

**THE BYLAWS OF THE CONGREGATION AND CORPORATION
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF MOUNT VERNON, IOWA**

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?*

This passage from Micah 6:8 is at the heart of what we seek to do and be together at First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon, Iowa. In our worship and service, we are called to seek justice, to demonstrate kindness, to bear witness to goodness, and to do these things humbly, recognizing the limitations of our own understanding. Our vision statement guides our mission and ministry: “Striving to live as Jesus lived—confronting injustice with love, compassion, service.”

We are known as “the church with the rainbow steps” and the rainbow is an appropriate symbol of who we are and what we believe. Just as the rainbow in our culture symbolizes the inclusion of all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, or physical or mental ability, so does our congregation affirm the dignity and worth of each person and welcome all into our life together. We value the uniqueness of each person, created in the image of God, and know that as the rainbow needs all the colors to be the best expression of itself, so our congregation needs the gifts, talents, and abilities of each member to do what the triune God is calling us to in this time and place. We are a people drawn together by the call of the gospel to worship God, to love one another, and to serve our neighbors. Our congregation is small, but almost every member is active in contributing talent, time and money to our common mission. We care for one another and over the years, many strong ties of friendship have bound us together, across the wide differences in our vocations and styles of life. As a result, our fellowship is warm and supportive. “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.”

This is not to say, however, that we are in complete agreement about matters of theology, politics, or social action. We are a mature community of faith, which embraces a broad range of theological positions and styles of discipleship. Within that range we have developed a strong program of Christian education and through dedicated giving of time, energy and financial resources, we have committed ourselves to a larger vision of Christian mission in the world. Together we try to seek justice, love, kindness, and walk humbly with our God.

ARTICLE I. AUTHORITY OF THE CONSTITUTION

1. The First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon, Iowa, as a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), recognizes that the constitution of the church is in all its provisions obligatory upon its members.

2. The bylaws of the First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon, Iowa, shall always be subject to the constitution and laws of the state of Iowa, and to the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
3. The session should review the bylaws at least annually and recommend amendments to the congregation when appropriate.

ARTICLE II. CONGREGATION AND CORPORATION MEETINGS

1. Annual Meeting. There will be an annual meeting of the congregation and corporation in the church on a Sunday in January of each year for the transaction of any business properly addressed by session prior to such meetings.
2. Special Meetings. Special meetings of the congregation or of the corporation may be called by the session or the presbytery. Such calls shall state clearly the purpose of the meetings, which shall be limited to matters specified.
3. Public Notice of Meetings. The time, place, and purpose of all congregational and corporation meetings shall be given by public notice from the pulpit on the two successive Sundays preceding the meeting.

4. Serving Officers at Congregation Meetings. The officers serving at a congregational meeting are the moderator and the secretary.

A. Just as the pastor is the moderator of the session, so is he or she the moderator of the meetings of the congregation. When a church is without a pastor ~~or in cases where circumstances are such that the pastor cannot or should not preside, the presbytery shall appoint the person to serve as moderator of the session or as moderator of congregational meetings, as is appropriate.~~

B. ~~Congregational meetings also require a secretary whose job it is to record the minutes of the meeting and to see that they are entered in the session's minute book. Ordinarily the clerk of the session shall serve as the secretary of the congregational meeting. If the clerk is absent or otherwise prevented from serving, one of the very first items on the agenda must be to elect someone to serve as secretary of the meeting.~~

C. ~~The clerk of the session shall be appointed by the session. The clerk may but is not required to be serving on session when serving as clerk.~~

5. President and Secretary of the Corporation. The session shall designate from among members on the active roll of the congregation a president. The clerk of the session shall serve as secretary. The president shall share with the clerk of the session the power to sign legal papers for the church.

ARTICLE III. CONGREGATIONAL AND CORPORATION MEETINGS

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Deleted: In cases where circumstances are such that the pastor cannot or should not preside, he or she (with session's approval) shall invite another minister of the presbytery. Also, when appropriate, a member of the session may be invited to preside at the congregational meeting. The approval of both the moderator of the session and the session itself are necessary for this to take place. Congregational

1. Congregational Meeting. At congregational meetings, all active members who are present are eligible to speak and to vote.
2. Corporation Meetings. This meeting will immediately follow the congregational meeting to approve the business of the day. Only active members at least eighteen years old shall be permitted to vote at meetings of the church corporation.
3. Quorum. A quorum at congregational and corporation meetings shall consist of the presiding officer, the secretary, and not less than 10% of the eligible voters.

ARTICLE IV. NOMINATING COMMITTEE OF THE CONGREGATION

There shall be a nominating committee for the purpose of submitting nominations for elder and for members of the Pastor Nominating Committee, as well as nominations for the next year's nominating committee. The session shall appoint one session member as the chair and voting member of the nominating committee, as well as a second session member to serve as a regular member of the committee. The nominating committee shall nominate three active members of the congregation to serve on the next year's nominating Committee. At its annual meeting, the congregation shall elect the three active members to so serve after considering the nominations by the Committee and any nominations from the floor. Members of the nominating committee shall serve until the next such meeting.

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 <#>Membership. The committee shall consist of two elders chosen by the session. **One of these session appointees shall be currently serving on the session and shall be designated by the session to serve as moderator of the nominating committee.** The remaining members of the nominating committee shall be elected by the congregation or chosen by organizations within the church designated by the congregation. A majority of the members of the nominating committee must not currently be members of the session. The minimum number of members is five persons-two elders and three other persons. The pastor is a member ex-officio, but does not vote.¶

ARTICLE V. ELECTION OF PASTOR

1. General Procedure. The election and calling of a pastor shall be conducted according to procedures stated in the Book of Order (G-2.08).
2. Pastor Nominating Committee. The committee to nominate a minister to the congregation for election as pastor shall consist of seven members elected by the congregation. It shall be the duty of the nominating committee of the congregation, as provided for in Article IV of these bylaws, to submit names of at least seven members for election as the Pastor Nominating Committee.
3. Report of the Pastor Nominating Committee. When the committee is ready to report, it shall notify the session, which shall then call a congregational meeting for the purpose of acting on the report of the committee.
4. Moderator of Congregational Meeting. When a congregation is convened for the election of a pastor, the moderator of the session, appointed by presbytery or some other minister of the presbytery shall preside.
5. Electing of a Pastor. When the congregation is convened for the election of a pastor, the moderator shall call for the report of the Pastor Nominating

Deleted: <#>Nominating Process. The committee shall be elected at the annual congregational meeting. There shall be opportunity for nominations from the floor at the meeting.¶

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 <#>Length of Term. Members shall serve from the annual congregational meeting at which they are elected until the next such meeting.¶

Committee. The vote shall be by ballot. A majority of the members present shall be required to elect the nominee.

ARTICLE VI. ELDERS

1. Eligibility. Elders shall be elected by the congregation from the nominating committee's nominations and any nominations from the floor of the congregational meeting, giving fair representation to persons of all ages and of all racial and ethnic members of the congregation.
2. Number-on-the-Session. The session shall consist of up to 9 members, but no less than 5 members plus 1 or more youth elders, who shall be representative of the congregation.
3. Terms-of-Service.
 - A. Two Classes. The elders shall be chosen for a term of two years, except the youth elder, whose term shall be one year. The session shall be divided into two classes, one class to be elected each year.
 - B. Ineligibility. An elder, after serving two full terms or one full term and a partial term of more than one year, shall be ineligible for re-election to the same office until one year after the second term expires.
 - C. Continuity of Office. An elder shall hold office until a successor is elected and installed. An exception may be granted by session upon the request of the elder.
4. Vacancies. Vacancies on the session shall be filled at the annual congregational meetings, and may be filled at a special congregational meeting at the discretion of the session. If the vacancies constitute more than one-third of the active elders, the session shall call a congregational meeting to fill the vacancies.

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ARTICLE VII. RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES OF THE SESSION

1. Responsibilities and Powers. The session shall have responsibility for governing the congregation and guiding its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that the congregation is and becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness.

2. Duties. In light of this charge, the session's duties include but are not limited to the following: The responsibilities and powers of the session for the mission and government of the church are as follows:

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A. Ensure the congregation may regularly gather for worship, education, and spiritual nurture;

B. Authorize the celebration of the Lord's Supper and the administration of Baptism;

- C. Receive and dismiss members and maintain the roll of active members;
- D. Provide for programs of nurture, education, and fellowship;
- E. Prepare and adopt a budget, determine the distribution of the congregation's benevolences, and account for the proceeds of offerings and their disbursement;
- F. Manage the physical property of the congregation for the furtherance of its mission;
- G. Employ the administrative staff of the congregation; and
- H. Lead the congregation in participating in the mission of the whole church

3. Meetings. The session is expected to meet monthly but shall hold meetings no less than quarterly. The pastor may call a special meeting of the session when he or she judges it necessary and shall do so when requested in writing by any two members of the session. The session shall also meet when directed to do so by presbytery.

4. Records. The session shall keep a full and accurate record of its proceedings, which shall be submitted at least once a year to the presbytery for its general review.

5. Quorum. A quorum of the session shall be the pastor or other authorized moderator and one-third of the elders in active service, but no fewer than two. The moderator and two elders can make a quorum for the reception and dismissal of members.

6. Legal Rights. The session members over eighteen years of age shall also be officers of the corporation and legal trustees of the church, and shall receive and hold title to all real and other property of the church. They shall manage the corporate affairs of the congregation, including an annual audit of all financial records of the church. They shall have full power to appoint a treasurer and a financial secretary and session committees. The session shall not sell or mortgage any of the real property of the church or lease the real property used for the purpose of worship or lease any of the other property, unless specifically authorized by a regularly called corporation meeting and with the written permission of the presbytery.

ARTICLE VIII. MEMBERSHIP AND DUTIES OF SESSION COMMITTEES

The structure of the church's committee system and membership on said committees shall be established by the Session. Further, the Session shall organize the committee structure to support the church's mission and goals in terms of faith formation, compassion and service, and support. The structure and membership of committees shall be reviewed at least annually by the Session and revised as appropriate.

All committees must keep a written record of their proceeding and provide the Session with a report as requested and also with an annual report. Committees shall inform the Session of any major plans prior to their implementation.

Deleted: <#>Equipping the church's members to be evangelists and providing opportunities for them to share their faith¶
 <#>Receiving members in various categories of membership¶
 <#>Leadthe congregation in reaching out¶
 <#>Ordering the life of the church¶
 <#>A continuing responsibility for members and their growth and equipment for ministry¶
 <#>A continuing responsibility for church officers¶
 <#>yond the congregation-relationships with other governing bodies, the community, and the ecumenical church¶
 <#>Serving in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline¶
 <#>Calling meetings of the congregation¶

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Deleted: 6. Committees. There shall be established the following standing committees by the session: Christian Education; Finance; Worship; Social Concerns; Physical Property; Outreach; Personnel; Fellowship; Member Care. Other committees may be appointed as deemed appropriate. Committees shall serve for one year.¶

The pastor shall be a member ex-officio of all committees of the Session.

ARTICLE IX. RULES OF ORDER

All meetings of the church shall be conducted in accordance with the most recent edition of the Book of Order & Robert's Rules of Order.

ARTICLE X. AMENDMENTS

Those portions of these bylaws, which are required by, or are in conformity with, the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall not be amended, except to comply with amendment to the Constitution.

Other portions of these bylaws may be amended on approval by two-thirds of the voting members at any regular or special meeting called for that purpose, but no such change or amendment shall be made which in any way changes the purpose or objectives of the corporation.

Deleted: All committees shall consist of one session member and/or report to a session member. All committees must keep a written record of their proceedings and must report to the session before any plans are implemented. The pastor shall be a member ex-officio of all committees of the session. The duties of the committees are listed in the addendum to the bylaws and are interchangeable at the discretion of the session.