

The Constitution and By Laws of the First Presbyterian Church of Seneca Falls, N.Y.

Articles of Government

Article 1. Declaration of Principles: This church was organized by the Presbytery of Geneva on August 10, 1807 for the worship of Almighty God and the advancement of His Kingdom. We acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as the Great Head of the Church and receive the Holy Scriptures given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life and the Supreme law of the church.

Article 2. Constitution: The First Presbyterian Society and Church of Seneca Falls, New York, Inc being a particular congregation of the ~~United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America~~ (Presbyterian Church, USA-or its successor) recognizes that the constitution of said Church, is in all its provisions, obligatory upon it and its members.

By Laws

I. Mission Statement: The First Presbyterian Church of Seneca Falls, a member congregation of the Covenant Network, acknowledges one community of people under God. Therefore, our mission is to serve this community guided by the example of Jesus Christ and led by the Spirit of God. We actively seek to minister to all. We value Presbyterian tradition, the education of all seekers, outreach to those in need and tolerance for those who have found different answers to God's call. For each of us, our Christian journey requires faith, hope and love.

II. Members:

- 1. Eligibility for Membership:** Only members on the active roll of the church shall be members of the Corporation and eligible for election as Elders. Ministers are not members of the congregation and, so, are not members of the Corporation.
- 2. Active Members:** The roll of active members is established and maintained by the Clerk of Session and the Session shall determine those individuals who are active members from time to time.

III. Session:

1. The government of this church shall be vested in a Session composed of the Pastor and twelve ruling elders¹, divided into three equal classes, one class of whom shall be elected each year at the November congregational meeting for a three-year term. No ruling elder shall serve on the Session for consecutive terms, either full or partial, aggregating more than six years; but shall be ineligible to be elected to a new term until one year shall have elapsed. (G-2.0404)
2. Vacancies on the Session may be filled at a special meeting of the congregation or at the annual meeting, as the Session may determine.

¹ This article was amended several times:

- a) 21 elders prior to 11/12/1983
- b) 11/12/1983-to 18 elders
- c) 11/22/1992-to 15 elders
- d) 12/14/2003-to 12 elders

3. All of the administrative responsibility, both spiritual and corporate, shall be lodged in the Session; and the Session shall have authority over all affairs, activities, and organizations of the congregation, except otherwise provided in the constitution.
4. As soon as possible after the annual meeting the Session shall elect, for a term of one year, a Clerk and such Treasurers or Assistant Treasurers as may be needed; these officers need not be members of the Session or ruling elders of the congregation. (G-3.0205 and G-3.0104)
5. Members and officers of the Session shall serve their appointed terms and until their successors are elected and installed.
6. It is expedient at every meeting of the Session that there is a presiding minister. When the church is without a pastor, the moderator of the Session shall either be the minister appointed for that purpose by the presbytery (of Geneva), or one of the same presbytery invited by the Session, in the consultation with the presbytery (of Geneva) ~~committee on ministerial relations~~, (Committee on Ministry) to preside on a particular occasion. When it is impractical to procure the attendance of such a moderator, the Session of the church without a pastor may elect one of its own members to preside, except in judicial cases, when a minister of the same presbytery shall preside.
7. The Clerk shall have charge of all books and papers of the Session, and of all the congregational records, holding them subject to the call of the Session. The Clerk shall make a record of all the meetings of the Session and of all the meetings of the congregation. The Clerk shall record all actions which the ruling elders of the congregation may take in their capacity as trustees of the corporation, and shall incorporate the minutes of the corporation into the minutes of the congregation.
8. The Session shall meet once a month, if possible, except during July and August.
9. Special meetings of the Session may be called, whenever deemed necessary, by the Pastor or by the Clerk of the Session.
10. One-third of the ruling elders of the Session, with the pastor or other moderator serving in his/her place, shall constitute a quorum at the meeting of the Session.
11. There shall be an annual meeting of the congregation in the church edifice on a Sunday in November for the purpose of election of elders and on a Sunday in January for the purpose of reviewing statistical, financial and other committee reports and any other business to come before the congregation.
12. Special meetings may be called by the Session or the Presbytery (of Geneva). Such calls shall state clearly the purpose of such special meeting, and no other matter save that specified in the call may be considered.
13. Public notice of the time, place, and purpose of all meetings of the congregation shall be given from the pulpit on the two Sabbaths next preceding the meeting.
14. The pastor shall preside. If the church is vacant or if the pastor and the ruling elders agree that the subjects to be discussed require it, or if the pastor is ill or is otherwise unable to be present, a minister of Geneva Presbytery shall be invited by the Session to preside. This invitation shall be cleared through the ~~ministerial relations committee~~ (Committee on Ministry) of the Geneva Presbytery.
15. The Clerk of Session shall be secretary of the meetings of the congregation. If unable to attend, the Session shall designate a secretary in his or her stead.
16. The members of the Church shall be active members in good standing as defined by the usages and rules of the ~~United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America~~, (Presbyterian Church, USA) ~~regardless of age~~. (Book of Order G-1.0304 and G-1.0402)

17. All active members of the church are eligible to vote at all stated and special meetings of the church. Voting by proxy is not allowed.
18. Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised ~~General Rules for Judicatories adopted by the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America,~~ (Presbyterian Church, USA), so far as they apply, and when they do not apply, according to usual legislative rules of order.
19. All meetings shall be opened and closed with prayer.
20. A quorum for a congregational meeting and the annual meeting shall consist of the moderator, secretary and ten eligible voters. (Book of Order G-1.0501 and G-1.0502)
21. ~~There shall be a representative nominating committee chosen in accordance with the Form of Government. The Nominating Committee shall be constituted of the following representatives: two members of the Session one of whom will be chairperson, one member of the U.P.W, four members at large to be elected by the congregation, with nominations to be presented by the Nominating Committee at the November Congregational Meeting. The Committee shall bring to the annual meeting nominations of one eligible person only for each office to be filled. Additional nominations of qualified persons may be made from the floor by any eligible voter.~~
22. Whenever there is a conflict between the Constitution and By Laws of the congregation and the Constitution of the ~~United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America,~~ (Presbyterian Church, USA-or its successors), the latter shall take precedence and the former shall no longer be considered in effect.

IV. Ministry Teams:

A. Guiding Policies for All Ministry Teams (other than Session):

1. The minister is the ex-officio (non-voting) member of all Ministry Teams but may designate as appropriate one or more staff members as the Ministry Team staff liaison.
2. Members of the Session serve as regular members for one (1) year terms on all permanent Ministry Teams and for the purpose of communicating between Ministry Teams and the Session.
3. Active non members may participate on all Ministry Teams except Session.
4. Ministry Team members are determined annually by the Ministry Teams chair.
5. All Ministry Teams shall be accountable to the Session.

B. Buildings and Property:

1. This Ministry Team shall be composed of no less than three (3) members. The Sexton shall be an ex-officio member of this Ministry Team. In addition, this Ministry Teams will also have one (1) Elder.
2. The purpose of the Buildings and Property is to be responsible for the maintenance of all property of the church, subject to any policies established by the Session or the congregation.

C. Christian Education:

1. This Ministry Team shall be composed of no less than three (3) members. In addition, this Ministry Teams will also have one (1) Elder.
2. The purpose of the Christian Education Ministry Team is to administer, promote, coordinate, and evaluate the total education program of the congregation from infant to adult.

D. Finance and Stewardship:

1. This Ministry Team shall be composed of no less than two (2) members. In addition, this committee will also have one (1) Elder and the Treasurer.
2. The Finance and Stewardship Ministry Team communicates with the Session through its chairperson.
3. It shall be the duty of the Finance and Stewardship Ministry Team to plan and conduct the Stewardship program throughout the year. This Ministry Team is responsible for the payment of all bills, and financial obligations.
4. The Ministry Team shall develop the budget for Session approval and monitor it during the course of the year. The budget shall annually be submitted to the Session for review and recommendation for approval in time for the Annual Meeting.

E. Membership and Parish Life:

1. This Ministry Team shall be composed of no less than three (3) members. In addition, this Ministry Team will also have one (1) Elder.
2. The purpose of the Membership and Parish Life Ministry Team is to provide a variety of fellowship offerings that encourage members and friends to get to know each other as part of our church family. This Ministry Team shall also work to strengthen the fellowship of the members of the congregation and to reach out to those without a church home, inviting them to join us; and to coordinate the pastoral ministries of the congregation with the Pastor.

F. Nominating:

1. The Ministry Team shall be composed of 4 people; two (2) shall be Elders and two (2) shall be members at-large from the congregation. They shall be elected by the congregation at the November congregational meeting.
2. The Nominating Ministry Team is responsible for presenting the at-large member slate for election at the November congregational meeting.
3. The purpose of the Nominating Ministry Team is to present nominations to the Congregation for all elective offices, seeking to spread offices of the church among as many of the church members as possible.

G. Outreach:

1. This Ministry Team shall be composed of no less than three (3) members. In addition, this Ministry Team will also have one (1) Elder.
2. The purpose of the Outreach Ministry Team is to serve as the primary recruiting arm of this congregation.

H. Personnel:

1. This Ministry Team shall be composed of no less than three (3) members. In addition, this Ministry Team will also have one (1) Elder.
2. The purpose of the Personnel Ministry Team is to serve in an advisory capacity and as a liaison between the staff, the congregation, and Session. This Ministry Team is responsible for all Human Resources matters, especially those pertaining to paid employees. They are responsible for the annual evaluations of all paid staff and for recommending staff salary increase/decreases to Session.

I. Worship and Music:

1. This Ministry Team shall be composed of no less than three (3) members. In addition, this Ministry Team will also have one (1) Elder.
2. The music staff shall be ex-officio (non-voting) member of this Ministry Team.

3. This Ministry Team shall have supervision of all matters relating to the worship and music in the church.

V. Dissolution

If the church is formally dissolved by the presbytery of which it is a member, or has become extinct by reason of the dispersal of its members, the abandonment of its work, or any other cause, all such property, both real and personal, present and future, as the Corporation may have shall be vested in and be the property of the Presbytery of Geneva of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), pursuant to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), said Presbytery being an organization qualified under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of the United States. In the alternative, said property of the Corporation shall be held, used, and applied for such uses, purposes, and trust as the Presbytery may direct, limit, and appoint, or such property may be sold or disposed of as the Presbytery may direct in conformity with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (*Book of Order* G-8.0300, G-8.0400, G-11.0103; Article of Incorporation XVII).

Constitution and the By Laws of The First Presbyterian Society and Church of Seneca Falls, New York

Article 1. The First Presbyterian Society and Church of Seneca Falls, NY is a religious corporation organized in 1864 by the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of Seneca Falls, NY under the laws of the State of New York, and recognizes its obligation to observe The Religious Corporations Law of the State of New York.

Article 2. The Constitution of this religious corporation shall be the Constitution of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, (Presbyterian Church, USA)

By Laws

1. There shall be ~~an annual meeting of the congregation~~ a congregational meeting in the church edifice on a Sunday in November for the purpose of election of officers and the annual meeting ~~on a Sunday in January~~ for the purpose of reviewing statistical, financial and other committee reports and any other business to come before the congregation.
2. Special meetings may be called by the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Seneca Falls, NY acting in their capacity as Trustees of the corporation, and shall be called at the written request of ten communicant members of the church.
3. The trustees of this religious corporation shall be, by virtue of their office, the ruling elders of the First Presbyterian Church of Seneca Falls who are serving as members of the Session.
4. The ruling elders serve as trustees shall manage the property and affairs of the corporation when meeting together in regular meetings of the Session.
5. The Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Seneca Falls, NY shall be the presiding officer at meetings of the trustees, without a vote on corporate matters; the pastor shall preside at the meetings of the corporation unless the qualified voters choose some other person as presiding officer, but without a vote.
6. Active members of the First Presbyterian Church of Seneca Falls in good standing of whatever age shall be entitled to vote in meetings of the corporation; and there shall be no voting proxy.
7. A quorum at meetings of the trustees shall be one third of the number of trustees; a quorum at meetings of the corporation shall be ten active members.
8. The authority of the Trustees in respect to the selling, mortgaging, and leasing of the real property shall be subject to any rights reserved to the congregation by civil law, shall be subject to the Constitution of the ~~United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America,~~ (Presbyterian Church, USA), and shall be subject to the permission of the Presbytery when

required. No sale, mortgage, or transfer of real property belonging to the corporation shall be authorized except at the annual or special meeting of the corporation by a majority vote of qualified voters of legal age present at the meeting.

9. The secretary at the meetings of the trustees and at the meetings of the corporation shall be the Clerk of Session or, in the Clerk's absence, someone elected to serve in his or her place.
10. Minutes of the corporation shall be incorporated into and kept with the minutes of the Session and Congregation.
11. The trustees shall report annually to the corporation on their management of the property and assets of the corporation.
12. Whenever there is a conflict between the Constitution and By Laws of the corporation and the Constitution of the ~~United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America~~, (Presbyterian Church, USA), the latter shall take precedence and the former shall no longer be considered in effect.
13. Whenever there is a conflict between the Constitution and the By Laws of the corporation and the Religious Corporations Law of the State of New York, the latter shall take precedence and the former shall no longer be considered in effect.

Amendments

1. The above Constitution and By Laws of the First Presbyterian Society and Church of Seneca Falls, NY may be altered, amended or repealed at any annual or special meeting of the corporation and Church by a majority of the qualified voters present provided that a full reading of the proposed changes or printed distribution of the same shall have been made in connection with the call of the meeting.

Revision Dates:

1/11/2012
6/1/2011
4/25/2011
12/14/2003
11/22/1992
11/12/1983