

Constitution and bylaws -- Summary of major changes

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(Refer to the proposed document as you study these, please. If you have a copy of the current constitution/bylaws, you might want to consult it, too.)

Constitution

Article I Name

- The actual legal name of the church is “Mt. Sinai Congregational Church.”

Article II Mission and Covenant

- In sections A, B, and C you can see we combined the concepts of “purpose,” “doctrine,” and “covenant” into one article (Article II “Mission and Covenant”)

Article III Governance, Sections A, B, and C

- We simply renamed this article “Governance” and organized the ideas therein in outline form.

Article IV Membership

- In section A we included the language of our open and affirming statement here.
- We added the process by which someone becomes a member, substituting “Membership and Mentoring Action Team” for “Diaconate.”
- In section B we also changed the label, “Diaconate,” to “Membership and Mentoring Action Team.”

Article VI Officers and Boards

- We cleaned up the outline form here.
- We identified the elected officers: moderator, vice moderator, treasurer, and clerk and noted their accountability to Council, omitting the word, “Executive” from the name of that body.
- We removed ordained staff (minister, associate minister, licensed minister, etc.) from this section. They are not “elected,” nor are they “officers” in the legal sense of that term.
- We clarified that officers must be members of the church.
- We refer to descriptions of officer responsibilities in the bylaws and in a policy manual that is yet to be a work in progress.
- We noted that officers are elected by majority vote at a duly called meeting.
- Section A identifies the function of Council and the alignment of its work with the mission of the church (Article II).
- Section B identifies ministry boards as the operating structures of the church, stating that each will have a mission statement aligned with the mission of the church (Article II).
- Section C notes that the composition of office holders and board personnel will reflect diversity.
- Section D introduces the change we made regarding the commencement of terms of office: new officers and board leads will begin serving on “January 1 of the year following their election.” (Refer to Article VI Services and Meetings, Section A for date of election. The period between their election and the beginning of their term would be used for training and coordination with the outgoing officers and board leads.)
- Note that we removed the general descriptions of individual boards from this article. These now appear in the bylaws in greater detail.
- We removed the “elected positions” of youth and women’s fellowship representatives on Council.
- Section E notes that meetings are open.
- Section F describes the process for removal of an elected officer or board lead.

Article VI Services and Meetings

- The general description of worship services remains pretty much the same.

- Section A Annual Meeting--We moved the annual meeting to the first Sunday in November. Our thinking was that the weather would not necessitate rescheduling the meeting. Also, we felt that electing officers and board leads in November would allow time for training and transition before they assumed their roles at the beginning of the next year.
- Sections B and C remain pretty much the same.
- Sections D and E clean up some procedural issues and fall into outline form.

Article VII Amendments

- This remains basically the same as the current constitution.

Bylaws

Article I Minister and Officers

- We gave far more detailed information about the responsibilities of the minister and each elected officer, noting that the full description of the minister's responsibilities is in the letter of call.
- We refer again to the policy manual, where duties and responsibilities of elected officers will be found.
- Note that the minister serves *ex officio* on Council and all boards.

A. Minister

- Note under A, 5 the addition of a "Minister/Parish Action Team," which is described later in Article II, 6, b, 2.

B. Moderator

- Note the addition of a monthly report of the moderator to the congregation to open lines of communication.
- Since we added the office of vice moderator, we structured the term of the moderator to two years, to be succeeded by the vice moderator.

C. Vice Moderator

- The vice moderator will lead the Personnel Ministry Board.
- We created this office to allow for continuity with term limits for the Moderator. Once this structure is fully in place, the vice moderator will serve a two year term before becoming moderator for two years.

D. Clerk

- The clerk will maintain the minutes in the church office.
- The clerk will maintain/update the policy manual in the church office.
- We changed the term of office to three years, again allowing for continuity, and training of new persons to assume this office.
- Responsibility for keeping membership, baptism, marriage, and death records is moved to the Membership and Mentoring Action Team under the Congregational Nurture Ministry Board (Article II, B, 4, b, 5).

E. Treasurer

- The treasurer may seek an assistant and/or financial secretary* in consultation with the Finance Ministry Board. *This was previously an elected officer.
- The term is changed to three years, as with the clerk.

Article II Council and Ministry Boards

A. Council

- The number of voting members of Council has been reduced from thirteen to eight: Three officers and five* ministry board leads. (*The vice moderator, an officer, serves as lead of the Personnel Ministry Board.)
- The responsibilities of Council are enumerated.
- The process for enlisting a Minister Search Action Team appears here.

B. Ministry Boards

- The “flow” of the structure is described in this section.
- Leads and SAT coordinators form the board membership.
- The four ministry boards are identified.
- All work of the ministry boards and action teams serves to advance the mission of the church.
- Each will have its own mission statement and policy that is aligned with that mission.
- Participation on boards or action teams is open to “active members and non-members. (N.B.: Ministry board leads must be church members, Constitution Article V.)

2. Ministry Board Members

- Leads are elected at the annual meeting for one-year terms. They may succeed themselves for another one-year term.
- Board leads, working with the Nominating Action Team, identify volunteers to coordinate their boards’ standing action teams (SAT’s).
- SAT coordinators identify volunteers to assist with their teams’ tasks.
- Note that each board must submit a proposed budget to the Finance Ministry Board by September 15.

3. Worship and Sacraments Ministry Board

- This board takes on much of the work of the current Diaconate, with some exclusions that have been moved to the Congregational Nurture Board.
- SAT’s are responsible for worship planning for one or more of the liturgical seasons.

3. Congregational Nurture Ministry Board

- This new board oversees the work of the current Board of Christian Education, bearing the responsibility for child and youth education and adult programs.
- Further, this board includes SAT’s for coffee hours, the Caring Ministry, membership/mentoring, and “special gatherings.”

4. Social Justice Ministry Board

- This board replaces the Board of Christian Outreach and retains the same areas of responsibility, now coordinated as SAT’s.

5. Personnel Ministry Board

- This board replaces the former “Personnel Committee.”
- The vice moderator is lead for this board.
- The nominating committee becomes a SAT under this board.
- The Minister/Parish Action Team is a new SAT on this board.
- This board bears the responsibility for review of paid non-ordained staff and for hiring additional non-ordained staff.

6. Finance Ministry Board

- This new board oversees the work of the current Board of Trustees, the Board of Stewardship and Mission, and the Board of Endowment (Dream Fund).
- The Finance Ministry Board Lead is coordinator of the Dream Fund Standing Action Team.
- SAT’s take on many of the responsibilities formerly handled by the entire Board of Trustees. These are delineated in b, 1-5.