

Glossary

of the Constitution and By Laws of the Bunkertown Church of the Brethren

AD HOC COMMITTEE (*ad hoc, Latin, "for this"*): A committee formed to achieve a specific objective, and usually dissolved after the achievement of its objective. They are called Short-Term Committees in the Bylaws of the Bunkertown Church of the Brethren. *See Short-Term Committee.*

AD INTERIM (*Latin, "in the time between"*): This phrase refers to the temporary period that one entity serves to represent another entity. For example: The Executive Committee serves to represent the Church Board when meeting with the pastor in an advisory capacity or in maintaining good ministerial relations with the congregation.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE is the highest legislative authority in the Church of the Brethren regarding matters of polity, procedures, discipline, and program vision. Delegates from congregations and districts meet in rotating geographical locations so as to fairly accommodate the traveling expenses of members in various parts of the nation. Worship, business, insight sessions, exhibits, auctions, games for the young, and special forums are components of the event.

BRETHREN (*Church of the Brethren*): In the year 1708, a group of eight people were baptized in the Eder River of central Germany with the determination to revitalize their spiritual lives in closer harmony with Jesus Christ. They accepted the New Testament as their only creed. Brethren seek to be of service to others, commit themselves to social justice, peacemaking, simple living, discipleship, and proclaim the gospel of Jesus. Identity line: *"Continuing the Work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together."*

BYLAWS: The written rules and regulations enacted by an organization to provide a framework for its operation and continued maintenance. It is a companion document to a Constitution that stipulates the rules by which the organization shall operate. Bylaws provide for meetings, elections of officers, explain the types and duties of officers, the filling of vacancies, special notices, establishment of committees, and provisions for discipline. Bylaws are often a binding contract of the membership, which must be formally adopted and/or amended. A constitution may state that a particular meeting should take place to conduct business; the bylaws would determine when and how it should meet. A constitution would not mention the necessity of a quorum to convene. That is the function of the bylaws.

CHECK REQUEST: The Church Treasurer will disburse funds only when requested by a proper authority (such as Commission Chairs or the Board Chair). Our current practice is to have a Board authorized signature on all check Requests. Thus, an approved order to commit funds is given in order to limit the possibility of unrestricted disbursements originating from anyone in the congregation, or to prohibit financial improprieties in general.

CONGREGATION: The collective body of believers in the ministry of Jesus Christ who gather at one place, yet act as a whole. The Church is the body of Jesus Christ which is global in scope. The congregation is a local part of that wider church. Jesus referred to the church in Matthew 16:18, *"I will build my church."* The Greek manuscript word for church is *ekklesia* (pronounced *ek-klay-see'-ah*) meaning assembly, from EK (*Greek, "out"*) and KLESIA (*Greek, "ones called"*). The Church of Christ is composed of those who have been "called out from" the world of unbelief. Ecclesiastical is an English word that comes from this same word and pertains to things about the church.

CONSTITUTION (*Latin, [cōstituō] to constitute, establish, arrange*): A written body of statements termed Articles that establishes the purpose of an organization, defines why it should exist, confers specific powers or limitations upon itself, and sets forth the procedure of how amendments can be adopted. It is a document that "constitutes" or establishes something. It differs from bylaws in that it lays a foundation for the bylaws to build upon.

CONTINUING COMMITTEE: A committee whose purpose "continues" beyond a specific objective unless it is officially disbanded. For example: the function of the Nominating committee continues beyond the submission of names for the ballot of an election. It cannot be termed a Short-Term (Ad Hoc) committee because the objective of submitting names for ballots does not end as long as there are elections. Likewise, it cannot be termed a Standing Committee because it is not officially permanent nor endowed with powers. Other examples would be the Counting Committee which counts the money given in offerings as long as there are offerings. *See also Ad Hoc, Short-Term, and Standing Committees.*

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DULY CALLED MEETING : A particular meeting of a governing body might convene only as bylaws would stipulate. A few of these stipulations might include a well defined length of advance notice, reference to certain officers, the date, the time, and the location. Further, bylaws may also designate that only certain matters or issues should be called in this proscribed manner. An announcement to convene that fails to comply may nullify the meeting and negate any decisions.

EX OFFICIO (*ex officio*, Latin, "from the office") : The term refers to rights or powers granted to an individual because of an office held. An executive serving in one capacity may also serve on a committee or board as an additional member "by virtue of their office" rather than through elections. A common misconception is that the participatory rights of ex officio members are limited by their status. Rather, this term denotes only how one becomes a member of a group, not the scope of their rights, which is determined by the group. It is a method of being seated, not a class of membership.

Unless bylaws constrain their rights, they are afforded the same rights as other members, including debate, making formal motions, and voting. Another misconception is that ex officio board members lack voting privileges, but the term has nothing to do with voting [*Robert's Rules, (11th ed.), pp. 483-84; p. 497, ll. 20-29*]. Therefore, it is advisable that bylaws clarify the status of ex officio members to avoid commonly held assumptions or misconceptions.

POLICY : A definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives, in respect to given conditions that would best guide and determine present and future decisions for the sake of expediency. There is often confusion between the words policy and polity. Polity describes the framework in which policies abide. For example: The polity of a church may provide for the existence of a kitchen and lunch room, but it is the policies that determine who does what in the kitchen and how it will be done. *See also Polity.*

POLITY (Greek: Πολιτεία, "rule by citizens") : was originally a term used in ancient Greece to refer to the many city states that had an assembly of citizens as the core of the political process. Congregational polity (rule by members) is that form of church government in which final human authority rests with the local congregation in decision-making, regarding membership, leadership, doctrine, worship, conduct, missions, finances, property, and relationships. This is human authority that recognizes the lordship of Jesus Christ and the leadership of the Holy Spirit. *See also Policy.*

QUORUM (Latin, "of whom") : The smallest dependable number of officers and members of an organization required to be present at a meeting in order to faithfully conduct the business at hand. Unless otherwise decided, once a quorum at a meeting has been established, the continued presence of a quorum is presumed to exist only until the chair or any other member notices that a quorum is no longer present (some members have left the meeting).

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER : A book written by US Army Brigadier General Henry Martyn Robert (1837–1923) containing rules of order and procedure intended to be a parliamentary authority for use by a deliberative assembly. He was born in South Carolina and raised in Ohio. When asked to preside over a meeting at a church in New Bedford, Massachusetts, his lack of knowledge concerning basic parliamentary procedure resulted in a huge embarrassment. He resolved that he would learn all he could about such procedures before attending another such meeting. The initial rules were loosely based on procedures then used in the United States House of Representatives.

RULES : A uniform standard or principle mandating or guiding conduct or action for a given type of situation. Rules are generally less encompassing than Regulations. A government regulation would determine if a certain game is lawful, such as gambling, and Rules would determine how and where it may be played. *See also Regulations.*

REGULATIONS : A term that is much more "official" in legal terms than a Rule. Regulations are often a set of Rules. For example: Federal regulatory commissions would issue Rules on how airplanes may fly, bridges may be built, radio stations may broadcast, and cars may travel. They would not be referred to as Federal rules commissions. *See also Rules.*

SHORT-TERM COMMITTEE : A more pleasant term for an Ad Hoc Committee which is formed to achieve a specific task or objective, and usually dissolved after the completion of the task or achievement of its objective. For example: A

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“search committee” would be formed to fill the vacancy of a church office. When someone is hired, there remains no further reason for the existence of that search committee. *See also Ad Hoc, Continuing, and Standing Committees.*

STANDING COMMITTEE : A permanent committee officially established by an assembly which provides its scope and powers, until subsequent official actions may restrict its functions or disband its existence. The Standing Committee of Church of the Brethren Annual Conference meets a few days prior to the main Conference, to review business items, arbitrate disagreements, and make recommendations for deliberation by the Conference delegate body. It is generally more efficient to have Conference delegates vote on recommendations of processing denominational business than to expend an inordinate amount of time creating them.

A Standing Committee is not of the Short-Term (Ad Hoc) type because its functions and objectives are permanent. It is similar to the Continuing type in that its work continues but is different in that it has been granted specific powers to execute business according to the enabling body. Nominating Committees (Continuing) have a permanent similarity but have no powers, such as installing or removing officers. *See also Ad Hoc, Short-Term, and Continuing Committees.*