's name from the Church rolls.
3. **Church Covenant.** The following Church Covenant summarizes the membership objectives and expresses the united aims of the Church:
(Words of Covenant follow)

1864 Founding Covenant

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now, in the presence of God and of the angels, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the side of the Holy Ghost, to walk together in Christian love: to strive for the advancement of this Church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to give it a sacred pre-eminence over all institutions of human origin; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations. We also engage to maintain family devotion; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements and exemplary in our conduct; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; and to be zealous in our efforts to further advancement of the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly and sisterly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage, that when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

2005 Updated Covenant

Who we are...

Union Church is an interdenominational Christian church which welcomes those who wish to journey with us as we seek to receive and follow God's sacred spirit and the ethical teachings of Jesus Christ. We are an evolving community of faith that seeks to reflect the love and compassion of God through our conduct. We follow the teaching of Jesus to love God, neighbor, and self. We have reverence for the Earth and all living creatures. We are a worshipping community that gathers to give thanks and to celebrate the Holy Presence of God in all things.

What we covenant to do together...

We covenant together in the presence of God to be a loving, caring community that prayerfully supports one another, to be a place of peace and spiritual nourishment for all who gather, and to be a joyful presence in Biddeford Pool and beyond. We provide religious nurture and biblical education for all who seek it. We share our stories of faith with one another and our time, talent, and resources for the work of God's kingdom. We are open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our worship, programming and mission outreach.

ARTICLE IV. CHURCH LEADERSHIP

- 1. Pastor.** The Deacons, after prayerful consideration, shall present the name of one candidate to the Church Members for action. The Church Members shall call a Pastor by a three-fourths vote of the Members present at a properly called meeting, in a secret ballot.

He/she shall preach the Gospel; administer the ordinances; seek the development of Christian character among members of the community, visiting members of the congregation in their homes as needed; have under his/her care all the services of the Church in cooperation with the various boards and committees. He/she shall be an ex-officio and non-voting member of all boards and committees.

When the Pastor wishes to terminate his/her pastorate, he/she shall give notice by letter of resignation to the Church Members two months in advance unless otherwise mutually agreed.

When the Church wishes to terminate the Pastor's employment, a special meeting of the Church Members shall be called. No such meeting shall take place unless two weeks' notice has been given. When three-fourths of the Church Members present at such special meeting shall vote by secret ballot to request the Pastor to resign, the Church shall require his/her resignation in accordance with the terms of the Pastor's employment agreement.

2. **Officers.**

- a. **Moderator.** The Church Moderator shall be a Member of the Church and shall be elected at the mid-year business meeting for a two-year term. He/she will work closely with the Pastor in running the Church. He/she will be the Chairperson of all the Church meetings. He/she will be an ex-officio member of all committees and boards. However, he/she will not chair these committees unless otherwise provided, nor vote except in the case of a tie. It shall be his/her responsibility to see all committees meet regularly and deal with the business they have been assigned. The Moderator shall sign all contracts on behalf of the Church after Executive Committee approval.
- b. **Clerk.** The Church Clerk shall be a Member of the Church and shall be elected for one year at the mid-year business meeting of the Church. He/she shall ensure that a faithful record of the proceedings of the Church shall be kept, including records pertaining to admission and dismissal of Members and baptisms. The Clerk shall also ensure that letters of transfer voted by the Church are issued, all communications and official reports are preserved on file, and proper notices of all meetings are given. The Clerk shall perform such other duties as usually pertain to the office of the Clerk.
- c. **Treasurer.** The Treasurer shall be a Member of the Church and shall be elected for one year at the mid-year business meeting. He/she shall receive and keep account of all monies of the Church and disburse them in accordance with the directions of the Members. He/she shall have custody of all papers relating to the property and trust funds of the Church. He/she shall keep an accurate account of all receipts and disbursements. He/she or a representative of the Finance Committee shall make a report at each regular business meeting and at each meeting of the Executive Committee.

3. **Deacons.** There shall be at least six active Deacons who shall be Members of the Church. One-third of the total number shall be elected at each mid-year business meeting of the Church; each Deacon is to serve for three years.

The Deacons shall recommend to the Church Members a candidate for Pastor; assist the Pastor in the general work of the Church; see that all worship is carried on appropriately; assist at all baptisms held in the church; visit members of the congregation; interview prospective members; and be responsible for all spiritual matters of the Church.

The Deacons shall arrange for pulpit supplies when necessary and provide leadership for the prayer meeting in the absence of the Pastor.

4. **Trustees.** There shall be at least three Trustees who are elected by the Church. One third of the total number shall be elected at each mid-year business meeting of the Church; each Trustee is to serve for three years.

The Trustees shall have the care and custody of all the property of the Church, real and personal. They shall see that the instructions of the Members are carried out in relation to these matters. They shall purchase supplies and make needed repairs pursuant to the budget approved by the Members. Any unbudgeted purchases exceeding \$500 must be decided on by vote of the Executive Committee or the Church Members.

5. **Terms and Vacancies.** The terms of all officers, Deacons and Trustees shall begin immediately upon their election and shall continue until their replacements are elected or they otherwise resign their positions. The Moderator shall appoint an individual to fill any vacancy occurring in the established offices.

ARTICLE V. CHURCH FISCAL YEAR

Fiscal Year. The Church fiscal year shall run from January 1 through December 31.

ARTICLE VI. BUSINESS MEETINGS

1. **Semiannual Business Meetings.** There shall be two business meetings of the Church each year. The first shall be held at the beginning of the year, normally in January, to adopt the budget for the ensuing year, to receive reports from the different Church organizations, and to transact such other business as may properly come before the meeting. The various reports at the first business meeting shall be made up to December 31 inclusive. The second business meeting shall be held mid-year, normally in June, for the election and installation of Church officers, Deacons and Trustees, to receive reports from the different church organizations and to transact such other business as may properly come before the meeting.
2. **Strategic Planning.** Church Members shall convene a strategic planning session at least once every five years, or at more frequent intervals as deemed appropriate by the Church Leadership.
3. **Special.**
 - a. **Special Meetings Called by Executive Committee.** Special meetings of the Church may be called at the request of the Executive Committee. The Clerk shall ensure that written notice is provided to the Members at least seven days in advance of the meeting, unless a longer period is otherwise required. The nature of the business to be transacted shall be stated in the call. However, no meeting shall be held without the knowledge of the Pastor, Deacons, or Trustees.
 - b. **Special Meetings Called by Church Members.** A special meeting of the Church may also be called at the request of at least seven Members of the Church. The Clerk shall ensure that written notice is provided to the Members at least seven days in advance of the meeting, unless a longer period is otherwise required. The nature of the business to be transacted shall be stated in the call.

4. **Presiding Officer.** The Chairperson of business meetings will be the Church Moderator. In his/her absence the Pastor or one of the Deacons shall be Chairperson.
5. **Procedure.** “Robert’s Rules of Order” shall be the standard for conducting all of the business meetings.

ARTICLE VII. VOTE NECESSARY

A majority vote of all qualified Members present and voting is necessary to carry out the business transactions of the Church, unless a larger majority is otherwise specified in this Constitution. A minimum of seven (7) qualified Members will be required as a quorum.

ARTICLE VIII. VOTING QUALIFICATIONS

To be qualified to vote at any business meeting of the Church, a person must be an active Member of the Church and be eighteen years of age or older.

ARTICLE IX. COMMITTEES

1. **Standing Committees.** There shall be five Standing Committees of the Church: the Executive Committee, the Finance Committee, the Nominating Committee, the Program Committee, and the Mission Committee. The Executive Committee shall set forth “Policies and Procedures” as organizational and procedural guidelines for the Standing Committees. Except as otherwise provided, each committee shall elect its own chairperson.
 - a. **Executive Committee.** An Executive Committee comprising the following -- Moderator, Pastor, Clerk, Treasurer, and Chair of the Deacons, Chair of the Trustees, Chair of the Finance Committee, Chair of the Program Committee and Chair of the Mission Committee – shall be responsible for the daily operation of Union Church. The Moderator shall chair the committee. Anyone participating in an Executive Committee meeting as chairperson of one of the constituent bodies shall be a Member of the Church or shall serve as a non-voting member of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall issue and, from time to time as necessary, revise the “Policies and Procedures” governing the operations of the standing and *ad hoc* committees.
 - b. **Finance Committee.** A Finance Committee comprising one of the Trustees of the Church, the Treasurer, and three at large Members or Associate Members of the Church shall recommend the yearly budget of the Church, propose long range financial planning for the Church, and make decisions on the financial investments of the Church consistent with the long range financial plan and the Church budget approved by the Church Members.
 - c. **Nominating Committee.** A Nominating Committee of three persons shall be appointed at the first business meeting of the year. It shall be the duty of the

committee to present for approval at the mid-year business meeting a list of officers, Deacons and Trustees. Nominations to any office or committee may also be made from the floor. A reasonable effort shall be made to fill all offices. If difficulties occur, vacancies may be filled by the Church at a later date and the incumbent holder of the office may continue until a replacement is found.

- d. **Program Committee.** The Program Committee shall be responsible for raising funds through programs and activities to support both Church missions and operations.
- e. **Mission Committee.** The Mission Committee shall plan and supervise programs of local, national and international outreach, support and activities, as directed by the Church.

- 2. **Ad hoc Committees.** The Executive Committee may from time to time, as it deems appropriate, establish committees to expedite the work of and promote fellowship within the Church. All committees shall make necessary recommendations to the Executive Committee for action, and elect their own chairperson. The responsibilities of each such committee shall be outlined in "Policies and Procedures" issued by the Executive Committee. The need for the continuance of each *ad hoc* committee shall be reviewed annually.

ARTICLE X. FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE CHURCH

The financial support of the Church shall be provided by the freewill offerings of God's people.

ARTICLE XI. PRESERVATION FUND

The Preservation Fund was established in 2014 in celebration of the anniversary of the founding of our church in 1864, and to honor all those who have come before us. The fund shall be considered to be an endowment for the preservation, maintenance, and continuous improvement of the building and grounds of the Union Church in Biddeford Pool. The Fund, and income from the Fund, is not intended to be used for the day to day operations of the church, though its application may supplement or offset other Church operations and expenditures. Further contributions and bequests to the Fund will be gratefully accepted at any time.

The actual investment, use, spending, oversight, and accounting of the Fund shall be the responsibility of the Executive Committee of the Church, which, as part of its annual budget presentation to the Church Members, shall account for the previous year's investment of and proposed upcoming expenditures from the Fund. It is the intent that the Executive Committee shall institute a spending rule for the fund typical of such endowments. A non-mandatory target for spending from the fund shall be 5% of value of the fund based on a three year rolling average valuation. The Executive Committee shall review spending from the Fund from time to time to ensure that the Fund's capital is being properly preserved and/or increased. Any annual expenditure of more than ten percent (10%) of the total valuation of the Fund must be

approved by a minimum two-thirds (2/3) majority of the Church Members present at any business meeting or special meeting of the Church.

ARTICLE XII. AMENDMENT

The Constitution may be amended by two-thirds of the Members present and voting at any business meeting of the Church. Written notice of the amendment must be distributed in writing at least one month before the vote is taken.