



Congregational Conversation Session 1 Info Sheet

Topic: Membership – October 3, 2021

General Bylaws Information

The Bylaws provide the formal structure of the congregation and allow for maintaining and changing that structure. Bylaws hold the highest level of authority of congregational guiding documents. Bylaws do not need to include every matter of policy. Because bylaws are generally amended only through congregational meetings, nimble congregations seek to create policies, operating guidelines and procedures that stand apart from the bylaws to govern day-to-day matters. These can be amended more easily as needs evolve and change.

Characteristics of Effective Bylaws:

- be brief and clearly stated;
- cover only the bare bones of the organizational structure;
- be reasonably easy to amend;
- comply with the laws to which the organization is subject;
- be readily accessible to all members.

As we discuss the proposed revisions, we are asking ourselves the following questions:

Does this need to be in the bylaws? Does it rise to the highest level of governing authority or would this issue/item be better addressed in Board policy and/or staff and volunteer team procedures and guidelines for day-to-day operations? Is this issue/item already addressed in existing policies, procedures and/or guidelines?

Topic 1- Membership

CURRENT BYLAWS - ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Qualifications: Any person at least sixteen years of age may join by completing the path to membership and signing the Membership Book. The path to membership is a process approved by the Board. It shall be published on the Fellowship's web site, and made available in the same manner as these bylaws, pursuant to Article X, Section 3. Membership is effective when the Board or Congregation has accepted that the path to membership has been completed, and the Membership Book has been signed. No test of belief shall be imposed as a condition of membership.

Section 2. Nondiscrimination Clause: The Fellowship affirms and promotes the full participation of persons in all our activities and endeavors including membership, programming, hiring practices, and the calling of religious professionals, without regard to age, race, color, gender, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, class or national origin.



CURRENT BYLAWS - ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP (*continued*)

Section 3. Support: Members shall contribute volunteer service and/or monetary support to the Fellowship. Each member shall sign and submit a commitment form annually, specifying what volunteer service and/or financial support is intended to be given. (*Congregational interpretation 5/17/2009: The words "and/or" mean specifying either or both satisfy the requirement, but specifying neither does not satisfy the requirement*).

Section 4. Termination of Membership:

- a. Membership shall be terminated upon request of that member. Termination is effective when the Board accepts the request.
- b. If it has been more than one (1) year since a member has met the requirements of Section 3 of this Article, the Board may terminate membership no less than thirty (30) days after notice of termination has been sent to the last known address via first-class mail. Membership is automatically reinstated as soon as the requirements of Section 3 of the Article have been met.
- c. Membership can be terminated for actions that threaten the well-being of the Fellowship, provided that due process has been followed pursuant to Section 7 of this article.

Section 5. Non-members: Non-members are encouraged to participate in Fellowship activities and programs. Non-members are not eligible to make motions, vote, or serve on the Board or Nominating Committee. Unless the meeting is in executive session, non-members who have participated in Fellowship activities and programs are welcome and may participate in debate.

Section 6. Record Keeping: The Board Secretary keeps the official membership roll.

Section 7. Disciplinary Procedures: Members shall refrain from conduct injurious to the Fellowship or its purposes. Penalties for such conduct generally fall into the categories of reprimand, suspension, or expulsion. Such penalties may be carried out only after due process has been followed pursuant to the parliamentary authority, with modifications described in the following paragraphs:

- a. To start the disciplinary process, five (5) or more members must sign a complaint. Upon presenting the complaint to the Board of Directors, the Board shall appoint an investigating committee.
- b. If the investigating committee does not exonerate the accused member, it must draft a resolution preferring charges against the member.
- c. If the accused member signs a written request, the charges and the rest of the disciplinary process is brought before the Congregation. If no written request is given, the charges and the rest of the disciplinary process is brought before the Board of Directors.
- d. If the charges are brought before the Board of Directors, the Board sets the date for trial, acts as the trial committee, and imposes the penalty. A two-thirds (2/3) vote of the entire membership of the Board is required to impose any penalty on the accused member, including termination of Membership.



e. If the charges are brought before the Congregation, the Board must schedule a special meeting of the Congregation at which the charges will be heard, a trial committee will be elected, a date for the trial will be set, and a date for another special meeting of the Congregation will be set to hear the report of the trial committee. At that meeting, the Congregation will vote whether or not to accept the trial committee's recommended penalty. To terminate the membership of the accused, a two-thirds (2/3) vote is required. Any other penalty can be imposed with a majority vote.

PROPOSED REVISION(S) - ARTICLE II - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Path to Membership: Any person may become a member of this Fellowship (hereafter a "Member") by completing the path to membership. The path to membership shall be set forth in a written policy approved by the Board of Directors (hereafter the "Board") or a written procedure approved by the Minister and made available publicly.

Section 2. Member Rights: Members who have completed the path to membership are eligible to vote on Fellowship actions that require Member approval and to serve on the Board. Non-members may participate in Fellowship activities but are not eligible to vote or serve on the Board.

Section 3. Member Responsibilities: Members are expected to participate in the life of the Fellowship through volunteer service and financial support. Expectations regarding service and support shall be set forth in the path to membership procedure.

Section 4. Ending Membership: The Board or the Minister shall review membership at least annually. The Board or the Minister shall remove from the membership roll any Members who have requested resignation, who have been inactive for at least one year, or who have died. The Board may end a Member's membership for cause according to the Path to Membership procedure.

REASONS FOR CHANGES

1. Existing document had unnecessary detail that should be in a policy or procedure.
2. Existing document did not reflect current practices (e.g., Secretary of the Board maintains the current member list).
3. Non-discrimination clause was moved to Article I and has existing documents in the Board Policy Manual and the Personnel Manual, and other related procedures.

Additional relevant information:

- Path to Membership - Procedure created by staff to reflect current practices, available on the website.
- Termination of Membership - Rev. Sara has proposed draft for "Ending the Membership Relationship" to be considered for Board Policy Manual and additional staff procedures.
- The Committee on Ministry charter designates the committee to help facilitate appropriate conflict resolution processes for issues that could adversely affect the congregation's ministry.