

# CHURCH PROFILE

September 2022



## **Suffolk Christian Church**

216 N. Main Street

Suffolk, VA 23435

757-539-9182

website: [suffolkchristian.org](http://suffolkchristian.org)

[suffolkchristianchurchoffice@gmail.com](mailto:suffolkchristianchurchoffice@gmail.com)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Pastor Search Team Members.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Church Staff .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Mission &amp; Vision Statements .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Core Values.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>A Brief History of Suffolk Christian Church .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Timeline from 1860-2029.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>The Ministers of Suffolk Christian Church.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Church Membership.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Leadership and Governance .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>The Community of Suffolk, VA .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Major Suffolk Employers .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Facilities .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Economic Assets .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Our Future .....</b>	<b>28</b>

## PASTOR SEARCH TEAM MEMBERS

Board of Deacons: Robert Boyce

Board of Finance: Elaine Abernathy

House of Worship Committee: Douglas Parr

Board of Christian Education: Ginnie Kinsey

Music Committee: Benita Rhodes

Transition Team/Membership At Large: Joyce Trump

Membership At Large: Lisa Carraway

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Please send resumes and cover letters to:

[SCCPastorResume@gmail.com](mailto:SCCPastorResume@gmail.com)

Or

Pastor Search Team

Suffolk Christian Church

216 N. Main Street

Suffolk, VA 23434

## CHURCH STAFF



**Rev. Dr. Tracy Hartman,  
Intentional Interim Pastor**



**Priscilla Bunch,  
Director of Christian Education**



**Dae Nixon, Financial Secretary**

**Suzanne Flemming, Ministerial Assistant**



**Janet Rock, Director of Music**



**Organist**



**Rebecca Padrick, Pianist**



**Sean Bilby, Handbell Choirmaster**



**Aaron Whidbee, Sexton**

## **Mission:**

To go and make disciples of Jesus Christ by sharing God's grace, love, and forgiveness.

---

## **Vision Statement:**

### **Because we love Christ and His Church....**

We envision a church family that is alive, active, and eager to share the gospel to all within our midst.

We envision vibrant worship where the Bible is preached and the Lord is praised through music and prayer, causing people to grow closer to Christ.

We envision strong fellowship that brings us together in loving and nurturing ways.

### **Because we believe that God's Grace is the foundation of our Christian life....**

We envision a growing congregation that is welcoming to all and committed to making disciples.

We envision members who value individual spiritual gifts, supporting one another as we strive to use those gifts for the glory of God.

We envision meaningful and effective ministries for our children and youth, as we teach future generations about Jesus.

We envision the creation of new ways to encourage spiritual growth in each person and to train Christian leaders for the present and the future.

### **Because we believe in Jesus' commandment to love one another....**

We envision a congregation that constantly responds in loving ways to the needs of the community, serving others both near and far.

We envision Suffolk Christian Church as a beacon on Main Street, radiating and demonstrating Christ's love for all.

**Because we love Christ, we worship.**

**Because we believe in His grace, we disciple.**

**Because we follow His commandments, we serve.**

**We Worship. We Disciple. We Serve.**

*Adopted at a Called Church Conference on January 20, 2013*

## Core Values

- 1. We Love Jesus Christ and His Church.**  
Individually, we are connected to Christ through a growing personal relationship with Him. We come together as a church body to be the presence of Christ on the earth and to serve in Christ's Kingdom.
- 2. God's Grace is the Cornerstone of our Christian Life.**  
God unconditionally accepts us and fully forgives us through Jesus Christ. We will gratefully respond to God in loving service and treat each other with love and respect.
- 3. We are Led by Godly Servants.**  
All who follow Jesus Christ are called to be His servants and to bear fruit for the Kingdom of God. Our leaders set an example of Servant Leadership through service, giving, worship, prayer, and spiritual growth.
- 4. We Believe the Bible is Inspired, Trustworthy, and Relevant.**  
The Bible is timeless and timely, relevant to the needs of all people at all times, and speaks to the specific challenges of our contemporary living. Through the Holy Spirit's help, we can know God's Word more deeply. All our preaching and teaching will be based on the Bible.
- 5. We Connect with God through Praise and Worship.**  
Sunday mornings our church family gathers to celebrate God's goodness and be taught from the Bible. Our music, our prayers, the Lord's Supper, and baptism all lead us to acknowledge God and His presence in our lives.
- 6. Everything We do is Supported by Prayer.**  
We talk to God and listen to His leading so that all of our ministries and activities are conceived, planned, carried out according to God's will. We will also believe that every Christian needs a powerful private prayer life in which they can feel a deep connection with God.
- 7. We Believe in Life-Long Learning.**  
Christian education in small groups is the ideal means by which we can learn and grow as Christians, seeking to be biblically literate and fully-functioning disciples of Christ.
- 8. Our Mission is to Reach Out to Our Community and Our World.**  
Beginning with our own community of Suffolk, we want to fulfill our Lord's Great Commission to the church. We will try our best to reach out to the poor and disenfranchised and those who suffer hardship.
- 9. Our Church Family is Made Up of Loving Relationships.**  
We love people because God loves people, too. Every ministry and activity of our church will be accessible and friendly to the greatest number of people and we will try to promote an atmosphere of love and compassion in our church family to strengthen individuals, marriages, and families.
- 10. We Believe in Giving Generously.**  
We Christians are managers of all that God has given us. The financial support of our church's mission and ministry may be one of the most tangible expressions of our faith, so we will encourage everyone to give generously and sacrificially.

Adopted at a Called Church Conference on May 26, 2004



# A BRIEF HISTORY OF SUFFOLK CHRISTIAN CHURCH 1860-2022



Suffolk Christian Church (SCC) was founded in 1860 by the Reverend William Brock Wellons, D.D. (1821-1877). In Surry County 66 years earlier, the Reverend James O'Kelly broke away from the Methodist Episcopal Church to found the Christian Church based on Five Cardinal Principles:

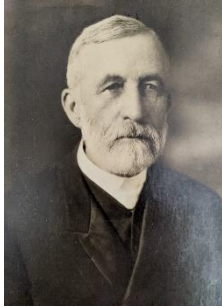
1. The Lord Jesus Christ as the only Head of the Church.
  2. The name Christian to the exclusion of all party and sectarian names.
  3. The Holy Bible, or the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as our only creed, and sufficient rule of faith and practice.
  4. Christian character, or vital piety, the only test of church fellowship and membership.
  5. The right of private judgment, and the liberty of conscience, the privilege and duty of all.
- These principles have guided members of Christian Churches for more than two centuries with a later addition:
6. Union of all Christ's followers is sought.



Already the founding minister at Bethlehem Christian Church, Dr. Wellons organized a church with 22 members at his home on Kilby Street (now West Washington Street) in Suffolk. His warm and positive preaching style combined with eloquence and energy earned him a reputation as a “great revivalist” preaching at churches across the region. The first church building was dedicated on the present site on the Sabbath, March 10, 1861.

Dr. Wellons was a tolerant man in religion who often visited other churches, Protestant and Catholic, when traveling and not himself preaching; but as apparent in his articles in *The Christian Sun*, his weekly regional religious newspaper, he believed that God favored the South in the Civil War. He and his family left Suffolk after Union troops took control of the town in 1862 and he served as a chaplain in the Confederate Army. In his absence a Union chaplain briefly used the church. When Dr. Wellons returned, he worked with other area clergymen to revive their congregations and strengthen the Christian churches. Like his brother James (1826-1927) in North Carolina, he preached and established more congregations, white and black, in the area and served as their minister until his death.

The congregation dedicated a new sanctuary in the Romanesque revival style for 600 worshipers in 1894. This style includes rounded arches, relatively small semi-circular windows, brick exterior, shallow-pitched roofs, yet unlike the original Romanesque churches, limited external ornamentation. Inspired by southern European churches of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, the style was popular in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century for college buildings and among “low church” congregations -- those that allow more individual latitude in religious belief and practice. The façade was remodeled and tall brick towers and vestibule were added in 1912. The original 1893 pipe organ has been renovated several times and continues to undergird the music ministry. Twice in the 20<sup>th</sup> century donors gave each a Neo-Gothic stained-glass window from the venerable Willet Studio for the sanctuary.



SCC members founded and contributed to educational institutions in the region including the coeducational Suffolk Collegiate Institute in 1872. While minister at SCC, the Reverend William Wesley Staley, D.D. (1849-1932) served as the non-resident and unpaid president of Elon College, traveling by train at his own expense to Elon at the start of each week and returning to Suffolk to minister to church members and preach on Sundays from 1894-1905. He brought the college through very difficult financial times. For over a century SCC has sent students to present day Elon University for an education.

Deacon Junius Edgar West (1866-1947), a prominent citizen of Suffolk, served two terms as Virginia’s Lieutenant Governor and for nearly 50 years on the Board of Trustees of Elon College and of the State Female Normal School, the present-day Longwood University.

Through the years, the church has responded to the growing needs of the congregation and expanded the facilities several times. In 1993, the church began a process of prayer and study to discover God’s will concerning the future of the church in downtown Suffolk. The building was showing its age and was not up to modern standards of access and accommodation. The “Building for Tomorrow” committee led the church to commit to our downtown location and begin the process for a major renovation and elevator tower addition.

Today we work together with the same cardinal Principles restated in our church constitution: “the Lord Jesus Christ as the only head of the Church; Christian as a sufficient name; Christian character as a sufficient test of membership and fellowship; the Bible as a sufficient rule of faith and practice; individual interpretation of the Scriptures as the right and privilege of every believer; and the unity of all Christians.” This is further stated in our mission statement, “Our Mission is to go and make disciples of Jesus Christ by sharing God’s grace, love, and forgiveness,” and demonstrated by the fruit of our works.





## 1860-1869

William Brock Wellons (1860-69) Honorary  
Pastor for Life

Original Building  
-Completed in 1861

Christian Church Denomination

\*1860, Jan., contract to build

\*1860, Nov., church organized with 25 members

\*1862, Services halted by War. Suffolk was occupied by federal troops. Rev.

Wellons had to flee.

\*1865, Services resumed.

\*1865, A 19 day revival brought 77 conversions and 25 new members

## 1870-1879

Jesse Thompson Whitley (1876-79) William  
Thomas Walker (1879-82)

Original Building

Christian Church Denomination

\*1870, Church debt paid in full \*1872, Pastor became  
full-time

\*1876, New Organ Ordered

\*1877, Female members granted equal rights

## 1880-1889

William Thomas Walker (1879-82)  
William Wesley Staley (1882-1922)

\*1882, Rev. Staley elected pastor at a yearly salary of \$700

Original Building

\*1890, Building Committee appointed with \$12,000 goal

Christian Church Denomination

\*1884, Parsonage erected next to the church

## 1890-1899

William Wesley Staley (1882-1922)

\*1894, Dr. Staley named 2nd president (non-resident) of Elon College

Present Building

\*1891 original bldg. demolished. Cost of new one: \$40,000

\*Seating

Capacity: 800

\*\$3,500 Jardine Organ installed

\*1894, Building Dedicated

Christian Church Denomination

\*1889, Built parsonage beside church

## 1900-1909

William Wesley Staley (1882-1922)

Present Building

Christian Church Denomination

\*1907 Curry-Brown Revival, city-wide and held at SCC brought SCC 183 new members and was said to have brought new life to Suffolk \*1909, Baraca class formed

## 1910-1919

William Wesley Staley (1882-1922)

Present Building

\*1912, Remodeled front façade. Towers, porch and 3 Sunday School rooms added

Christian Church Denomination

\*1914?, Support to Elon Orphanage

## 1920-1929

William Wesley Staley (1882-1922)

Howard Scott Hardcastle (1923-33)

\*1922, Dr. Staley named Pastor Emeritus

Present Building

\*1928, Sunday School wing added at a cost of \$116,405

Sanctuary remodeled

Christian Church Denomination

## 1930-1939

Howard Scott Hardcastle (1923-33)

John Galloway Truitt (1933-49)

\*1934, Minister now called for an indefinite period (not yearly)

Present Building

1931, Became Congregational Christian Church through merger

## 1940-1949

John Galloway Truitt (1933-49) Duane

Nathan Vore (1949-53)

Present Building

\*1940, Church debt paid in full

\*1946, Organ renovated, chimes added

Congregational Christian Church

\*1940, Services began to be broadcast through WLPM, local radio station \*1943 Property purchased on south side of building.

\*1947 Started rotating deacons

\*1949 John G. Truitt, Jr., church member, became a candidate for the ministry.

## 1950-1959

Duane Nathan Vore (1949-53) George

Douglas Alley (1954-62)

Present Building

\*1952 Stained glass window over pulpit added

Congregational Christian Church

\*1950, West Memorial Bible Class was established in memory of Deacon Junius

Edgar West (1866-1947)

\*1952, Women's Fellowship started, took the place of another women's organization

\*1954, New parsonage on Butler Ave purchased

\*1959, Old parsonage, beside the church, used for assorted purposes and torn down

# 1960-1969

George Douglas Alley (1954-62)  
Robert Burrell Marr (1962-85)

Present Building

\*1964, Small Elevator added.

\*1966, Covered colonnade added to south side of church.

1963, Became United Church of Christ through merger with Evangelical and Reformed Churches

\*1960, 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

\*Lenten Preaching missions with Main Street Methodist.

# 1970-1979

Robert Burrell Marr (1962-85)

Present Building

\*1978, South parking lot enclosed and gated

United Church of Christ

# 1980-1989

Robert Burrell Marr (1962-85)  
Paul Glenn Carmany (1985-88)  
\*1985, Rev. Marr Emeritus

Present Building

United Church of Christ

\*1985, 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrated

\*1985, First female deacon ordained, Page Richardson.

# 1990-1999

Bruce Allen Havens (1990-96)  
Michael David Halley (1996-2021)

Present Building

\*1993, Van Valkenberg home purchased, sold and moved.

\*1995, Nativity stained glass window added to front wall

\*1998, Extensive renovation begun, North entrance and covered walkway added. Large elevator added.

United Church of Christ

## 2000-2009

Rev. Michael D. Halley (1996-2021)

Present Building

\*2002, Major renovation to organ

\*2009, Kitchen renovation

2005, Withdrew from UCC

\*2000, Homecoming celebration for the newly renovated church

\*2004, Mission and Vision Task Force I

\*2005, Church adopted its Core Values and Mission Statement.

## 2010-2019

Rev. Michael D. Halley (1996-2021)

Present Building

Unaffiliated

\*2010, 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, John Truitt, Jr. guest speaker

\*2013, Congregation adopted vision statement

\*Decline in Sunday School, church attendance, and youth participation

\*Increased community missions

\*Partnership with other churches to establish Coalition Against Poverty in Suffolk.

\*Participated in Night Stay (winter program for the homeless)

\*Sponsored community suppers

## 2020-2029

Rev. Michael D. Halley (1996-2021)

Present Building

Unaffiliated

\*March 2020, Corona Virus Pandemic, no worship in the building from March 22 - May 31. Services available online

\*October 2021, Rev. Halley retired

2021, Commissioned a transition team to engage an intentional interim minister and to work with the pastor and congregation to review SCC past and present and November 2021, The Rev. Dr. Tracy Hartman named as intentional interim minister



## THE MINISTERS OF SUFFOLK CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The Reverend William Brock Wellons, D.D.  
1860-1876

The Reverend Jesse Thompson Whitley  
1876-1879

The Reverend William Thomas Walker  
1879-1882

The Reverend William Wesley Staley  
1882-1922  
Pastor *Emeritus*, 1922-1932

The Reverend Howard Scott Hardcastle, D.D.  
1923-1933

The Reverend John Galloway Truitt, D.D.  
1933-1949

The Reverend Duane Nathan Vore, D.D.  
1949-1953

The Reverend George Douglas Alley, D.D.  
1954-1962

The Reverend Robert Burrell Marr, D.D.  
1962-1985  
Pastor *Emeritus*, 1985-2013

The Reverend Paul Glenn Carmany, D.Rel.  
1985-1988

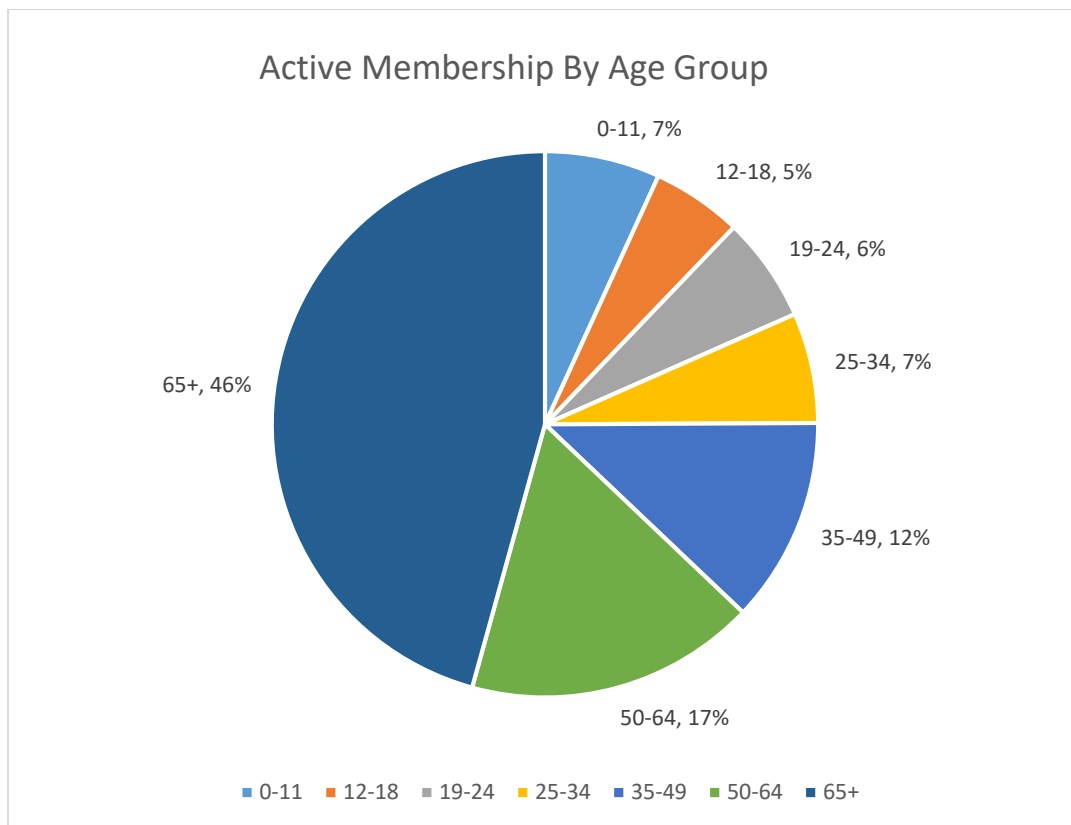
The Reverend Bruce Allen Havens, D.Min.  
1990-1996

The Reverend Michael David Halley  
1996-2021

## CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

\*Active Membership: 373

\*\*Inactive Membership: 712



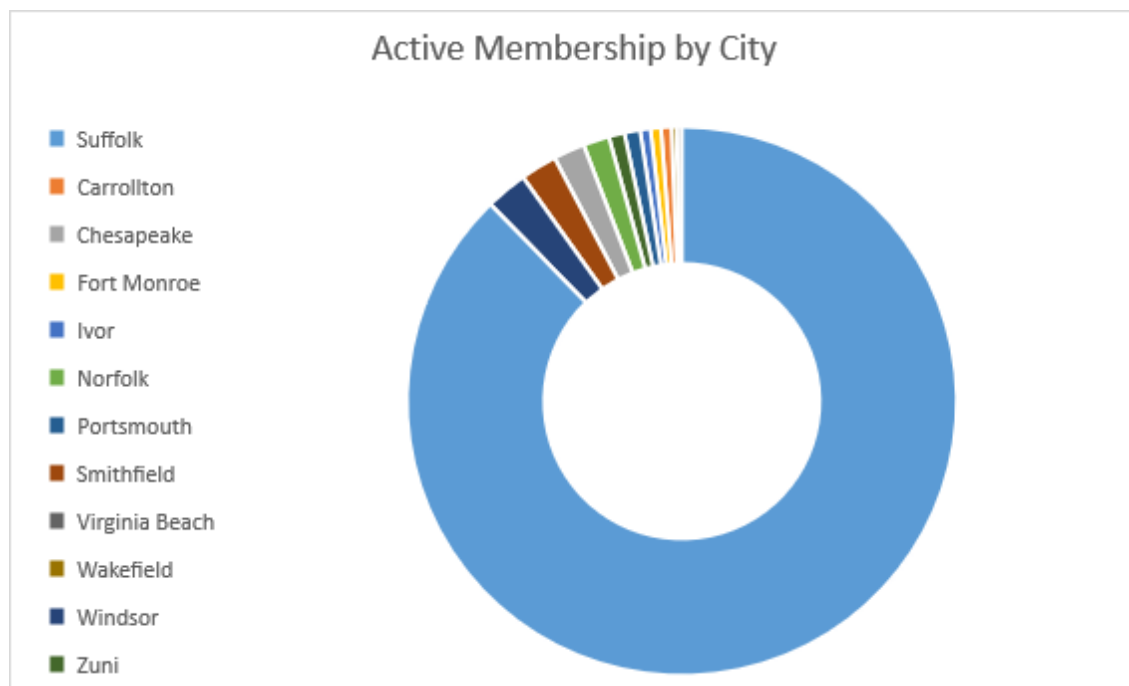
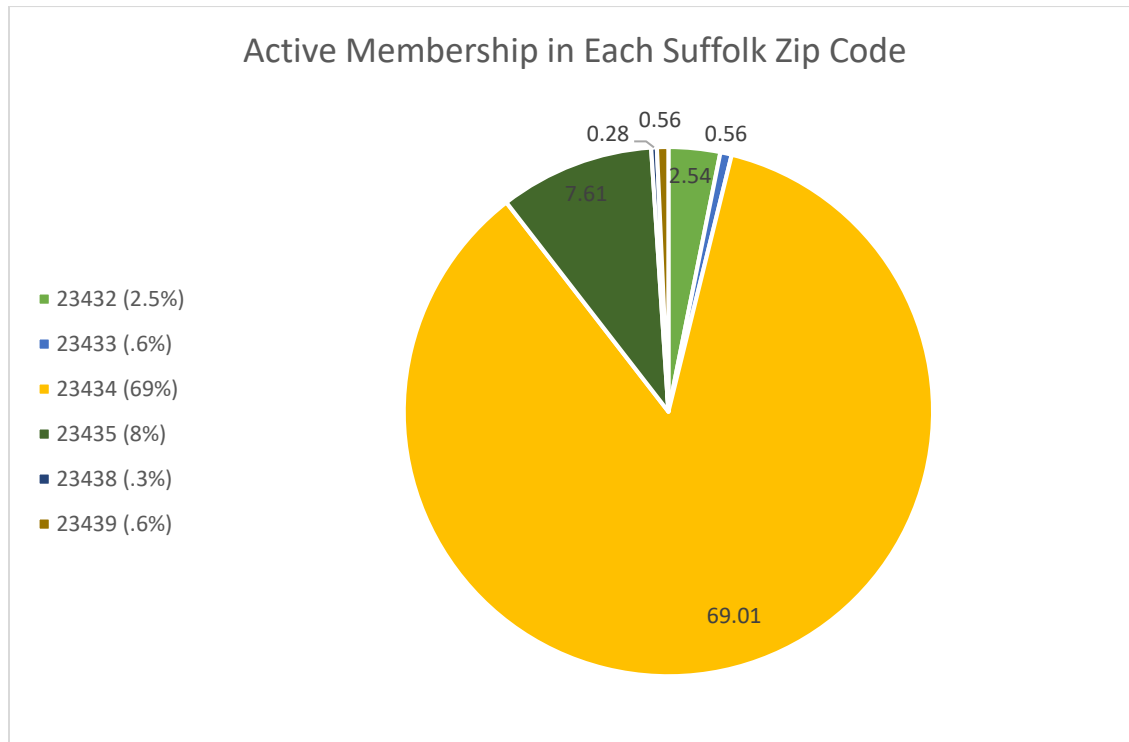
**\*An “active” member could attend church regularly, contribute financially or request to remain in contact with the church.**

**\*\*An “inactive” member may have left the area, has not attended, or financially supported the church. The Board of Deacons decide if a member is inactivated due to lack of attendance.**

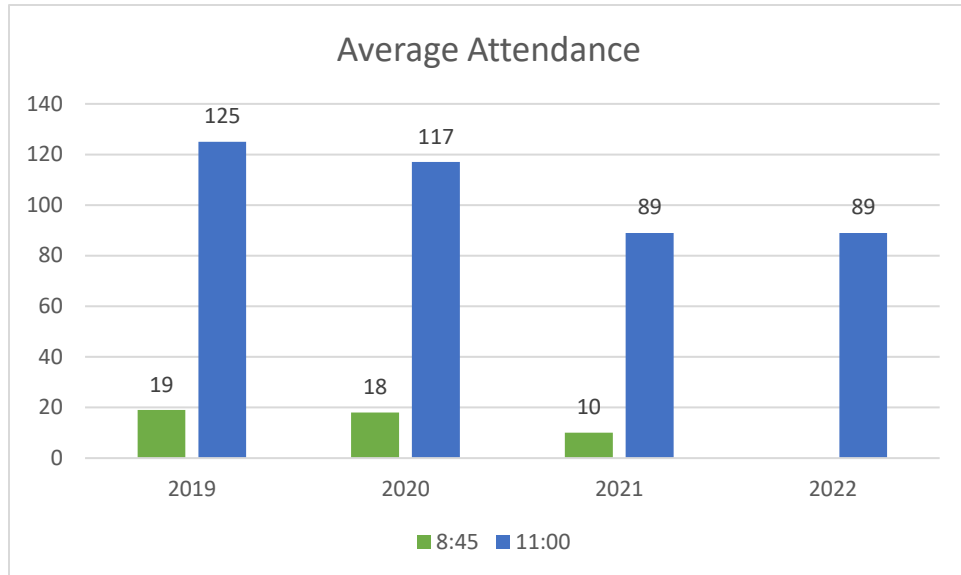
*Data Collected through Church Windows*



## Active Membership by Area



**Average Attendance** (updated 7/12/2022)



# LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

## Boards and Committees

Board of Trustees  
Executive Board  
Board of Deacons  
Board of Finance  
Board of Christian Education

House of Worship Committee  
Board of Ushers  
Music Committee  
Scholarship Committee

## Church Programs

Church Wide Fellowship  
Women's Bible Study  
Saints Alive  
Thursday Crafters  
Adult Handbells  
Kings Ringers  
Chancel Choir  
Acolytes  
Thanksgiving Dinner  
Thanksgiving fruit baskets for shut-ins  
Grief Support  
Vacation Bible School  
Graduate Sunday  
Decorating Committee  
Care and Concern Committee  
Scholarship Sunday  
Laity Sunday  
Prayer Team



*Acolytes in  
Washington, DC*



## Monthly Missions

Church Family Assistance  
Meals on Wheels  
Western Tidewater Free Clinic  
Winter Shelter  
Suffolk Christian Church Scholarship Fund  
Coalition Against Poverty in Suffolk (CAPS)  
Crisis Pregnancy Center of Tidewater  
The Genevieve Shelter  
Neighbors in Need  
Night Stay



## Community Outreach Programs

Food Pantry  
Coats for the Community  
Salvation Army Meal Servers  
Meals on Wheels  
Narcotics Anonymous  
Souper Bowl Sunday  
Community Food Giveaways  
CAPS / Night Stay / Suffolk Winter Shelter  
Haiti Missions  
Game Night  
The Last Supper Re-Enactment  
First Responder's 9/11 Cookout  
Trunk or Treat  
Fall Festival  
Movie Nights  
Gingerbread Houses  
Valentines Baskets for the Shut Ins  
Easter Egg Hunt  
Wednesday Children's Bible Study (July/August)  
Blessing of the Backpacks  
Mission Fuge (6-12<sup>th</sup> grade)  
CentriKids Camp (3-5<sup>th</sup> grade)  
Christmas Parade Participation  
Christmas Caroling for Shut-Ins  
Children's Christmas Musical  
Christmas Cantata  
Santa Luncheon



*Picnic for First Responders*



*Re-enactment of The Last Supper*

## History

As Virginia's largest City, Suffolk is 430 square miles of rich land with woods, lakes, rivers, and rolling terrain - not to mention wise development and the use of it - that make this area bountiful for residents and businesses alike. Our schools and parks, neighborhoods, health care facilities and utilities help create a successful community. In fact, some of the region's most prosperous companies already call Suffolk home. The great potential for growth is attracting many new businesses and employees. This is a place full of pride, full of promise. Suffolk is a place where progressive isn't just a description, it's an attitude. It's a place with vision. It's Suffolk, Virginia. You're welcome to join us.

## Seal of Suffolk *(Designed by Deacon Emeritus Herbert L. Briggs)*

The seal showcases important founding dates:

- 1646 for Nansemond County
- 1742 for Suffolk
- 1974 for the consolidated City of Suffolk

In the seal, the tractor represents our agriculture, the helmet our history, the fish for recreation, the gears for industry, and the peanut signifies the importance of the crop.



## Nansemond River

Native Americans lived off the bountiful land in Suffolk. Back in 1609, the Nansemond Indians drove out Captain John Smith, who was interested in the oyster beds in the Nansemond River. This river, the commerce it helped create, and the English settlers who recognized the opportunity they would have here, gave birth in 1742 to the Town of Suffolk, named after Governor William Gooch's home of Suffolk County, England.

## City Establishment

Burned by the British in 1779 and damaged by other fires throughout the next century, Suffolk survived to become a city in 1910. In 1974, it became the present City of Suffolk, consolidating with the towns of Holland and Whaleysville, and the County of Nansemond. The end result was a new municipality encompassing a total of 430 square miles, making it the largest city in land area in Virginia and the 11th largest in the country.

## Peanut Processing

In 1912, an Italian immigrant named Amedeo Obici moved from Pennsylvania to Suffolk and opened Planters Nut and Chocolate Company. Today, Suffolk remains a major peanut processing center and transportation hub.

## Demographics

There are 91,383 residents in Suffolk. The residents are 48.9% white, not Hispanic or Latino; 41.46% African American; 9.7% other, including American Indian, Asian, 2+ races and Hispanic/Latino

The estimated median household income is \$79,899.

<https://www.suffolkva.us/>



## MAJOR SUFFOLK EMPLOYERS

Educational Services  
Naval Information Forces  
Healthcare  
Public Administration/Services  
Warehousing and Distribution  
Banking  
Food Services  
Manufacturing  
Simulation and Technology  
Retail (including automotive, nurseries, groceries)  
Utilities – Dominion/Energy  
Virginia Department of Transportation  
Construction





## FACILITIES

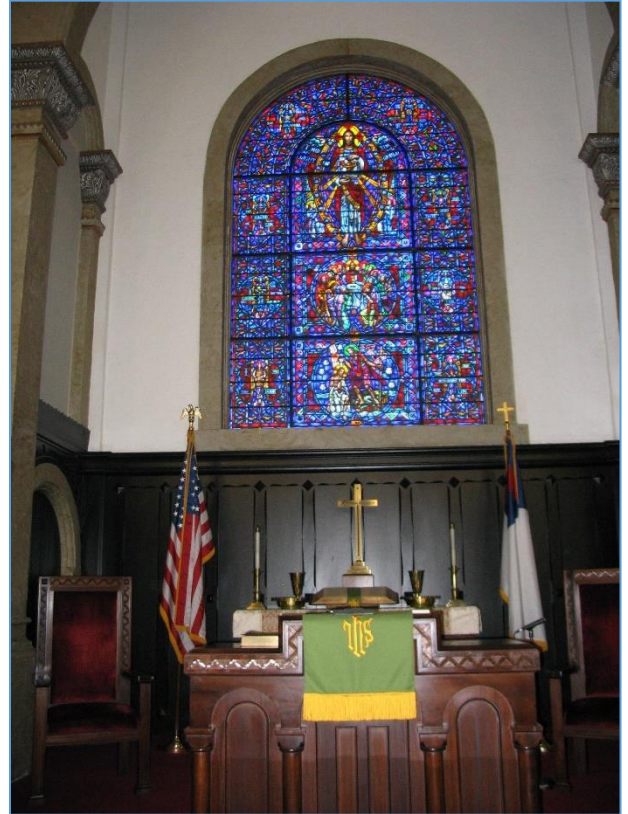
### 216 N. MAIN STREET



Suffolk Christian Church is a three-storied building located at 216 North Main Street in the heart of downtown Suffolk. There are entrances to the paved parking lots with handicapped parking on either side of the church. A landscaped garden is on the north side of the building leading to one of three entrances. The parking area on the north side includes a covered walkway to the entrance with a community playground next to the walkway. The doors in the front of the church are opened for Sunday worship services and special occasions and lead to the sanctuary. The third entrance is from the south parking lot with a covered walkway. The first floor includes a foyer, offices, library, conference room, classrooms, food pantry, and restrooms.



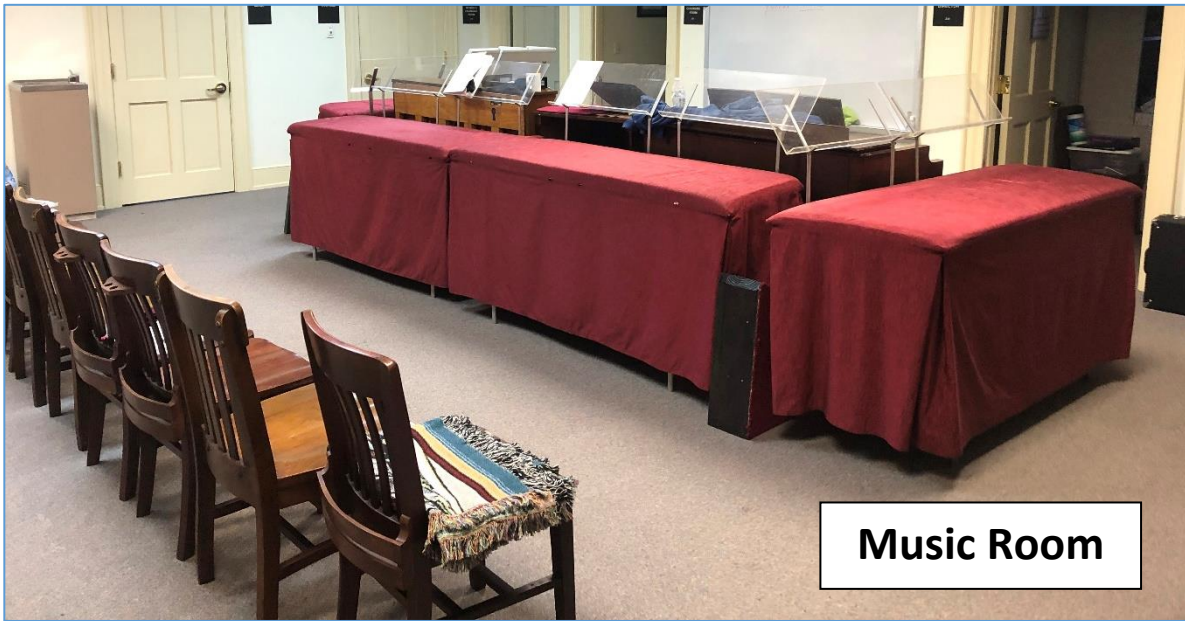






One elevator on the first floor offers entrance to the second floor. A second elevator offers entrance to the fellowship hall and kitchen as well as entrance to the second and third floors.





The second floor includes the beautiful sanctuary, music and choir room, entrance by steps to the third floor, restrooms, a parlor, classrooms and access to the bell towers. The third floor includes the balcony, restrooms, classrooms and a foyer next to the elevator. The bell tower of the church can be seen from several locations and the bells can be heard throughout the community.







There are two stairways on the first floor; one, leading to the sanctuary and one to the fellowship hall and a large, updated commercial kitchen with ample pantry space.



## ECONOMIC ASSETS

Our church operates financially on a monthly general operating budget which provides primarily for staff and building operation and maintenance. The building and surrounding land is debt free.

The church is fortunate to have invested and designated endowments.

Candidates who are in the interview process may request more detailed budget information.



## OUR FUTURE

In November 2021 we embarked on a transition process in our church. We have held four town hall meetings to review and gain strength from our past; to examine our present by identifying our personal and material assets and acknowledging our challenges; and identifying our hopes for the future.

Suffolk Christian Church was established in 1860 and in the ensuing 162 years the church and its people have experienced wars, economically challenging times and vast cultural changes. Yet, through it all, the people have known the joys of fellowship and a Christian-based faith in our present and future, blessings of growth, expanded facilities, and programs that not only served the church membership but, also, reached outside the church in response to community needs.

We appreciate the beauty and history of our church; the importance of traditional liturgy and beautiful music in our worship services; our central location in the downtown area; the many and varied programs offered to our membership and the opportunities for support and special relationships for our church members and larger community. Our members are affiliated with numerous civic, social and cultural organizations whose missions are allied with those of our church. Hence, we have multiple opportunities for cooperation in meeting the needs of our community. We, also recognize the value in working with other churches as we have done in recent years in providing help for the homeless.

Our hope for the future is to find ways to utilize our building more fully and faithfully, and to expand our missions beyond the walls of the church. We believe that with leadership and guidance provided by our new pastor we can help build community and serve our neighbors through expanded support for the following:

- Increased ministries to our growing homeless population
- Partnership with local schools to support and enhance educational opportunities in K-12
- Alternative worship services
- Creative ways to increase our membership

Our congregation is willing to consider ways to utilize our building more fully and to take our message beyond the walls of the church but at the same time maintaining the traditions of the church.

