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Subject: Re: NCLL sample Methodist Bylaws
Date: February 4, 2023 at 2:02 PM
To: Robert Godsey rjgodsey@me.com

BW

TO: Mr. Robert Godsey, New Life Methodist Church, Grant, AL

Thanks for forwarding your Bylaws-in-progress. I congratulate you for taking this process so seriously as you are making this document your own. I have several comments below—many of which are related to the comments made in your document.

1. With regard to why we include a specific statement of faith on the LGBT issues—1) this is one of the primary reasons you are leaving the UMC, 2) as Francis Shaeffer once said, the most important issues for a church to deal with are the key cultural (or doctrinal) issues of the day, which in our day are the LGBT and life issues, and 3) courts will recognize a church's beliefs in this area (i.e., not marrying same sex couples, not allowing a biological male with gender dysphoria to use the ladies bathrooms or sleep with female teens on a youth group trip, etc.); however, the church must clearly state those beliefs. I have attached alternate marriage policies that the church GB could enact. Article 12, D refers back to this type of Statement of Faith or policy.
2. People interpret the Bible in different ways—generally to suit what they already believe. So the UMC church will still say that the Bible supports same sex marriage and ordaining same sex or transgender clergy. Again, this is one of the reasons you are leaving the UMC. Therefore, it is important to state how your church interprets the Bible in these matters. The same would be true of abortion and euthanasia. Different churches interpret the Bible differently in these areas.
3. With regard to euthanasia, there is both active and passive euthanasia. A patient can just refuse additional treatment and die naturally—that is passive euthanasia (or not euthanasia at all). Active euthanasia involves a doctor removing food and water or injecting morphine or other drug to actually cause the death of a person who otherwise would not die—and that is active euthanasia and is what we are addressing here.
4. Of course you can omit any of these cultural beliefs that you don't want to include.
5. You can decide for yourselves what you want to do about a church membership class or other membership requirements. Churches do different things in this regard.
6. Your voting age or age of membership can also be whatever you want to make it, but 16 is probably the lowest you should go.
7. I have attached a church Trespasser Policy for you. In these days when you never know whether some nut job will enter the church to cause a disruption, you need to have some way to deal with that. However, since the church building is your church's private property, and the law permits anyone to ban someone from their private property for any reason, this does not need to be included in the Bylaws in order for the church to legally take this action when/if necessary.

8. Your reasons for dismissing someone from membership can be whatever you want them to be. Generally, they include disruption or no longer identifying as a Christian—perhaps saying bad things about the church on Facebook or other social media.
9. The church discipline of a member (which would generally lead to dismissal) can be whatever you want it to be. Some churches have their Governing Board make this decision. Others allow the pastor to dismiss members. The problem comes when churches will only dismiss someone after a membership vote. That generally requires all the members to be given too much information about that person. Churches have been sued for defamation, slander or violation of privacy rights if all members are given too much information about a situation (primarily money or sex or other family problems).
10. We include affiliated members as a substitute for an inactive membership list. Normally, only active church members (whoever you consider those to be) can vote at church meetings. This avoids having a lot of inactive members show up to vote on (and determine) a controversial issue when they haven't been to church in 5 years or they actually live somewhere else. And obviously, you would not want anyone who is not yet a full church member to vote at church meetings.
11. An active member eligible to vote is a qualified member. Sometimes a church accepts members at 16 but doesn't allow them to vote until 18.
12. Since you are now a registered corporation, as well as a church, you are required to have at least a president, secretary and treasurer of the corporation. You can elect those people any way you like. And the corporation treasurer could merely be a figurehead, while you hire a CPA to actually keep the books. The same could be true of a secretary—a figurehead while you hire someone to do actual secretarial work. Quite often the chairman, secretary and treasurer of the GB would also serve as the corporate officers. These are the people who would sign outside legal documents— things like mortgages, etc.
13. Your Governing Board members can serve as long as you like. The key is to state how and when they are elected in your Bylaws. You can also replace them however you like. The key is to be able to vote a GB member out if they become disruptive, senile, etc. with or without cause.
14. Pulpit committees can be organized as you like but should include a cross-section of membership.
15. Generally only an ordained pastor administers the sacraments. And only an ordained pastor can marry. But some churches allow lay members to assist with communion.
16. Churches determine for themselves what are the duties of the pastor and the duties of the GB.
17. Some churches have Deacons and some don't. Same with Trustees or Elders. Once the church corporation owns the property, there is no need for Trustees. Most churches have only one governing board to handle all church business—although a church can choose to

have several different governing boards with differing duties. Again—your choice.

18. With regard to counting offerings, more than one person should always be involved to avoid fraud and embezzlement (or such allegations).
19. We recommend no motions from the floor to avoid controversy and give the GB and pastor time to consider any motions ahead of the meeting to make recommendations. However, some churches do allow motions at the end of the meeting from the floor or even during the meeting. Again—your choice
20. Churches generally only want teachers who support the church's Statement of Faith. Teaching is a position of authority, so why have someone teaching something the church does not believe?
21. Churches are permitted to engage in political lobbying about issues of concern to the church, but should not use more than 7-10% of their time and money for that. What churches may not do is to officially endorse a candidate during an election. This IRS rule was not enforced under Pres. Trump, who believed churches should be able to freely engage in politics (which is what America's Founders thought as well). This IRS candidate endorsement prohibition rule was made by House Speaker Lyndon Johnson in the 1950s to punish nonprofits who objected to his fraudulent elections in Texas, but our Founders expected churches to be active in electing America's leaders. Biden put that IRS rule back in place (although the IRS does not enforce it these days for Democrat-leaning churches). If Pres. Trump is re-elected again in 2024 and has a GOP Congress, this IRS prohibition might be removed altogether.

I hope this addresses all your concerns and I congratulate you again for so carefully considering all of this. Let me know if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

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