

Adapted from the *Companion to the Constitution* to comply with the *Book of Order 2011-2013*
[Bracketed notes are for information and should not be included in the bylaws.]

Sample Bylaws of the Congregation (Consult with Presbytery G-1.0201)

I. Statement of Purpose or Mission

The Presbyterian Church of _____ has been called by God and organized to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, to minister to the needs of members of the congregation and residents of the community, and to promote peace and justice in the world.

II. Relation to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The _____ Presbyterian Church is a member church of the Presbytery of Cincinnati in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

III. Governance of the Church

This church shall be governed in accordance with the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*. Consistent with that Constitution, these bylaws shall provide specific guidance for this church. The most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order (Newly Revised)* shall be used for parliamentary guidance.

[Note: A congregation has the option not to use Robert's Rules for congregational meetings; sessions must use them for parliamentary guidance. Write your bylaws accordingly.]

IV. Meetings of the Church

There shall be an annual meeting of the congregation on the _____ Sunday in January *[note: or any other day/month chosen by the congregation]*, at which at least the following business shall be presented: annual reports from organizations and the session (information only), financial report for the preceding year, budget for the current year (information only), changes in the terms of call for the pastor(s) [if installed], nominating committee report for church officers (G-1.0501), electing members to serve on the nominating committee.

[Note: The Book of Order no longer requires particular business to transpire at the annual meeting. Review G-1.0501 and G-1.0503 for guidance as to matters that are permitted. Bylaws should include a list of any business that the congregation wants to require within the limits set by the Book of Order.]

Special meetings may be called by the session. Such calls shall state clearly the purpose of such special meetings, and business shall be restricted to that which is specified in the call. (G-1.0501)

V. Notice of Meetings

Adequate public notice of all congregational meetings shall be given, including notice given at regular services of worship prior to the meeting.

[Note: Congregation must adopt its own rule of minimum notification specified – it may adopt provisions of earlier editions of the Book of Order.] (G-1.0502)

VI. Moderator

The installed pastor shall ordinarily moderate all meetings of the congregation. If it is impractical for the pastor to preside, he or she shall invite another teaching elder who is

a member of the presbytery or a person authorized by the presbytery to serve as moderator.

If there is no installed pastor, or the installed pastor is unable to moderate and/or to name another moderator, the presbytery shall make provision for a moderator. (G-1.0504)

VII. Secretary and Minutes

The clerk of session shall serve as secretary for all meetings of the congregation. If the clerk of session is unable to serve, the congregation shall elect a secretary for that meeting. The secretary shall record the actions of the congregation in minutes of the meeting. (G-1.0505)

VIII. Quorum for the Meeting

The quorum of a meeting of the congregation shall be the moderator, the secretary, and _____ members, but under no circumstances shall it be fewer than _____ of the active members of the congregation. Consistent with the laws of the state/commonwealth of _____, a quorum shall be _____ active members on corporate matters. The secretary shall determine that a quorum is present. All active members of the congregation present at either annual or special meetings are entitled to vote. (G-1.0501).

[Note: Currently, Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio do not have a minimum age for voting in corporate matters. Consequently, every active member regardless of age is eligible to vote on both ecclesiastical and corporate matters.]

IX. Incorporation

In accordance with the laws of the state/commonwealth of _____, the congregation shall cause a corporation to be formed. Consistent with the laws of this state/commonwealth, both ecclesiastical and corporate business may be conducted at the same meeting of the congregation. (G-1.0503).

[Note: There will be variations from state to state on provisions for incorporation. Since the pastor or moderator is not a member of the corporation, consistent with Article VI, a member of the session shall be invited to moderate the meeting when corporate matters appear on the agenda. The ruling elders serving on the session shall serve at the same time as trustees.]

X. Nominating Committee (See G-2.0401)

The congregation shall form a nominating committee in the following manner:

[Note: The congregation determines the process for electing a nominating committee. It may choose to use provisions in earlier editions of the Book of Order.]

- (1) There shall be ____ active members on the nominating committee. [at least three]
- (2) One of the members shall be a ruling elder who is currently serving on session.
- (3) The pastor shall be a member ex officio and without vote.
- (4) Full opportunity shall always be given to the congregation for nomination from the floor of the congregational meeting by any active member of the congregation.
- (5) A majority of all active members present and voting shall be required to elect.

XI. Session

The congregation shall elect _____ ruling elders divided into three equal classes, one class of whom shall be elected each year at the annual meeting for a three-year term. No ruling elder shall serve for consecutive terms, either full or partial, aggregating more than six years. A ruling elder having served a total of six years shall be ineligible for reelection to the session for a period of a least one year. A session shall elect a ruling elder as its clerk for a _____ year-term and a ruling elder as its treasurer for a _____ year-term and shall form such committees as necessary to carry out its work. A quorum for the session shall be the pastor or other presiding officer and _____ ruling elders.

[Note: Provisions for terms of service must comply with G-2.0404:]

Ruling elders and deacons shall be elected to serve terms of no more than three years on the session or board of deacons, and may be eligible for reelection according to congregational rule. However, no ruling elder or deacon shall be eligible to serve more than six consecutive years, and a ruling elder or deacon who has served six consecutive years shall be ineligible for election to the same board for at least one year. Election shall be to classes as nearly equal in number as possible, with the term of only one class ending each year. The presbytery may, upon written request and by majority vote, grant a congregation a waiver of this limitation on terms.]

XII. Board of Deacons [not required]

The congregation shall elect _____ deacons divided into three equal classes, one class of whom shall be elected each year at the annual meeting for a three-year term. No deacon shall serve for consecutive terms, either full or partial, aggregating more than six years. A deacon having served a total of six years shall be ineligible for reelection to the board of deacons for a period of at least one year.

The board of deacons, at its first meeting following the annual meeting, shall elect a moderator and a secretary from among its members and shall form such committees as necessary to carry out its work.

The pastor shall be an advisory member of the board of deacons. A quorum for the board of deacons shall be _____ of the members, including the moderator.

[Note: If a congregation chooses to elect deacons, the follow provisions apply and bylaws must comply with them:

G-2.0202 Under Authority of the Session

Deacons may be individually commissioned or organized as a board of deacons. In either case, their ministry is under the supervision and authority of the session.

Deacons may also be given special assignments in the congregation, such as caring for members in need, handling educational tasks, cultivating liberality in giving, collecting and disbursing monies to specific persons or causes, or overseeing the buildings and property of the congregation. Deacons shall assume other duties as may be delegated to them by the session, including assisting with the Lord's Supper. (W-3.3616). A congregation by a majority vote may choose not to utilize the ordered ministry of deacons. If the congregation has neither a board of deacons nor individually commissioned deacons, the function of this ordered ministry shall be the responsibility of the ruling elders and the session.]

XIII. Vacancies

Vacancies on the session or the board of deacons may be filled at a special meeting of the congregation or at the annual meeting, as the session may determine.

XIV. Amendments

These bylaws may be amended subject to the Articles of Incorporation, the laws of the state/commonwealth of _____, and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) by a two-thirds vote of the voters present, providing that the proposed changes in printed form shall have been distributed at the same time as the call of the meeting at which the changes are voted upon.