

**BY-LAWS
WESTWOOD FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

WHEREAS, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., through the General Assembly, the Synod of the Covenant, and the Presbytery of Cincinnati, is the ecclesiastical governing body of this Church; and **WHEREAS**, the Constitution of said Presbyterian Church U.S.A. is the Constitution of this Church; and

WHEREAS, the Constitution of this Church, adopted April 18, 1928, and amended on October 11, 1933, no longer meets the requirements of this Church;

NOW, THEREFORE, WE DO HEREBY adopt in their place and stead the following by-laws as and for the Westwood First Presbyterian Church of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.

ARTICLE I

Section 1 The government of this Church and congregation shall be administered by two (2) Boards: the Unicameral Board (Session/ Directors) and the Board of Deacons.

Section 2 These Boards shall have such duties and power as are presented for them by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. and by these by-laws, and may be required by the laws of the State of Ohio.

ARTICLE II - THE SESSION

Section 1 The Session shall consist of the Pastor, or Co-Pastors, Associate Pastors, and **not more than fourteen (14) and not fewer than eight (8) Ruling Elders**, duly elected, ordained, and installed. The number of ruling elders may be changed by a majority vote of the congregation at a regularly called congregational meeting. One third (1/3) of the ruling elders, with the Moderator, shall be necessary to constitute a quorum.

Section 2 Ruling elders shall be elected to a three (3) year term of office, thus one third (1/3) of the Session shall be elected annually except when it is necessary to elect ruling elders for shorter terms to equalize the number in the classes or to fill vacancies. No ruling elder shall be eligible to serve more than six consecutive years, and a ruling elder who has served six consecutive years shall be ineligible for election to the same board for at least one year.

Section 3 Only active members (**as defined in Article V, Section 1**) of Westwood First of **one year** immediately prior to nomination and eligible under the **Standards of Ethical Conduct** (Approved by the 210th General Assembly (1998) Presbyterian church (U.S.A.)) shall be eligible for election as ruling elder, unless the member shall have been an ordained ruling elder in another Presbyterian Church U.S.A. Then that person may be eligible after a period of **six (6) months**.

Section 4 **As spiritual leaders, duly elected and ordained to ordered ministry in the Church of Jesus Christ (per Book of Order, G-2.01), Ruling Elders, once ordained and installed, shall understand that are certain requirements and expectations. These should be explained and acknowledged as they accept nomination and begin the ordination process, as outlined below:**

- **Attendance of at least sixty-five (65) percent of the worship services in a given year.**
- **No unauthorized absences for Session meetings. If unable to attend a session meeting,**

Ruling Elders must contact the Pastor and/or Clerk of Session to obtain a release.

- **Active participation in a majority (over half) of the activities sponsored by the committee on which the Ruling Elder serves and those church programs/activities, sponsored by other committees/church groups.**
- **Completion of any/all annual church training sessions offered annually and at least one offered by the Presbytery over the course of a given three (3) year term.**
- **Financial support of the church, in some measure, including pledging, and paying per capita. Circumstances may make that difficult, and so other means of financial support, including in-kind donations of goods and services may be deemed acceptable.**

Section 5 By a majority vote, the Stewardship and Operations Committee may require that any fund management or expenditure issue be the subject of consideration at two separate Session meetings, which meetings shall be not less than seven (7) days apart, with the final vote completing the Session's action on the issue or expenditure occurring only after the issue or expenditure has been considered at the second meeting.

Section 6 Session shall be guided by the manual of committees which may be changed by a 2/3 vote of Session. This manual shall be reviewed annually by the Clerk of Session and a Session member of the Administration and Personnel Committee.

ARTICLE III — THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Seven of the Ruling Elders shall be designated as Directors to make up the board of Directors. This board shall have such powers, duties, and responsibilities as provided by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., and the laws of the State of Ohio, the Articles of Incorporation issued by the State of Ohio incorporating said body. The Directors shall duly exercise those duties delegated by the Session and report such actions. The directors shall meet at least once a year.

ARTICLE IV - THE BOARD OF DEACONS

Section 1 The Board of Deacons **shall consist of not more than ten (10), and no fewer than five (5) deacons**, duly elected and installed. The actual number may be changed by a majority vote of the congregation at a regularly called meeting. The Moderator or Vice Moderator and one third (1/3) of the deacons shall be necessary to constitute a quorum.

Section 2 Deacons shall be elected to a three (3) year term of office and one third (1/3) shall be elected annually except when it is necessary to elect deacons for shorter terms in order to equalize the number in classes or to fill vacancies.

No deacon shall be eligible to serve more than six consecutive years, and a deacon who has served six consecutive years shall be ineligible for election to the same board for at least one year.

Section 3 Only active members **(as defined in Article V, Section 1)** of this Westwood First Presbyterian Church, who have been such for at least one (1) year immediately prior to nomination and eligible under the **Standards of Ethical Conduct** (approved by the 210th General Assembly, PCUSA), shall be eligible for election as Deacons.

Section 4 As spiritual leaders, duly elected and ordained to ordered ministry in the Church of Jesus Christ (per Book of Order, G-2.02), Deacons, once ordained and installed, should recognize that are certain requirements and expectations, in addition to those that pertain directly to the position of Deacon. These should be explained and acknowledged as they accept nomination and begin the ordination process, as outlined below:

- Attendance of at least sixty-five (65) percent of the worship services in a given year.
- No unauthorized absences for Deacon meetings. If unable to attend a session meeting, Deacons must contact the Deacon Moderator, or Pastor to obtain a release.
- Participation a majority (over half) of the activities sponsored by the Deacons and those church programs/activities, sponsored by other committees/church groups.
- Completion of all annual church training sessions offered annually and at least one offered by the Presbytery over the course of a given three (3) year term.
- Financial support of the church, in some measure, including pledging, and paying per capita. Circumstances may make that difficult, and so other means of financial support, including in-kind donations of goods and services may be deemed acceptable.

Section 5 The Board of Deacons shall meet regularly, or upon the call of its Moderator, or when directed to meet by Session, but shall meet at least quarterly.

ARTICLE V - THE CONGREGATION

Section 1 According to the Book of Order (G-1.0402), an active member of a church is a person who has made a profession of faith in Christ, has been baptized, has been received into membership of the church, has voluntarily submitted to the government of this church, and participates in the church's work and worship. In addition, active members participate in the governance of the church and may be elected to ordered ministry (see G-2.0102). Active members shall regularly, after prayerful consideration, recommit themselves to the disciplines and responsibilities of membership outlined in G-1.0304. The session shall have responsibility for preparing those who would become active members of the congregation.

Section 2 The annual eeclesiastical congregational meeting for the reception of reports of the various organizations connected with the Church and for the transaction of such other business as may be properly brought before such meeting shall be held within thirty days of budget approval by Session, and in case the business of said meeting cannot be completed upon such date, said meeting may be adjourned to a future date, for the completion of said business and receiving of reports of the organizations.

Section 3 The Session shall set a date for the election of officers that allows for the **mandatory** training (per Book of Order G-2.0402), ordination, and installation of officers, **prior to the June meeting of Session**. In case the business of said meeting cannot be completed upon said date, said meeting may be adjourned to a future date for completion of said business.

Section 4 Notice of the annual congregational meeting shall be published in **the Sunday bulletin**, and given from the pulpit of the Church on each of two successive Sundays preceding such meeting, by the pastor/co-pastors of the Church, if there be one, or by the officiating minister, or by

the Clerk of Session, or other officer. The meeting may be convened following the notice given on the second Sunday. Notice of said meeting **should** be published in the Parish Bell in two issues immediately preceding the date of the meeting, if possible.

Section 5 Notice of special meetings of the congregation shall have the same publicity as the calling of the annual ecclesiastical congregational meeting, and shall specify the particular business to be transacted. No other business may be transacted at such meeting.

Section 6 Special meetings of the congregation may be called by the Session on its own motion.

Section 7 In accordance with Presbyterian law, the pastor/co-pastors of the Church, or other minister duly appointed by the Presbytery as Moderator, shall act as presiding officer at all annual or special meetings of the congregation or any adjournments thereof.

Section 8 The Clerk of Session, or in his/her absence or inability, an acting Clerk named from Session by the Moderator of that Board, shall act as Secretary at all annual or special meetings of the congregation.

Section 9 No fewer than one-tenth (1/10) of the members of the Church shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any regularly called annual or special meeting of the congregation.

Section 10 All organizations meeting regularly at Westwood First shall be under the jurisdiction of the Session. **All leaders of organizations working with children under the age of eighteen (18) shall be required to have background checks completed. If the organization is unable to meet this requirement, Westwood First will complete the them, and the organization may be required to reimburse the church for all, or part of the expense in doing so.**

Section 11 _ All executive officers (president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer) of all Church or Church-related organizations meeting regularly at Westwood First shall be active members (see Section 1) of this Church. This provision does not apply to the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Kiwanis, Senior Citizens, or other community groups/organizations which meet in the Church.

Section 12 **Everyone who teaches a class that is being offered by the church and under church auspices, shall be subject to approval (including required background checks) by the Congregational Life and Nurture Committee of the Session, along with any curriculum that may be offered, in coordination and consultation with the Pastor. Teachers that are members of the Westwood First shall be active members (as defined in Article V, Section 1). Those that are not members of Westwood First shall be members in good standing of a recognized denominational church, all others must be approved by the Pastor and Session.**

Section 13 Secretaries of societies, associations, organizations, and departments of the Church shall review their work and submit written reports to the Church Office at least two weeks prior to the annual congregational meeting for inclusion in the Annual Report, **or when required by Session, when given adequate prior notice.**

ARTICLE VI - THE CHURCH OFFICER NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Section 1 Pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., there shall be a Nominating Committee composed of seven (7) **active** members (**as defined in Article V. Section 1**) of Westwood First. Two (2) members shall be elected by and from the Session. The senior member of the two ruling elders shall be Chairman of the Nominating Committee.

One of these Elders shall be from the Board of Directors. One (1) member shall be elected by and from the Board of Deacons. One (1) member shall be elected by and from the membership of Presbyterian Women, and one (1) member from the Men's Fellowship, and two (2) members from the congregation shall be nominated to serve on the following nominating committee and shall be elected at the same congregational meeting which is called to elect members to other church Boards pursuant to this section. The pastor (**or associate or co-pastors**) of the Church shall serve as ex-officio member(s).

Section 2 The Nominating Committee shall be elected annually with the exception of the junior of the two ruling elders from Session (who shall be Vice Chairman of the Committee) and shall become Chairman of the Committee in the following year in order that there may be a carry-over of experience from year to year. The Committee itself, carries a two (2) year commitment.

Section 3

- A. As soon as is possible after the Nominating Committee is elected, the names of the Committee members shall be published in the Parish Bell and/or bulletin. The congregation shall be informed at the same time that it can propose names of communicant members of the Church for any of the Boards to be considered by the Nominating Committee.
- B. After selection by the Nominating Committee and acceptance by the nominees, the names of the nominees and the offices they have been nominated to shall be published at least one (1) time in the Parish Bell and at least one (1) time in the Church Bulletin before the congregational meeting.
- C. When the nominees are presented at the special meeting of the congregation, they shall be brought forward by the Board, and introduced individually.
- D. Each Board shall conduct a course of information and preparation for the newly elected Board members immediately following their election. (according to G-2.0402 Book of Order).
- E. The Nominating Committee shall maintain a permanent file on all communicant members invited to become candidates for all Boards. Information such as their length of membership and service in the Church shall be a part of this file, in addition to each member's individual response to the invitation.
- F. The Nominating Committee shall make recommendations for filling vacancies on Church Boards (see Article II, Section 3; Article IV, Section 3, Article V, Section 1).

Section 4 Full opportunity shall always be accorded at the special meeting of the congregation for nominations from the floor by any communicant member of the Church.

Section 5 The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. shall take precedence in the event of conflict with the provisions of this Article.

Section 6 The Nominating Committee may nominate and the congregation may elect one additional youth elder and/or one additional youth deacon to serve a one-year term. The nominee must be an active voting member of the congregation, but does not have to have been a member of the church for two years. Suggestions for Youth Elder and/or Deacon should be solicited from the congregation.

Section 7 The Nominating Committee will nominate at large a member for each new class of the Administration and Personnel committee and the Stewardship and Funds Management Committee.

ARTICLE VII - GENERAL

Section 1 All Board and congregational meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the General Rules for Judicatories adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. insofar as they apply, and when they do not, according to Robert's Rules of Order.

Section 2 These by-laws, together with the rules and regulations adopted for the government of the various boards and organizations thereof, together with an equal number of copies of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., shall be kept on file in the Church Library for reference by any communicant member of this Church. Any changes in said rules and regulations shall be approved by the Session, and thereafter shall be filed with the aforesaid copies in the Church Library.

ARTICLE VIII - AMENDMENTS

Section 1 The by-laws of this Church may be amended, or repealed, and new by-laws adopted, at an annual ecclesiastical congregational meeting, or at a special meeting of the congregation called for that purpose. Meetings of the congregation called for the purpose of amending, repealing, and adoption of new by-laws, shall be publicized and handled in accordance with the provisions of Article V Section 4 of these by-laws.

Section 2 At any meeting of the congregation called to amend these by-laws, or to repeal these by-laws and adopt new by-laws, a vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the communicant members present shall be required to effect the change.

Section 3 Article II Section 3 and Article IV of these By-Laws may be suspended by a motion of the Nominating Committee and must pass by a 2/3 majority of communicant members present.

Section 4 The by-laws shall be reviewed on an interval of between three to five years by a duly qualified committee named by the Session, which committee shall have a member of the Session as its chairman.

Section 5 Anything in the foregoing by-laws in conflict with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. shall have no force or effect.

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