

**BY-LAWS OF THE CONGREGATION/CORPORATION
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF PETALUMA**

PREAMBLE:

The Congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of Petaluma, organized and existing under and by virtue of the statutes of the State of California is an ecclesiastical organization and a non-profit corporation subject to and an integral part of The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It is subordinate to the constitution of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) except in such instances as may violate the laws of the State of California. The following By-Laws are adopted as containing the principles of its government.

NAME:

Both as ‘congregation’ and ‘corporation’, this Church shall be identified by the name: First Presbyterian Church.

PRINCIPAL OFFICE:

The principal office for the transaction of the business of the Corporation and the Congregation shall be located at 939 B Street in the City of Petaluma, State of California.

MEMBERSHIP:

- I. All who profess faith in Christ, promise obedience to his laws, and accept the ordinances of the Church according to the confession of faith of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are eligible to become members of the Congregation and become members on acceptance by the Session at a regular meeting or duly called special meeting.
- II. Members of the Congregation may be placed on the inactive roll, or have their name deleted from the rolls by the Session in accordance with the Book of order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
- III. The Session shall have the power to grant certificates of membership to other churches.

THE CHURCH SESSION:

- I. The spiritual affairs, government, and discipline of the Congregation shall be controlled and directed by a Session consisting of the pastors and twelve (12) ruling elders in active service, which Session shall conduct its affairs in accordance with the Book of Order
- II. The Session shall annually elect a Clerk of Session who shall also be secretary of the corporation. The clerk must be an ordained elder but need not be a voting member of Session.

- III. The Clerk of Session shall keep a legible and accurate record of its proceedings; which record shall be, at least once in every year, submitted to the inspection of the Presbytery of the Redwoods.
- IV. All administrative responsibilities both spiritual and corporate, shall be lodged in one body, the Session. Elders serve as both elders and as trustees.
- V. The Session shall annually elect from their body, a President of the Corporation. As the Session is a unicameral body, it is necessary that the Corporation President be a member of Session.

CHURCH TREASURER:

- I. A treasurer of the corporation shall be elected annually by the Session. The treasurer shall be eligible for re-election. Financial reports shall be prepared as requested by Session. The treasurer shall receive the funds and collections of the church, and its organizations as desired, and shall keep account of source and designation of all funds received, and shall disburse funds as directed and duly authorized.
- II. The treasurer shall keep account of all trust funds and other resources of the corporation, depositing all important papers and documents in a bank safe deposit box to which (s)he and the Clerk of Session shall have access.
- III. The treasurer shall report regularly to the Session, and shall prepare for distribution a complete financial report at the close of each calendar year.

THE BOARD OF DEACONS:

- I. There shall be a Board of Deacons comprised of fourteen (14) Deacons in active service. The pastors shall be advisory members of Deacons. (rev. 10/29/06)
- II. The Board of Deacons shall minister to those in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress, in accordance with the scriptural duties of the office. There may be delegated to the Board of Deacons, under the direction of the Session, certain specific responsibilities. The Board of Deacons shall conduct its affairs in accordance with the Book of Order.
- III. The Board of Deacons shall elect from its membership a Moderator, a Vice-Moderator, a Secretary and a Treasurer of the funds of the Board. The same person may hold the office of secretary and treasurer if the Board so elects.

ELECTION OF RULING ELDERS AND DEACONS:

- I. The Ruling Elders and Deacons shall be elected by the congregation at the November meeting of the Congregation. Session Members shall be Trustees.

- II. All members on the active roll of the Congregation, but no others, are entitled to vote in the election of Ruling Elders and Deacons.
- III. Ruling Elders and Deacons must be members on the active roll of the Church.
- IV. When a majority of all the voters present and voting cast their votes for a person for these offices, (s)he shall be considered elected. Each voter shall be entitled to one vote for each office to be filled. Voting by proxy and cumulative voting shall not be permitted.
- V. The Ruling Elders shall be divided into two (2) classes of six (6) each; and the Deacons shall be divided into two (2) classes of six (6) each. The Ruling Elders and Deacons shall be elected for terms of two (2) years, except when it is necessary to elect some for shorter terms in order to equalize the numbers in the classes or to fill vacancies, and the classes of each shall be so arranged that the terms of one class of Ruling Elders and Deacons shall expire upon the ordination and installation of their successor class of officers. (rev. 06/04/06)
- VI. No Ruling Elder or Deacon shall serve more than four consecutive years. A Ruling Elder or Deacon having been elected for a maximum of four (4) consecutive years shall be ineligible to serve thereon for a further term until at least one (1) year has elapsed from the expiration of the last term for which (s)he was elected.
- VII. For good cause, a Ruling Elder or Deacon may resign with the consent of the Session. On ceasing to be a communicant member of the Church, a Ruling Elder or Deacon immediately ceases to be a member of the Session or Board of Deacons, as the case may be.
- VIII. If any Ruling Elder or Deacon declines to act, resigns, dies or ceases to be a communicant member of the Church, the vacancy created shall be filled by the Congregation at its next annual meeting or at a special meeting called for that purpose. Those who shall be elected to fill vacancies existing for any reason shall be elected for the unexpired terms of such vacancies.

THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE:

- I. There shall be a Nominating Committee comprised of communicant members of the Church for the purpose of selecting candidates for the offices of Ruling Elders, Deacons, Church Nominating Committee and members of the Support and Endowment Fund Management Committee.
- II. Two (2) members of the Nominating shall be designated by and from the Session, one (1) of whom shall be named by the Session as Chair of the Nominating Committee; and one (1) member of the Nominating Committee shall be designated by and from the Board of Deacons. An additional six (6) members of the Nominating Committee shall be elected by the Congregation at its January meeting each year. The pastors shall be ex-officio members of this committee without vote.

- III. Members of the Congregation are encouraged to present suggestions to the Nominating Committee before it reports.
- IV. The names of the nominees shall be announced during worship and printed in the bulletin on the two Sundays preceding the Congregation meeting called to vote on them. Notice shall be given if vacancies remain in the list of nominees, with the notation that the Nominating Committee is still working to fill them.
- V. After the Nominating Committee has presented the names of candidates for office at any meeting, nominations may be made by the members of the Congregation or Corporation as the case may be, provided that such nominations have the consent of the nominee.

MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION/CORPORATION:

- I. There shall be two meetings of the Congregation/Corporation each year. Session shall set the date for one meeting in November and one in January. At the January Meeting, the Congregation shall consider the adequacy of pastoral compensation and receive annual reports. At the November meeting, the Congregation shall elect deacons, elders and nominating committee members. Any other business permitted by the Book of Order may be conducted at either meeting. Notice of such meeting shall be given in public worship on two successive Sundays. The meeting may be convened following the notice given on the second Sunday.
- II. The pastor shall be moderator of all meetings of the congregation. The Clerk of the Session shall be the secretary for the meetings of the Congregation/Corporation. Minutes of the meeting shall be taken and reviewed at the next meeting of the Session. When approved by Session, such minutes shall be final. The president of the Corporation shall preside over meetings of the Corporation. The secretary shall record the minutes, with such minutes becoming final as approved by the Session at its next meeting.
- III. Special meetings of the Congregation/Corporation may be called by the Session for any purposes normally defining a regular annual meeting, or to conduct other business as may be permitted by the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Public notice shall be given on two successive Sundays in worship. The meeting may be convened following notice given on the second Sunday.
- IV. All members on the active roll of the Congregation are entitled to vote. Voting by proxy is not allowed except in regards to corporate matters if required by state law.
- V. Twenty five (25) members or one tenth of the members on the active roll, whichever number is greater, shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at either an annual or a special meeting of the Congregation/Corporation.

VI. Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with Roberts Rules of Order insofar as they are not in conflict with the Book of Order.

VII. Elections shall be by secret ballot whenever there are nominations from the floor.

POLICIES

I FOR NURTURE AND PROTECTION:

As a faith community, First Presbyterian Church is committed to providing a safe and secure place where all children, youth and adults are nurtured and protected as they explore and grow in their faith in God. Nurture and protection thrive in a supportive community of acceptance, openness and trust. Abuse and harassment are contrary to Christian community. Therefore, First Presbyterian Church will maintain policies and procedures that will direct the reporting, investigation and intervention for issues of child abuse, harassment and sexual harassment. The Session will review these procedures annually to see that policies correspond to changes in both the civil law and the congregational organization.

AMENDMENTS:

Amendments to the By-Laws may be made at any annual or special meeting of the Congregation/Corporation by a majority of the members voting. Notice of the amendment shall be made in the public announcement of the meeting.

Revised in the Meeting of the Congregation and Corporation_____

revised 5/93

revised 4/94

revised/adopted 11/12/95

revised 9/4/96

revised 1/11/97

revised 11/8/98

amended 11/21/99

amended 8/29/04

revised 06/04/2006

revised 10/29/2006