

**BYLAWS OF THE
ALEXANDRIA FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
MILFORD, NEW JERSEY**

**Adopted
by the Congregation
in its January, 2000 Meeting**

**Prepared by a
Bylaws Committee Appointed by the
Congregation in Its Meeting of January 31, 1999:
LuAnn Keefe, Glen Nebel, Barbara Sherwood, and Edwin York,
Who Utilized as a Basis for This Proposal:
*The Book of Order and Companion to the Constitution:
Polity for the Local Church***

**Alexandria First Presbyterian Church Milford, NJ
Rev. Dennis Jones, Pastor**

BYLAWS OF THE ALEXANDRIA FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF MT. PLEASANT, MILFORD, N.J.

I. Statement of Purpose

We as members have been called by God and organized: to worship, 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. This statement of purpose for the bylaws supplements existing mission and vision statements of the church.

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

The church is a member church of the Presbytery of New Brunswick in the Synod of the Northeast of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

III. Governance of the Church

The 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. *Robert's Rules of Order (Newly Revised)* shall be used for parliamentary guidance.

The governing structure among Presbyterians is a partnership among four judicatories: Session, Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly. The congregation in the local church, while not a judicatory, (1) provides for supporting the leadership and mission of the local church as promised by members in their membership vows and (2) provides for the sheer enjoyment and grace in covenanting together in the worship, work and life of the people of God.

IV. Meetings of the Congregation

There shall be an annual meeting of the congregation in the church building on or near the last Sunday in January, weather permitting, at which the following business may be presented:

- (1) present the reports and recommendations of the organizations and groups in the particular church in a creative and innovative way that motivates members to mission (G-7.0302);
- (2) provide information in report form that the session can use in its review of all proceedings and actions of the organizations of the church (G-9.0404a);
- (3) exercise the responsibility to review the adequacy of the compensation for the pastor(s);
- (4) adopt or revise bylaws as the way the congregation will structure itself for mission; and
- (5) act on the ecclesiastical and corporate matters recommended by the session that will move the congregation forward in mission.

Special meetings of the congregation 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-7.0302)

A special meeting will be held each June to elect elders and deacons and some nominating committee members.

V. Notice of the Congregational Meetings

Public notice of the congregational meetings shall be given in printed and verbal form on at least two successive Sundays prior to the meeting. When the meeting is called for the purpose of electing a pastor, the notice shall be given in printed and verbal form at least ten days in advance, which shall include two successive Sundays. (G-7.0303)

VI. Moderator of the Congregational Meetings

The pastor shall moderate the congregational meetings. When the church is without a pastor, the moderator appointed by the presbytery shall preside. If it is impractical for the pastor or the moderator of the session appointed by the presbytery to preside, he or she shall invite, with the concurrence of the session, another minister of the presbytery to preside. When this is not expedient, and when both the pastor or the moderator concur, a member of the session may be invited to preside. (G-7.0306)

VII. Secretary of the Congregational Meeting

The clerk of session shall serve as secretary. If the clerk is not present or is unable to serve, the congregation shall elect a secretary.

VIII. Minutes of the Congregational Meeting

The minutes of the meeting recorded by the secretary shall be attested by the moderator and the secretary, approved by the session and recorded in the minute book of the session. (G-7.0307)

IX. Quorum for the Congregational Meeting

The quorum of a meeting of the congregation shall be the moderator, the secretary, and no fewer than one tenth of the active members of the congregation. The secretary shall determine that a quorum is present. Only active members may vote (G-7.0301), regardless of age. Voting by proxy is not allowed.

X. Incorporation of This Church

The church was incorporated by the State of New Jersey on June 11, 1919. The elders in active service are the trustees of this corporation. The session acting for this corporation has the following powers:

- (1) to receive, hold, encumber, manage, and transfer property, real or personal, for the church,
- (2) to accept and execute deeds of title to such property,
- (3) to hold and defend title to such property,
- (4) to manage any permanent special funds for the furtherance of the purposes of the church, all subject to the authority of the session and under the provisions of the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*,
- (5) to buy, sell and mortgage real property, acting only after the approval of the congregation granted in a duly constituted meeting (G-8.0500).
- (6)

Note: These actions require the approval of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, as well as the Session and the congregation.

Consistent with the laws of this state, both ecclesiastical and corporate business may be conducted at the same meeting of the congregation.

Since the pastor or moderator is not a member of the corporation, a member of the session shall be invited by the session to moderate the meeting when corporate matters appear on the agenda.

XI. Nominating Committee for Electing Elders, Deacons, Nominating Committee Members and Auditing Committee Members

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

- (1) There shall be seven members on the nominating committee.
- (2) Two of the members shall be elders designated by the session, one of whom shall be currently serving on the session and shall serve as moderator of the committee.
- (3) One of the members shall be designated by and from the board of deacons.
- (4) Four of the members, not persons currently serving on the session or the board of deacons, shall be nominated and elected by the congregation.
- (5) Members of the committee shall be elected annually, and no member shall serve more than three years consecutively.
- (6) The pastor shall be a member ex officio and without vote.
- (7) The nominating committee shall bring to the congregation nominations only for the number of positions to be filled.
- (8) The nominating committee shall recommend persons to the session to act as treasurers and financial secretary.
- (9) The nominating committee shall recommend persons to the congregation for the election of an auditing committee, to be composed of three members serving in three-year rotating terms, one elected each year.

Nominations shall be made by a representative nominating committee of active members of the church, which shall itself include both women and men, giving fair representation to persons of all age groups and of all racial ethnic members and persons with disabilities who are members of the congregation.

All nominating procedures shall be subject to the principles of participation and representation as stated in G-4.0403:

“Persons of all racial ethnic groups, different ages, both sexes, various disabilities, diverse geographical areas, different theological positions consistent with the Reformed tradition, as well as different marital conditions shall be guaranteed full participation and access to representation in the decision making of the church.”

The floor shall be open for nominations at congregational meetings.

XII. Eligibility for Being Elected Elder or Deacon

Men and women who are active members of the church are eligible for nomination as elders or deacons.

Answering the church’s call to serve as elder or deacon should involve serious commitments and intentions, including:

- (1) accepting the gift of ministry from Jesus Christ,
- (2) engaging in mutual ministry with other church leaders and the entire congregation,
- (3) sharing in the leadership of the church,
- (4) participating in training and other learning opportunities,
- (5) strengthening the mission of the congregation in the larger life of the denomination, and
- (6) encouraging worship in the life of God’s people.

A person chosen for being an elder or a deacon should lead a spiritual life and have a reputation for honesty, an exemplary life, brotherly and sisterly love, warm sympathies and sound judgment.

The spouse and family of those presently serving as elders are among those eligible to serve as elders or deacons. The spouse and family of those presently serving as deacons are among those eligible to serve as elders or deacons.

The spouse and children of clergy are eligible for election, ordination and service as deacons.

Staff members who are also active members of the congregation are eligible for election, ordination and service as deacons.

Persons under 25 years of age may be elected to serve as elders or deacons for a term of one, two or three years.

XIII. Terms of Office for Elders and Deacons: Rotation and Classes

The election of elders and deacons to specific terms of office is designed to provide the following:

- (1) full participation by members,
- (2) prevention of entrenchment,
- (3) continuity in decision making,
- (4) a biblical pattern of rotation of resources and for a period of rest, and
- (5) avoidance of “burn out.”

The provisions for rotation and classes in the *Book of Order* include the following: (G-14.0201a)

- (1) The class is stated as the year of conclusion of the term of office.
- (2) No elder or deacons shall be elected for a term of more than three years (but may be elected to a two-year term).
- (3) An elder or deacon may be reelected to a successive term or terms to complete an unexpired term of another person, provided the continuous time served does not exceed six years.
- (4) There are always two or three classes of elders on the session.
- (5) There are always two or three classes of deacons on the board of deacons.
- (6) The classes need to be as nearly equal as possible.
- (7) Only one class expires each year.
- (8) Terms are ordinarily for two or three years, except when it is necessary to elect some elders or deacons for shorter terms to equalize numbers in classes or fill vacancies.
- (9) Terms of one, two, or three years are provided for the election of persons under twenty-five years of age.
- (10) Terms of elders and deacons expire when their successors have been ordained and installed.

XIV. Elders: Election and Initial Organization

The congregation shall elect persons as elders that would result in a session of 13 elders in 2000 A.D., a session of 14 elders in 2001 A.D. and a session of 15 elders in 2002 A.D. As far as possible, the elders will be divided into three equal classes, one class of whom shall be elected each year for a three-year term. No elder shall serve for consecutive terms, either full or partial, aggregating more than six years. An elder having served a total of six years shall be ineligible for reelection to the session for a period of at least one year.

The *Book of Order* identifies two kinds of duties for elders, those that relate to an elder’s individual actions, and those that relate to collaborative service on the session and in the higher governing bodies of the church.

The caring, nurturing and enabling responsibilities of elders as individuals include the following: (G-6.0304)

- (1) Strengthen and nurture the faith and life of the members of the particular church.

- (2) With the pastor, encourage the people in the worship and service of God.
- (3) Assist in worship.
- (4) Equip and renew the people for their tasks within the church and for their mission in the world.
- (5) Visit and comfort and care for the people.
- (6) Give special attention to the poor, the sick, the lonely, and those who are oppressed.
- (7) Inform the pastor and session of those persons and structures who may need special attention.
- (8) Cultivate their ability to teach the Bible.
- (9) Serve places that are without regular ministry of the Word and Sacrament.
- (10) Administer the Lord's Supper when authorized by the presbytery. (G-11.0103z)
- (11) Serve as a commissioned lay pastor when commissioned by the presbytery.

The governmental responsibilities of elders are carried out in parity with ministers of the Word and Sacrament and as participants in governing bodies:

- (1) Exercise leadership, government, and discipline. (C-5.165, G-1.0303)
- (2) Have responsibilities for the life of a particular church, serving faithfully as members of the session. (G-10.0102)
- (3) Have responsibilities for the church at large, including ecumenical relationships.
- (4) Participate and vote with the same authority as ministers of the Word and Sacrament when elected as commissioners to higher governing bodies. (G-6.0302)

The session, at its first meeting following the election of new elders, shall elect an elder to serve as clerk and shall form such committees as necessary to carry out its work. At that same meeting of the session, the session shall annually elect the local and general mission treasurers. A quorum for the session shall be the pastor or other presiding officer and one third of the elders.

To encourage leadership gifts of more members of the congregation, to make our church more open and welcoming to new members, and to assist the session in fulfilling its unique leadership role, the session shall seek committee chairs, whenever possible, from those not actively on the session.

Elders should be limited to participating in one standing committee and one special committee, acting as liaison from those committees to the session.

XV. Deacons: Election and Initial Organization

The congregation shall elect persons as deacons that would result in a board of deacons consisting of 10 deacons in 2000, 11 deacons in 2001 and 12 deacons in 2002 and thereafter. As far as possible, the deacons will be divided into 3 equal classes, one class of whom shall be elected each year 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 responsibilities of the office of deacon include the following:

- (1) Minister to those in need, including the sick; the friendless; and those who may be in distress, both within and beyond the congregation.
- (2) Assume duties as assigned by the session.
- (3) May serve on committees of governing bodies in positions not requiring elders.
- (4) Coordinate many ministries of service and nurture in the congregation and community.
- (5) May serve the Lord's Supper. (G-6.0402; G-6.0406; W-3.3616)
- (6) Participate in tasks consistent with the responsibilities of office as individually commissioned by the session. (G-6.0403)

The board of deacons is under the jurisdiction and direction of the session. The records of the board of deacons shall be submitted to the session at least annually and at other times upon request of the session.

At its first meeting following the election of new deacons, the board of deacons shall elect a moderator and a secretary from among its members and shall delegate duties and/or form such committees as is 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 one third of the members, including the moderator.

XVI. Church Committees

As a church we frequently accomplish our tasks through committees established or approved by the session. Church members are encouraged to volunteer to participate and work on the church's committees, unless, as with the nominating committee, membership is especially regulated.

The congregation's involvement in these many committees is essential and welcome. It is desirable that the majority of committee members not be elders or deacons.

XVII. Committee Chairpersons

A member of the church shall be the chairperson of no more than one committee, whether that committee is a session standing committee, a session special committee, a nominating committee, a deacon standing committee, a deacon special committee, a pastor nominating committee, a staff search committee, a bylaws committee, a survey/study committee or any other regular or special church committee.

XVIII. Vacancies among Elders and Deacons

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.

XIX. The Bylaws of the Congregation

The purpose of these bylaws is to assist all church members in their orderly pursuit of Christ's mission through this church.

These by-laws may be amended subject to the Articles of Incorporation, the laws of the state of New Jersey 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 agreed upon.

Revisions

October 29, 2000- At a Special Meeting of the Congregation held on this date, Section XV, sentence one was revised to increase the size of the Board of deacons from 9 members to 12 members over a three year period. The vote was 46 for, 0 opposed.