

Bylaws Taskforce

First member's meeting, July 19 2009 “What should be in Bylaws and what in policies?”

Summary of members' input

BL=Bylaws; LM=Lead Minister

1A Financial Oversight

- BL should require congregational vote for expenditures over 10% of the budget and also for allocation of untargeted bequests that exceed that amount. Desire to see the BL specify that there must be a policy regarding deficit spending. Group also wanted BL specifying audits and who gets to see the results.
- BL require congregational input on some specified amount, 10% seemed agreeable.
- Group split, some wanted specific BL statement that congregation should authorize any item which formed a big %age of the budget; others felt it should be policies, with a mandate that there be such a policy.
- Most felt comfortable delegating such decisions to the Board.

2A: Executive Session

- Most BL should require Board to state reason for Executive Session and require a 2/3 vote. Some strong for BL to protect right of a member to address the Board, with process in policies.
- Should be in policies. Bylaws could mandate policy; announcement at Board meeting of general topic for executive session.
- BL mandate a policy about which business would require executive session.

2B. Board Communication.

- Important to have language re communication in BL.
- General desire for good communication by Board to congregation, including access to minutes.
- BL should not specify details about communication, that would be policy, but could specify that must “keep congregation informed”. Policies could specify that minutes be easily available.
- BL specify that minutes be available, suggest they be posted on internet and use Robert’s Rules format.

3A. Values-related Language.

- Yes, should be included. Aspirational language is important.
- Mixed, preambles showing intent OK, but some values language could be interpreted differently by different people and may prevent to-the-point BL.

3B Robert’s Rules.

Yes, mandated in BL (some said it should be along with aspirational language.)

3C. Electronic Voting:

- Yes, BL authorize Board to create a policy.
- Important to have voting options, but not specified in BL since this may change over time; BL could mandate policies regarding a variety of voting methods.
- No, if issue is important enough there should be a meeting.

- Details about voting can be in policies.

4A. Conflict Resolution:

- Hybrid, some fundamentals regarding rights of members in BL, most details left to policies.
- Mandate in BL for policies, including which kinds of conflict.
- Required in BL, identify which kinds of conflicts, process covered in policies.

4B. Exclusion from Property:

- Distinction between exclusion and removal from membership. Behavior interfering with activities on ERUUF campus OK, not necessarily limited to LM, details should be in policies.
- Should include exclusion (not membership revocation) for disruptive behavior in policies.
- Not included in BL, common sense rules, civil authorities should do any expulsions.
- Divided, some felt exclusion should only be for physical behavior, not behavioral which should be addressed in conflict resolution. Others felt that anyone should have authority to exclude when they saw imminent physical danger.

5A and B. Revocation of Membership.

- Termination related to behavior should not be in BL but rather in Conflict Resolution policies as a last resort in a multi-step process. Membership categories might help resolve concerns re members no longer able to participate.
- Only the congregation should have authority to revoke membership. Behavior outside dangerous behavior should be in conflict resolution process. Revocation of membership should be a power reserved to the congregation.
- Should be in policies.
- Bylaws should require a policy for administrative process for revocation, specified by examples, and only for administrative reasons.

General:

1. Need for teaching regarding policy governance and delegation of authority.
2. Support for keeping BL minimal and using policies for detail.
3. General support for aspirational statements, though also concern that they not expand BL and/or be subject to different interpretations.
4. Encouragement to make BL process transparent and to issue “response to comments” stating why decisions were made as they were.
5. Desire to have policies developed along with BL so that members could evaluate both as they develop.
6. Positive response to the July 19 process.