

Church Venture Northwest Guidelines For Doctrinal Statement and Bylaws

Doctrinal Statement and Bylaws FirstChurch ThisCity, ThisState Adopted: DATE

(A Title Page is not required, but helpful.)

Statements highlighted in bright green are required in Washington.

Statements highlighted in gray are required by the IRS for 501(c)3 status.

Statements highlighted in red are required by Church Venture Northwest.

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(the table of Contents is not required, but helpful)

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Doctrinal Statement

To secure your religious freedom and rights in the view of the state it is important to include a doctrinal statement in your governing documents.

You must have a doctrinal statement that is congruent with the Church Venture Northwest Identity Document (you are welcome to use the Doctrinal Statement in the Church Venture Northwest Identity Document).

The following areas are covered by the identity document:

Scriptures

God

The Father

The Son

The Holy Spirit

Humanity

Family

Sin

Salvation

Church

Angels

Last Things

Bylaws

The state requires that the board of directors adopt bylaws. (WA)

In this document we're using the term "Bylaws" as the name of the governing document. If your church uses the name "Constitution" for your governing document, the state will be okay with that. (You may presently have a Constitution and Bylaws, the state only requires one governing document. If you are only making changes to one of your existing documents make sure the documents are in agreement with each other.)

Name

Name is required in your Articles of Incorporation and not a necessary piece of the Bylaws. If you include Name in your Bylaws be sure it matches your Articles of Incorporation.

Purpose

*Purpose is required in your Articles of Incorporation for Alaska, Idaho, and Washington **and** to receive 501(c)3 status from the IRS. If you include Purpose in your Bylaws be sure it is congruent with your Articles of Incorporation.*

You are required to place your purpose in your Articles of Incorporation. (WA)

You are required to place your purpose in your Articles of Incorporation.

Authority and Government

Required to affirm agreement with the Church Venture Northwest Identity Document.

Elders

State law speaks to the number, election or appointment, terms, resignation, removal, vacancies, and meetings of directors. In many cases the bylaws may override state law, but if the bylaws make no provision in an area, then the law is the guideline.

The affairs of a corporation are managed by the board of directors. The bylaws may specify a different title for directors.

To be congruent with the Church Venture Northwest Identity Document the elders of the church must be designated as the directors of the corporation.

Elders must meet the biblical qualifications for their office and submit to the headship of Christ, emulating His servant leadership. We believe the function of eldering is reserved for biblically qualified males, who will serve in a plurality.

The board of directors must have at least 1 director. The bylaws may either fix or prescribe a manner for determining the minimum number greater than 1. If incorporated or restated after 1/1/2022 terms of director terms cannot exceed 5 years. If incorporated before 2022 with longer terms, those terms continue as is until amended to be 5 years or less. (WA)

Loans cannot be made to directors and officers. *All directors who vote or assent to make a loan to a director or officers and any officers participating in such action are jointly liable to the corporation for the amount of the loan until repayment.* (WA)

The directors of this church are the elders...

Number of Elders

Qualifications of Elders

Election, Terms, and Succession of Elders

Removal of Elders

Elders Meetings

Roles and Responsibilities of Elders

Officers

Required Officers of the corporation are President, Secretary, and Treasurer. An individual may hold more than one office, except that the office of President and Secretary cannot be held by the same person. The bylaws may specify different titles for officers. (WA)

Loans cannot be made to directors and officers. *All directors who vote or assent to make a loan to a director or officers and any officers participating in such action are jointly liable to the corporation for the amount of the loan until repayment.* (WA)

For further explanation of the employment of pastor staff and other staff see our samples.

Listing of Officers

State required officers

Other officers, e.g. Deacons, Deaconesses

Qualifications of Officers

Appointment, Terms, and Succession of Office

Removal of Officers

Roles of Officers

Membership

State law does not require your organization to have members.

If you incorporate with members, state law speaks to the election or appointment, qualification, removal, and rights of members. In many cases the bylaws may override state law, but if the bylaws make no provision in an area, then the law is the guideline.

If you incorporate with members, Church Venture Northwest recommends that you include a general statement about membership followed by specifics on the following topics.

A membership may be terminated regardless of the procedure set forth in the articles or bylaws if the corporation has had no contact with the member for at least 3 years AND either the member fails to respond within 90 days to a request from the corporation to update the member's contact info (which includes a statement that failure to respond could result in termination of membership) OR pervious request for update sent to member by first-class forwardable mail, with postage prepaid, is returned as undeliverable. (WA)

Qualification of Members

Reception of Members (Election or Appointment)

Responsibilities of Members

Privileges of the Members (Rights)

Classification of Members

Conflict Resolution

Discipline of Members

Removal of Members

Member Meetings

If a corporation has members, an annual meeting of the members is required.

State law speaks to the types of meetings, notice, voting, and quorum. In many cases the bylaws may override state law, but if the bylaws make no provision in an area, then the law is the guideline.

Notice must include the place, date and time of the meeting. Additionally, for special meetings, the purpose or purposes of the meeting must be included.

Notice for annual and regular meetings may be done by way of a schedule of meetings rather than providing notice for each meeting.

There must be an annual meetings of members. (WA)

Fair and reasonable notice of regular and special meetings to all members entitled to vote at a meeting is required. Notice of meetings may be oral or written and delivered personally, electronically, or by mail to all members entitled to vote at the meeting. Notice must be delivered not less than 10 days before and not more

than 60 days before the date of the meeting. If delivered orally, the notice is considered delivered when communicated. If delivered electronically, the notice is considered delivered when transmitted. If mailed first class, the notice is considered delivered 5 days after deposit with USPS. (WA)

For Worship

It is recommended you have a brief statement on worship, to differentiate those meetings from business meetings.

For Business

Quorum and Voting

Rules of Order

It is recommended you have something that defines how you will conduct your business meetings.

Books and Records

State law speaks to the types of records a corporation must keep, as well as where they must keep them, for how long, and members' rights to inspect these records. In most of these things, the bylaws cannot override state law. Each corporation shall keep permanently at any locations: minutes of member meetings, and board meetings; record of all actions taken by member and board by unanimous written consent; record of all actions taken on behalf of the corporation by a committee of the board; articles of incorporation or restated articles and all amendments to them currently in effect; bylaw or restated bylaws and all amendments to them currently in effect; all communications to members generally within the past 6 years, including financial statements; a list of the names and addresses of its current directors and officers; most recent annual report; a list of names and addresses of all members in alphabetical order by class. A member of the corporation may inspect and copy, during regular business hours at a reasonable location specified by the corporation, any of the above records upon written notice at least 5 days prior to the date of inspection. (WA)

Committees

State law allows the board of directors or bylaws to create committees and guidelines for those committees. This article is not required.

If your church will have committees Church Venture Northwest recommends you include some general guidelines for those committees.

General Controls

Standing Committees

Special Committees

Auxiliary Organizations

This article is not required.

Auxiliary organizations are things such as Daycares, Pre-Schools, Christian Schools, etc. If your church will have these Church Venture Northwest recommends you set forth some guidelines for how these organizations will relate to the church.

Authority

Approval

Officers

Bylaws

Meetings

Licensure and Ordination

This article is not required.

Church Venture Northwest recommends that you include provisions for licensing and ordination in your bylaws.

Licensure

Ordination

Finances

This article is not required.

Dissolution of this Church

Dissolution is required in your Articles of Incorporation for most states and to receive 501(c)3 status from the IRS.

If you include Dissolution in your Bylaws be sure it matches your Articles of Incorporation.

You must have one in either the Articles or Bylaws in all states.

You were required to place your dissolution clause in your Articles of Incorporation. (WA)

You were required to place your dissolution clause in your Articles of Incorporation.

For an example statement see the document: Legal Guidelines.

Amendments

State law speaks to the procedures for amending bylaws. Bylaws may override state law, but if the bylaws make no provision for amendments, then the law is the guideline.