



The Constitution, Bylaws and Policy (Operating) Manual for a Church[©]

Pro Forma Constitution, Bylaws and Policy Manual standards when developing or re-writing a church's governance documents.

The Church Constitution: (*Who We Are!*)

contains an enumerated list of “articles” that provide an overview of your legal identity, theological grounding, philosophy of ministry, and general church structure. The Church Constitution is a foundational document and, therefore, should be designed to be rarely revised, unlike the Bylaws and Policy Manual to follow, both of which deal with more specific operations. The two latter documents should be designed to be a bit more fluid and more easily updated in our changing times. Therefore, it is best to create three separate documents.

1. Name of church, address, and date of establishment.
2. Mission
3. Confessional Standard
4. Synod Membership
5. Membership
6. Called Church Workers
7. Authority of and within the Congregation
8. Procedure for dissolution.
9. Amendments

The Bylaws: (*What We Do!*)

outlines structure, operations and procedures. Unlike the Constitution, this document should be readily amendable by pastors, or elder, trustee, staff, or special committee. Items to be included may be:

1. Procedures for Calling Ministers of Religion
2. Role of the Pastor and called Church Workers
3. Church Council or Board of Directors
4. Nominations, Elections and Terms of Office
5. Church ministry structure
6. Church Services and Calendar
7. Meetings
8. Rules of Order
9. Amendments

The Policy Manual: (*How We Do It!*)

seeks to standardize best practices and protect the church from inefficiency and legal vulnerability. It may address issues such as:

1. Licensing; Ordination.
2. Safety protocols.
3. Financial protocols.
4. Grievance protocols.
5. Appeals to leadership.
11. Facilities and land
12. Personnel policies: vacations; holidays; sick leave; evaluations, etc.
6. Staff dismissal protocols.
7. Mission trip protocols.
8. Project funding protocols.
9. Officer and committee roles
10. Elections
13. Facilities usage by members and outsiders: weddings; receptions; parties; exercise classes; garage sales; car washes; sales; seminars; etc.

References:

- *Guidelines for Constitutions and Bylaws of Lutheran Congregations*, published by the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, revised November 2012.
- *A Guide to Formulate Your Church Constitution, Bylaws & Policy Manual*, published by Royal Pam Association of Churches, SBC.