

SAMPLE BY LAWS

FOR A CONGREGATION

I. NAME AND PURPOSE

1. The name of our congregation shall be _____ Presbyterian Church located at [address]
2. Our mission is [either a statement already accepted by the congregation or a summary of G- 1.0101].

II. A CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH [U.S.A.]

1. We are a voluntary fellowship of women, men and children united in covenant relationship with one another and with God through Jesus Christ. [See G-1.0102]
2. We shall be governed by the Book of Order which is the constitution of the Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.] under the leadership of the Session and the higher Councils [presbytery, synod and general assembly]. [See G-1.0103]
3. [See G-1.0303] Persons may become active members by one of the three following ways:
 - a. Professing their faith in Jesus Christ,
 - b. Re-affirming their faith in Jesus Christ, or
 - c. Letter of transfer from another Christian congregation.
4. We accept that our property, including our financial assets, is a tool for the accomplishment of the mission of Jesus Christ according to the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.]. [See G-4.000, particularly G-4.0201]

III. MEETINGS

1. Meetings of the congregation shall be held at least annually to elect officers and review the reports of session and to conduct other business as appropriate. [See G-1.0501]
2. An annual meeting of the corporation shall be held on the same day as the annual meeting of the congregation. According to civil law, ecclesiastical and corporate business may be conducted at the same meeting of this congregation. [see last sentence of G-1.0503]
3. A quorum of either the congregation or corporation shall be 1/10th of the active membership as listed in the last Annual Statistical report to the General Assembly. [See G-1.0501]
4. Special meetings of the congregation and/or corporation shall be called for specific matters to be listed in the call to the meeting. [See G-1.0501]

5. Meetings of the congregation and/or corporation shall be governed by the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order. [See G-3.0105, note this applies to Councils, that is in this matter a session , thus a congregation must establish what it shall use as an authority]
6. Notice of the annual meeting or special meetings shall be no less than public notice given on two successive Sundays, or by mail, including email, to be received no later than five [5] days before the meeting is convened. The meeting called may be convened following the worship service if the notice is given before worship begins on the second Sunday.
7. There shall be an approval of the notice and purpose for the meeting by vote of the congregation right after the convening and opening of the meeting. [If no approval is given, there shall be spread upon the Minutes the reason (s) and the meeting shall be immediately closed.]

IV. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

1. There shall be Ruling Elders of a total number of [specify] to be divided into classes of [2 or 3] year terms, of which no person shall serve a consecutive aggregate of more than six [6] years without a full year off the session before they can serve another term. [[If the congregation decides not to have a Board of Deacons, the Ruling Elders shall fulfill that function and it should be so stated, with # 3 below deleted: The Ruling Elders shall fulfill the duties and responsibilities accorded to Deacons.]] [See G-3.0201 and G-2.0404]
2. Ruling Elders active on the session shall also be the Trustees of the corporation, and they shall elect from their number a President, Vice-President and Secretary. Normally, the Clerk of Session shall be the Secretary of the corporation. [[If the congregation decides to elect separate Trustees, this #2 should read: There shall be Trustees of a total number [specify] to be divided into classes of [2 or 3] terms, of which no person shall serve a consecutive aggregate of more than six [6] years without a full year off the board of Trustees. They shall elect from among their number a President, Vice-President and Secretary. Normally, the Clerk of Session shall be the Secretary of the corporation.]] [See G-4.0101 and G-3.0201c]
3. There shall be Deacons of a total number of [specify] to be divided into classes of [2 or 3] year terms, of which no person shall serve a consecutive aggregate of more than six [6] years without a full year off the board of Deacons before they can serve another term [See G-2.0202]
4. Each officer [ruling elder, deacon and trustee as in 1, 2 and 3] shall be nominated by a congregational nominating committee, only one nominee per vacancy. [See g-2.0401]
5. The congregational nominating committee shall consist of congregational members in sufficient number to constitute a majority and be representative of the membership of the congregation, at least one officer from each board of which an active ruling elder shall be appointed by the session to moderate, and the Pastor [Teaching Elder appointed/approved by the Presbytery] who shall serve ex officio without vote. The congregational members shall be elected at the annual meeting from among those present or having given consent before the meeting is convened to have their name placed in nomination. They shall serve

for the year following their election, but for no more than two years without a year off. [See F-1.0403 and G-2.0401]

6. The members of the nominating committee shall respect full confidentiality of discussions, and refrain from contacting or discussing with any person a possible nomination without the consent of the nominating committee.

V. SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

1. Our 'Sexual Misconduct Policy' shall be that of the Presbytery of Philadelphia including but not limited to definitions and training as provided for Teaching Elder[s]. [See G-3.0106]
2. What is required by the Book of Order [of the PCUSA] for mandatory reporting is our requirement.
3. The session is required by these By Laws and the Book of Order [of the PCUSA] to enforce these requirements.

VI. AMENDING THESE BY LAWS

1. These By Laws may be suspended in a meeting of the congregation by three-quarters vote [3/4] of those present and voting, providing that:
 - a. The vote taken is counted or by ballot.
 - b. The suspension is for a specific provision[s] of the By Laws, not the whole.
2. These By Laws may be amended by one of the following ways:
 - a. By two-thirds vote [2/3] of those present and voting if notice of the proposed change has gone out with at least the notice to call the meeting.
 - b. By four-fifths vote [4/5] of those present and voting if the proposed change has not gone out with at least the notice to call the meeting.
3. The vote to amend shall be counted or by ballot.