

## Questions and Answers from First Free's ByLaws Q&A, July 20, 2020

1. **QUESTION:** (Submitted via email) Was Pastor Jason aware of the proposed changes before being hired as Senior Pastor?

**ANSWER:** Yes, Pastor Jason knew that we were in the process of revising the bylaws when he was interviewing for the Senior Pastor position; in fact - he had just recently completed a bylaws revision process at his former church. He's also been included in the process as we've been reviewing the document over the last few months.

2. **QUESTION:** (Submitted via email) Reasons for changing the words "Chairman" to "Chair" and "Committee" to "Team"?

**ANSWER:** Chair was revised to make the reference unbiased regarding gender of the Chair. "Committee" has been retained in a number of places, and only in a few instances to "Team".

3. **QUESTION:** (Submitted via email) Should there be something in the bylaws about transparency, and by that I mean communication from the elders to the congregation?

**ANSWER:** This is not so much a bylaws issue, as it's really a church culture issue. Procedural issues related to transparency are outlined in: Article IV, Section H: "Other Policies", Article V: "Congregational Meetings", Article VIII: "Officers and Agents", etc.

4. **QUESTION:** (Submitted via email) Article IV, section B: Member must be actively serving the church. Perhaps this is expanded later - if so, I missed it. I agree with the spirit of this, yet I feel we might be leaving some people out, e.g. an elderly or disabled person who is not able to be "actively serving" in the church.

**ANSWER:** Yes, it would be shameful to leave people out - but there are many ways to be "active" as a member at First Free, including but not limited to: prayer, mentoring, tithing, discipleship, etc. which would exhibit "fruit" (e.g. Galatians 5, James 2)

5. **QUESTION:** (Submitted via email) Article VI, section E: Vacancies. I prayerfully hope we never have another resignation of the entire Elder Board, but I understand this section was added to provide some guidelines just in case. #2 in this section says the remaining Officers are to call a special meeting. But if the whole board resigns, the only Officers left are the Treasurer and Financial Secretary. And what about the Senior Pastor, assuming he didn't resign? I guess I'm looking for clarity: who will call and run the meetings needed.

**ANSWER:** Technically, the particular instance referenced wasn't prescriptively handled according to the exact procedures outlined in the bylaws – since while the Elders resigned, the Officers should have remained in place for a time necessary to bring on new Officers. The Officers are responsible legally for the operations of the church; the elders serve the church in a pastoral, or ministerial function.

6. **QUESTION:** (Submitted via email) Article X, section D: A procedure is laid out "Except in the case of personal abuse or harassment." But I didn't see any procedures for personal abuse or harassment. I have the case of Willow Creek in my mind, and pray that we never go down that path. But we probably need to spell out what to do and what happens if an elder or pastor is accused of abuse or harassment.

**ANSWER:** This was an oversight for this iteration of the bylaws, but needs to be addressed and discussed at a later point – since it will take some additional consideration in order to craft a specific policy. There is policy outlined in the Staff Handbook regarding this issue, but really needs to be revisited if referenced as a specific document in the bylaws.

7. **QUESTION:** (Submitted via email) Article V, section B: I think the word “small” is a typo. Should be “same”? "Amendments to the Articles of Incorporation or these Bylaws; then verbal and written notice of such meeting shall be made on three consecutive Sundays, in the small manner described above, . . ."

**ANSWER:** This is an astute catch – thank you for being so diligent. This will be revised from “small” to “same”.

8. **QUESTION:** (Submitted via email) Article VIII, re officers’ terms expiring: I dislike the use of “they” to refer to one elder (i.e. - Just change Officer to Officers?)

**ANSWER:** Another good catch. This will be revised from “Officer” to “Officers”.

9. **QUESTION:** (Submitted via email) Article VIII, section A, Chair: Not sure I understand this: "The Chair shall not be counted in quorum requirements for all memberships except membership on the Elder Board.

**ANSWER:** This seemingly was addressed in the previous Q&A; “The Chair shall not be counted in quorum requirements for all meetings except meetings of the Elder Board”.

10. **QUESTION:** (Submitted via email) Article X, end of section E: “discrete” should be “discreet.”

**ANSWER:** Another good catch. This will be revised from “discrete” to “discreet”.

11. **QUESTION:** (Submitted via email) Article XI, first paragraph: This is confusing - "Standing committees shall be led and chaired by Deacons/Deaconesses who shall be affirmed to two-year terms, except for individuals who are also Officers, by a three-fourths majority vote of the Members present at a Congregational business Meeting"

**ANSWER:** The intent of this statement is to allow for the conditions where Church Officers are specifically Deacons of Standing Committees; in other words, the Financial Committee and the Membership Committee.