

Proposed Bylaw Change

In the wake of the COVID pandemic, as congregations found themselves conducting official business via Zoom, some have asked about the legality of “virtual” meetings. The advice given to our District President has been that congregations who want to be able to conduct such meetings “virtually” put such language into their Constitution / Bylaws. This is an attempt to do that.

Below is Bylaw 7 into which the Church Council proposes that this language be inserted. In the proposal below . . .

- ★ **Highlighted text** shows the language of the proposed addition being considered.
- ★ **Boldface text** highlights current sections/words that relate to the question at hand.
- ★ **Strikeout text** (lines 39, 49) shows language that would be stricken.
- ★ **Redline text** (lines 39, 49, 82) shows changes that would replace or be added to the current bylaw.

Bylaw 7: Voters Assembly Meetings

A. Calling

1. **General Frequency.** The Voters Assembly is required to **meet** at least two times each calendar year at approximately six month intervals.
2. **Special Meetings.**
 - a. A Voters Assembly meeting may be called at other times of the year by the Church Council, the pastor(s), or the president.
 - b. Any ten voting members may also request a Voters Assembly meeting through a letter to the Church Council.
 - c. Such request must be made in writing, state the specific nature of business to be discussed at the meeting, contain the date of the request, and be signed by the ten voting members requesting the meeting.
 - d. The Church Council must then call a Voters Assembly meeting within one month of the presentation of the written request.

~~3.~~ **Teleconference Meetings**

- a. **During emergencies or conditions that make meeting in person difficult or impossible, the Voters Assembly shall have the ability to convene by means of teleconference (e.g. Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, etc.).**
- b. **A decision to utilize teleconferencing for a meeting of the Voters Assembly shall be jointly determined by the officers of the congregation.**
 - (1) **The decision of the officers of the congregation that teleconferencing will be permitted for a meeting of the Voters Assembly shall be announced as part of the required notice of the meeting.**
 - (2) **Such notice shall include information about how to join the teleconference.**
- c. **At a meeting of the Voters Assembly in which teleconferencing is permitted, the following provisions shall be followed:**
 - (1) **The secretary shall conduct a roll call to determine attendance, noting which members are present in person and which are participating via teleconferencing.**
 - (2) **The following shall govern any voting:**
 - (a) **Permitted methods:**
 - i) **Roll-call vote of all members attending the meeting, whether in person or via teleconference;**
 - ii) **Secret ballot, for which those participating electronically may record their vote using electronic means available through the technology, or by voicing/texting their vote via telephone to three witnesses designated by the Church Council.**
 - iii) **Show of hands.**
 - (b) **At the request of any voting member, the vote shall be taken by roll call or by secret ballot (as defined above).**

~~3.~~ 4. Required Notice.

- a. All Voters Assembly meetings must be announced at all weekend worship services for at least two weekends prior to the meeting. Accordingly, the Voters Assembly meeting may be called to order no

- 42 earlier than after the final service of the second weekend.
- 43 b. Written announcement of Voters Assembly meetings must also be available at the church to all
- 44 communicant members.
- 45 4. Date and Time. The date and time of all Voters Assembly meetings is set by the Church Council. The date
- 46 and time must be reasonably convenient for voting members to attend.
- 47 5. Cancellation.
- 48 a. A Voters Assembly meeting called by the Church Council, pastor(s), or president may be cancelled by
- 49| the president if there has been a change in the agenda ~~and~~ such that there is no business for the
- 50 Voters to consider.
- 51 b. If the meeting was called at the request of ten voting members, the meeting may be cancelled only by
- 52 a written cancellation request sent to the president signed by all the members who originally
- 53 requested the meeting.
- 54 B. **Attendance and Participation.**
- 55 1. Members. All members of the congregation may attend and speak at Voters Assembly meetings.
- 56 2. Nonmembers. Only the Church Council may invite nonmembers to attend and speak at Voters Assembly
- 57 meetings. The chair of the Voters Assembly meeting controls the extent of their participation.
- 58 C. **Agenda.** An agenda for all Voters Assembly meetings must be prepared and published by the Church Council.
- 59 The Church Council only may prepare such agenda.
- 60 1. Business items requested in writing by ten voting members (Bylaw 7:A2) must be included as part of the
- 61 agenda.
- 62 2. Additional Business Items. An individual member may request the Church Council to include additional
- 63 business items on the agenda of a Voters Assembly meeting.
- 64 a. The request must be made in writing to the Church Council.
- 65 b. The Church Council must then vote to either include the item on the agenda or refer the item to the
- 66 appropriate board for its consideration.
- 67 3. Amendments. The agenda for Voters Assembly meetings may be amended only by the Church Council.
- 68 D. **Quorum Requirement. A quorum of voting members must be present prior to calling a Voters**
- 69 **Assembly meeting to order for any decisions of the Voters Assembly to be valid.**
- 70 1. Definition. The quorum for a Voters Assembly meeting is ten percent of the communicant members,
- 71 eighteen years of age and older on January 1 of the current calendar year, rounded to the nearest whole
- 72 number.
- 73 2. Adjustments. If the number of communicant members changes by more than ten percent during the
- 74 calendar year, the president or Church Council may direct that the quorum be re-calculated per bylaw the
- 75 previous subsection. The new quorum definition remains in effect for the remainder of the calendar year.
- 76 E. **Voting.**
- 77 1. Simple Majority. Unless otherwise required by this constitution and these bylaws, all resolutions are
- 78 passed by greater than 50% of the votes cast in favor of the resolution.
- 79 2. Super Majority. All resolutions requiring a three-fourths majority vote for approval require favorable
- 80 votes of three-fourths of the voting members present, rounded to the next higher whole number.
- 81 3. **Absentee and Proxy. There may be neither absentee votes nor votes cast by proxy.**
- 82| 4. **Method. All decisions of the Voters Assembly must be by secret ballot, show of hands, roll call, or**
- 83 **voice vote.**
- 84 a. **The chair determines the method of voting**
- 85 b. **However, if any one voting member requests a vote by secret ballot then voting must be by**
- 86 **secret ballot.**