

DISCUSSION – Bylaw comparison

Bylaws approved 1/29/2017 and the proposed revised version from 9/26/2021

Discussion: As and ECO congregation, Grace Commons Church subscribes and commits to following the ECO Essential Tenets and is governed by the ECO Polity and Rules of Discipline (the "Polity"). These two documents are collectively referred to as the "Constitution." The Constitution takes precedence over the Grace Commons Bylaws.

ECO updated the Constitution in 2020. The Grace Commons Church (GCC) bylaws were updated and approved Jan. 29, 2017. As a result, the GCC bylaws are out of date and not fully compliant with ECO. In addition, the GCC bylaws contained language and content that were a mixture of ECO requirements and hold overs from the older PCUSA requirements.

Language that was duplicated or paraphrased from the ECO 2020 Constitution in the bylaws was removed. Language that was not reserved to the congregation and not related to corporate governance was also removed.

The ECO concept is to adopt simplified bylaws that clearly identify the responsibilities of the corporation, the congregation, the Session, and the Ecclesiastical Offices. Some items removed from the old bylaws unique to Grace Commons Church will be preserved in the Session Policy document and or the Trustee Housing Policy and the charters for session committees. Revisions of the policy documents is underway.

A side-by-side comparison follows this introduction to facilitate comparison between the existing Bylaws and the proposed bylaws. The side-by-side comparison is lined up on the "Articles" headings for clarity. A redline draft was found to be complex and difficult to track.

The following list summaries major changes within each of the 7 Articles.

1. Preamble
 - a) The name of the church has been changed to Grace Commons Church.
 - b) The Preamble has been shortened and the second part placed in Article I
2. Article I.
 - a) The original Article I Objectives and Purpose was eliminated as it was duplicated from the Constitution.
 - b) GCC commitment to ECO and establishment of the Constitution was place here from the Preamble.
3. Article II.
 - a) Section 2.1, Status and Voting Rights and Section 2.2, Meetings, were removed as they are in the Constitution.
 - b) Authority of the Congregation was edited to reflect Section 1.0503 from the Constitution.
 - c) Item 5, concerning loans to the senior pastor, was dropped. Making such a loan creates a benefit to the Senior Pastor which is part of their total compensation. Their compensation or "terms of call," are determined by the Session and incorporated into the annual budget. Specifics will be found in the GCC Housing Policy which the Trustees are revising. When completed it will be shared with the congregation.
4. Article III.

- a) Article III was shorted with unnecessary language or language from the Constitution removed.
 - b) Section 3.2(a), Terms, has been shortened and the subparagraphs combined. The language that pertains to serving 6 years followed by the need for a year of sabbatical has been modified. The exclusion for serving a partial term in calculating or establishing the need for a sabbatical has been removed. Six years of continual services stands alone without regard for the composition of which terms or offices were held.
 - c) Section 3.2.b, and 3.3.b relating to nomination committees have been removed and will be found within the Session Policy document. Of note, the nominating committees are the responsibility of Session. Session has the responsibility of finding and supporting leadership in the church and bringing candidates for election to the Congregation. It is anticipated that within the Policy of Session, criteria for establishing a nominating committee will be found including the makeup of the committee to ensure that the entire congregation is appropriately represented.
 - d) Sections 3.2(c) and 3.2(d) are primarily found in the Constitution. Specifics for GCC to emphasize was retained.
 - e) Section 3.3 was shortened as most of the specifics was found in the Constitution.
 - f) Section 3.4 was removed because the requirement is found in the Constitution.
5. Article IV.
- a) Sections 4.2 through 4.3 were shorten by removing language found in the Constitution and clarifying the details around “meetings.”
 - b) Section 4.2 has also been changed to define the size of Session, “Session shall consist of not less than 6 elders.” This language replaces the older language which limited Session to be between 12 and 18 elders. This change provides flexibility to Session and aligns with a more focused roll for Session presented by ECO, “discerning the will of God” for Grace Commons”
 - c) A new Section was added, “Responsibilities.” This section clarifies that the responsibility of Session is set forth in the Constitution. This one sentence replaces language found in the original Bylaws that describes “Responsibilities” of Session in several locations.
6. Article V.
- a) Section 5.2(a) language added to codify that the President of Trustees serves as the President of the Corporation.
7. Article VI.
- a) Section 6.2 was dropped – see bullet #4 above.
8. Article VII.
- a) Section 7.1 was removed and is found within the Constitution.