

Type S Congregational Bylaws
Paper No. OCCG-030

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The bylaws of a congregation has historically been a relatively passive document that primarily establishes the congregation as a liability limiting corporation. In facing the conflict between maintaining our traditional methods of operation and the present decline of Churches of Christ, the bylaws can be configured to help prevent this conflict in the future, and be an example of how to revive some of our existing congregations. A currently used set of bylaws is presented along with what is called bylaws for a Type S congregation. The type S is intended to indicate promoting Shepherds as primarily spiritual caregivers for the flock rather than primarily business managers.

KEY WORDS:

Church organization, Elder, Shepherd, DelCon

GLOSSARY:

Bylaws: Rules made by a organization, company or society to control the actions of its members.

Elder: A scriptural name for a congregational leader with the general connotation today of being a ruler.

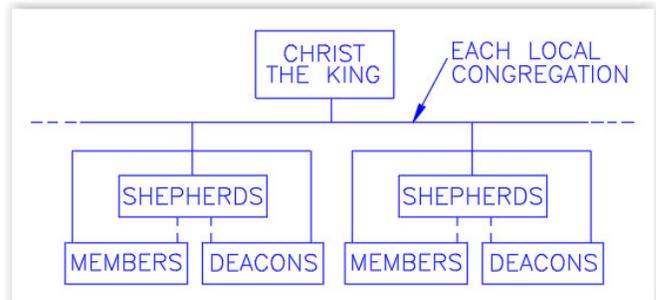
Shepherd: A scriptural name for a congregational leader with the general connotation today of being a shepherd or a spiritual caregiver.

Deacon: A scriptural name for a congregational officer who is a servant of the church.

Thumb Printing: Making small unnecessary changes to a proposal.

REPORT:

If your congregation is growing and fulfilling its part of the Great commission, you do not need to read this paper. It is intended



for those in congregations which are in decline and have a relatively low membership involvement. That is unfortunately most of our congregations.

In paper OCCG-029 ORGANIZATIONAL PLANS S, it was discussed that Churches of Christ are in a rapid decline at the present time and was suggested that our customary organizational implementation seemed to be a significant part of the problem. It is a scriptural implementation, but it is not the only scriptural implementation choice available.

The normal net result of our customary implementation is that the decision making power of the pre-elder organization was strong enough to get us to the point of having Elders, but then only Elders are allowed to make decisions after Elders are appointed.

This is not usually an immediate impact upon getting Elders, but happens gradually over a period of years. It is the observation of this writer that over several decades and watching several congregations that over the years there are corollaries between:

1. The extend of Elder control over the congregation,
2. The age of the Elders,
3. The age of the members of the congregation,
4. The disengagement of members in the work of the congregation,
5. The replacement of member involvement by staff involvement,
6. Attending worship services becoming the member's service to Jesus,
7. Change from specific Bible knowledge to general Bible knowledge,
8. The shift of expenditures from personal evangelism to member care, and
9. Declining attendance.

It is also the understanding of this writer that a vibrant congregation is dependent upon:

1. Member ownership in his/her congregation, as is usually embodied by being involved in decision making processes,
2. The ability of members/committees to make reasonably rapid decisions in today's fast paced world,
3. A blend of all ages within the congregation,
4. Member involvement in the work of the church,
5. Service involvement of members with the community,

6. Member education in religious matters in a way which prepares them for personal evangelism, and
7. Focus on personal evangelism.

The list above can be debated for an eternity, however, it is clear that member involvement declines over time as a congregation ages, and is very difficult to restart. If a reasonably high percentage of members are not actively engaged, the congregation is not likely to grow. If anything scriptural can be done to prevent the declining member involvement, it would be a good thing to do. Greater member involvement naturally leads to reduced need for extra staff expenses; sustained attendance; a feeling of member ownership in the congregation; and more Christians active in the work of the church.

According to the scriptures, Elders or Shepherds are in charge of the congregations and Deacons are assigned to do tasks. There is sparse information given on this in the New Testament, as one might expect when the organization is expected to last for thousands of years in all kinds of cultures. The scriptures remain the same, but the physical implementation of the scriptures will change from time to time. After a while, any organizational tradition we practice can take on the air of being scriptural. However, sometimes scripturally acceptable traditions can interfere with actually doing what is scriptural.

The suggestion of this paper is that there are somewhat different completely scriptural embodiments of church organization. Further there are options available which will tend to promote a long term vibrant and scriptural congregation better than our customary embodiment. Five options are discussed below which all

appear to be scriptural variations of church organization. This is more to say that a congregation has some choices to improve their membership involvement and Great Commission success. One of these, a combination of these, or some other better scriptural idea may be what your congregation needs to do. They will be described here, and a graphic placed in the Appendix of this paper.

TYPICAL CHURCH OF CHRIST ORGANIZATION (APPENDIX A)

The typical Church of Christ organization focuses on establishing the conventional Elder control of the congregation as soon as practical. In this organization typically the members, staff, Deacons, and committees all report directly to the Elders. The only group in a larger congregation which does not report directly to the Elders is Ministries, which report to the Committees. The names for these groups will vary from place to place. This is a completely scriptural embodiment of a church organization. However, we are suggesting that it tends to lead to the situation the Churches of Christ are in today: over time so much control goes to the Elders that it discourages involvement of members, which typically leads to declining church attendance. It does not take much introduction, as it is what we characteristically do. You can be sure that if your congregation is liability protected by a corporate charter, it has the required set of corporate bylaws.

TYPICAL CHURCH OF CHRIST ORGANIZATION (APPENDIX B)

This is the same organization as seen in Appendix A with the exception that the committees are shown to report to Staff and then to the Shepherds. This may happen to some or all of the committees,

the idea being that Staff are full time and are professionally trained to do some of the tasks. The other side is that some of the lay members may be far better trained at some of the activities than the Staff, e.g. building maintenance and finance. Secondly it is said that a Staff person can replace 20 volunteers, which said another way is that a Staff person can eliminate the involvement of 20 members. To a large extent, the role of a Staff member should be to facilitate the involvement of members rather than replace it.

TYPICAL CHURCH OF CHRIST WITH SPECIALIZED ELDERS (APPENDIX C)

Again, the same organization as seen in Appendix A with the exception that the Elders are specialized in their service with some acting as Shepherds and some acting as Administrators. This is an operational improvement as all the Elders are no longer in doing the administrative work of the congregation, as a group of Shepherds are actually devoted to shepherding. Shepherds chosen by the congregation are qualified by their ability to be spiritual Shepherds, so the ultimate goals would be to have all the Shepherds focus on shepherding.

TYPE S ORGANIZATION (APPENDIX D)

This organization type is named type S as it seeks to free the Shepherds to do the work of spiritual shepherding in the congregation. In this organization, the members, Staff, Deacons, and religious-related committees report to the Shepherds. The activities of the existing Board of Trustees would be expanded to include Finance, Budget, Nominations, and Building & Grounds. The Board of Trustees would be expanded beyond what it normally is to include Shepherds, Deacons, Other Members, and the Pulpit

Minister, with no group holding a majority. All members other than the Pulpit Minister would have a 3 year term and would sit out for at least one year before starting another term. This would ensure that no person could establish domination other than the Pulpit Minister, who must have consistency to be the face of the vision of the congregation. If he tries to exercise too much control, he can be terminated.

TYPE S ORGANIZATION SHOWING DELCON (APPENDIX E)

This is the same graphic as Appendix D with DelCon shown below the Board of Trustees at the top and below the Shepherds at the bottom. This is to teach that the Shepherds are over the Personal Evangelism committee, but the method of communication is not characterized by endless meetings. Delcon is the church operating software offered by the OC Church Growth Institute, and is representative here of whatever system a congregation uses. Delcon houses the job description and operating instructions of all Committees, Ministries, Staff, and Deacons.

The Personal Evangelism Committee operates according to the agreed upon job description and instructions. If they have a question, the first approach is to determine whether the instructions cover it. If they do not, the committee will contact their liaison Shepherd for counsel. The liaison Shepherd may or may not contact all the Shepherds in one or more meetings. The resulting decision is communicated back to the Personal Evangelism Committee by an update to the job description and/or operating instructions (likely after a verbal answer). The next time the same question comes up, the answer will be in the instructions and/or job description.

Only in rare cases will the initiative and inertia of the Personal Evangelism Committee be derailed by a long wait to be scheduled for a distant Shepherd's meeting. The Personal Evangelism Committee will know what is expected of them, what authority is delegated to them, and what resources they have available to them. The Shepherds are freed from continual decision making on pre-determined topics and are allowed time for spiritual shepherding. Everybody wins.

The same is true for committees reporting to the Board of Trustees, with the guarantee of no lifetime tenure of the members. This means that younger men will be allowed opportunities to be involved in setting the goals of the congregation, and the Shepherds will control the teachings of the congregation.

In a business, the President or CEO (Chief Operating Officer) takes direction from the Board of Directors and operates the business according to their wishes. No business would ever expect to succeed if they had board members qualified to be on the board for their spiritual shepherding talents, and had them take turns being the operational President. In a sense using DelCon (or an equivalent) like this is giving the congregation a CEO. All the board instructions are given to DelCon and then dispersed with clarity to the congregation.

TYPE S BYLAWS (APPENDIX F)

A set of prospective bylaws including the principles in the Type S organization is attached as Appendix F. The **primary goal** of the suggested Type S bylaws is to keep members involved in the work of the church. It is well and good to say that

anyone is always welcome to do the work of the church, but congregations exist in a complex set of relations between various people. A small percentage of members will actually display initiative to lead in making things happen. Most members are followers or are “sheep”, as Jesus said.

That initiative of an individual member to do and lead a good work, when permission to do that work is contingent upon approval by a group of elders at some future meeting, is likely to be discouraged. When it is then subject to thumb printing because some Elder needs to get his two cents worth in, it is even likely to be discouraged. This is not some wild speculation. This is a repeated observation.

Reviewers:

1. Judy Haley, Melissa Rowell

If you contact us at info@occg.institute we will send you an original Word copy of this document for you to use in your planning.

A LIVE DOCUMENT

This is just a suggestion on how to do this, but it is based on our best efforts. If anyone else has a better suggestion, let us know and we will publish it, advertise it, promote it, or anything else we can do. We need your help.

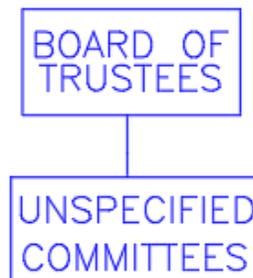
This paper can be updated and reposted at any time with your suggestions to make the information as pertinent as possible.

APPENDIX A: TYPICAL CHURCH OF CHRIST ORGANIZATION GRAPHICS

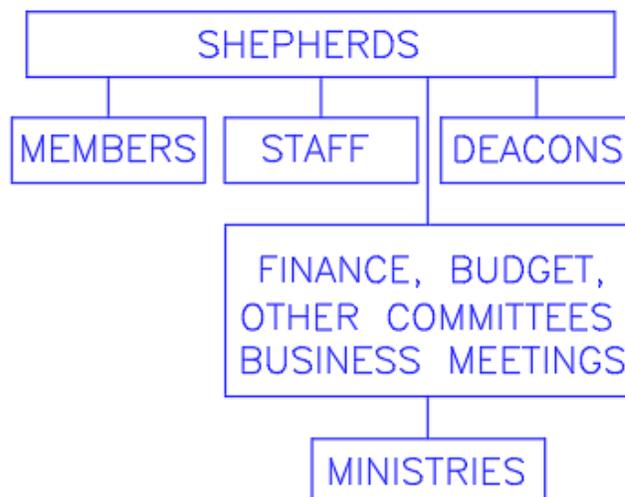
Note the typical Church of Christ has both a corporate and physical organization. Typically, the corporate structure is not well known and has few activities. All physical and spiritual authority goes through the Eldership. The Board of Trustees is basically a figurehead group only handling some legal matters..

TYPICAL CHURCH OF CHRIST ORGANIZATION

CORPORATE ORGANIZATION



CHURCH ORGANIZATION



APPENDIX B: TYPICAL ORGANIZATION WITH COMMITTEES REPORTING TO STAFF

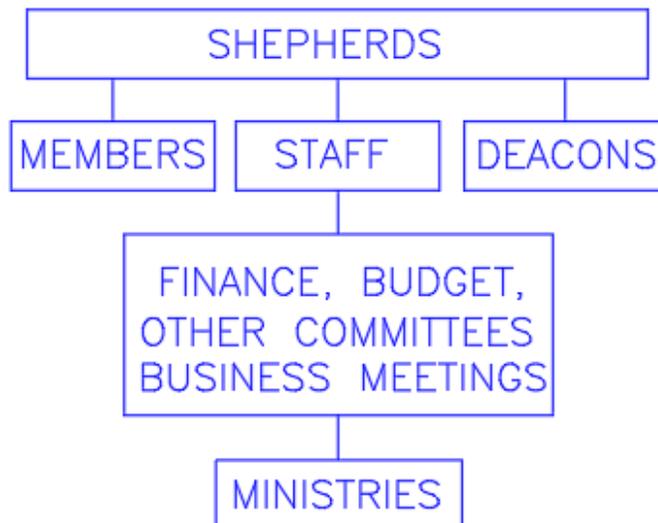
This is the same as Appendix A except that the committees report to staff as the paid and trained professionals.

CHURCH OF CHRIST
ORGANIZATION
COMMITTEES REPORTING TO STAFF

CORPORATE ORGANIZATION



CHURCH ORGANIZATION

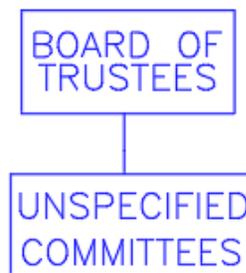


APPENDIX C: TYPICAL CHURCH OF CHRIST WITH SPECIALIZED ELDERS

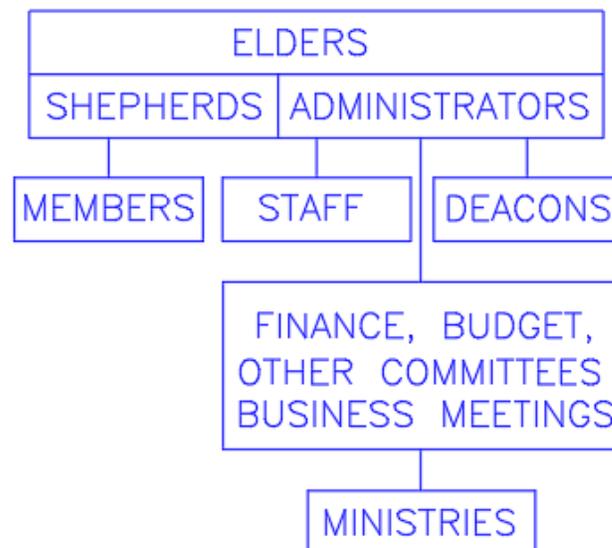
The Elders are divided into those who do spiritual Shepherding, and those who focus on administrative tasks.

SPECIALIZED ELDERS ORGANIZATION

CORPORATE ORGANIZATION



CHURCH ORGANIZATION

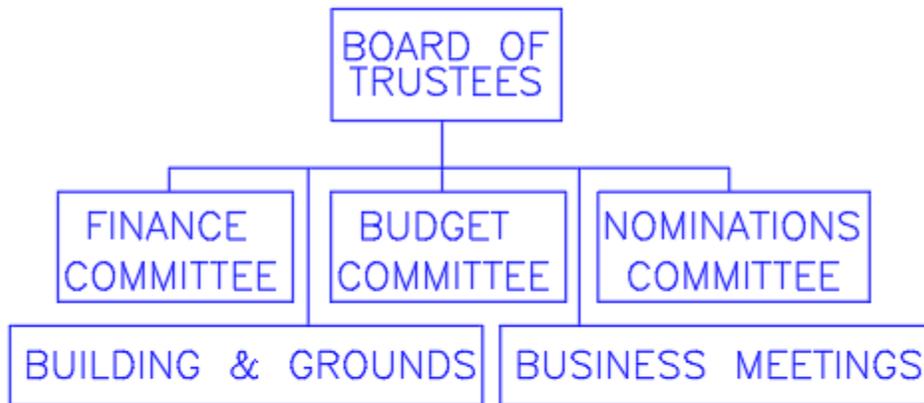


APPENDIX D: TYPE S ORGANIZATIONAL GRAPHIC

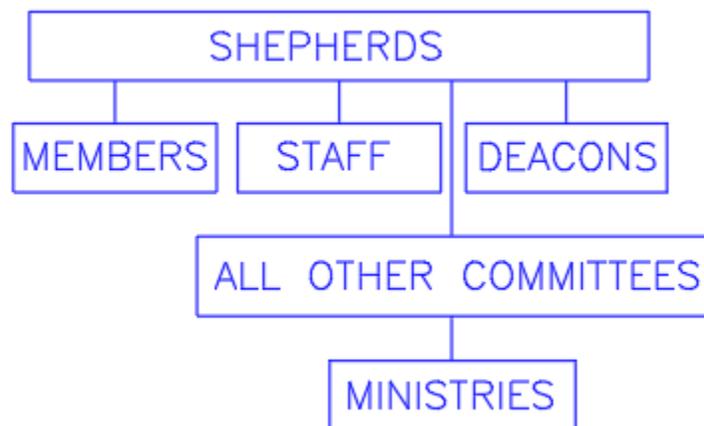
An organization where Shepherds specialize in shepherding and a portion of authority is vested in the Board of Trustees, which has Shepherd representation but not a majority. The Pulpit Minister should be a part of the Board of Trustees as he must have the vision for the congregation and use the pulpit power to continually promote that vision.

TYPE "S"
CHURCH ORGANIZATION

PHYSICAL ORGANIZATION

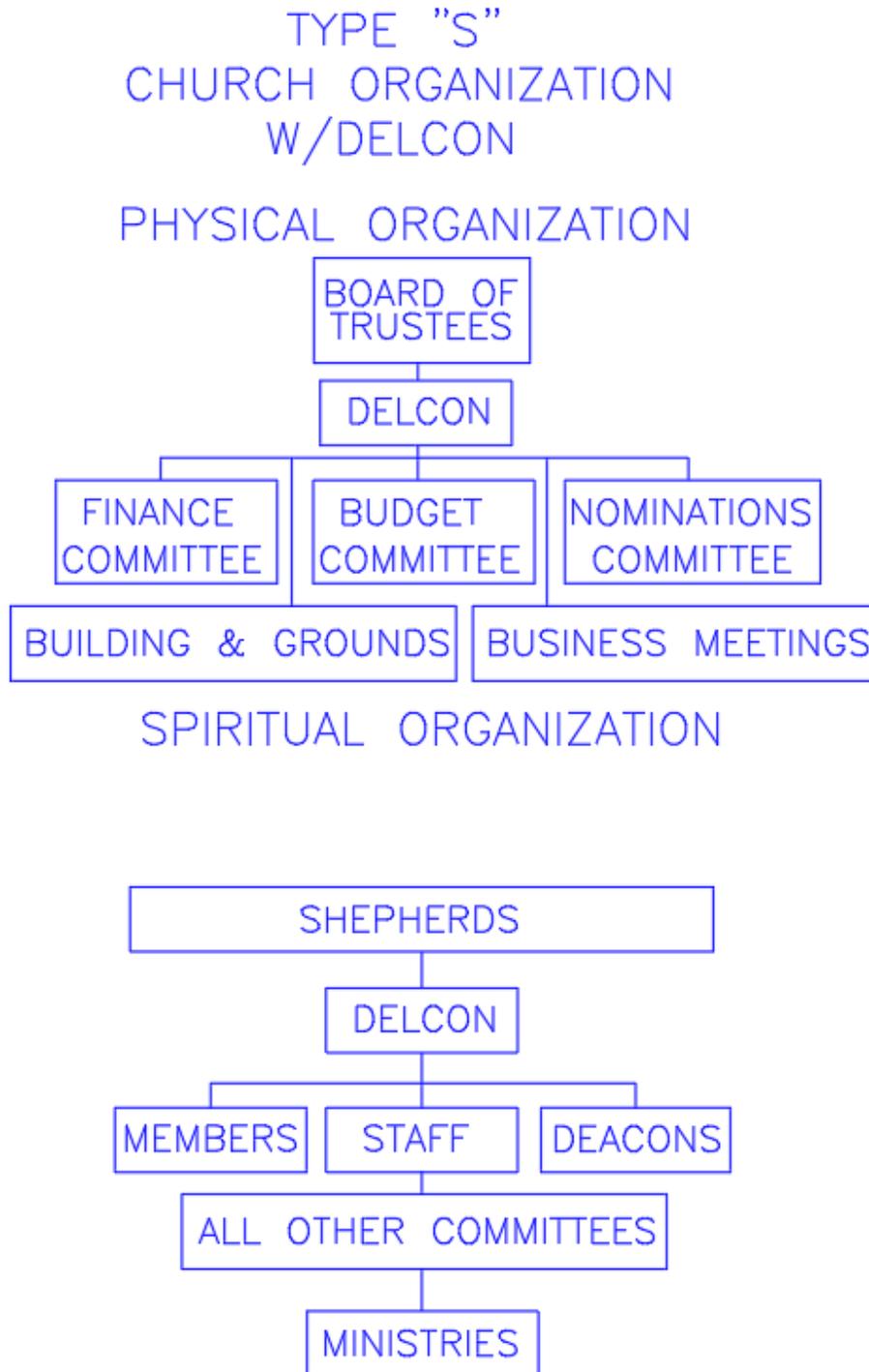


SPIRITUAL ORGANIZATION



APPENDIX E: TYPE S ORGANIZATIONAL GRAPHIC WITH DELCON SHOWN

Similar to Appendix D, with the authority shown passing through the Delcon (or equivalent) software so that the delegation will be clear and in writing. It also illustrates the committees reporting to the staff.



APPENDIX F: TYPE S CHURCH OF CHRIST

BYLAWS OF THE LUTHER COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CHRIST, A NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

ARTICLE 1: OFFICES

- 1.1 Principal Offices: The principal office of Luther Community Church of Christ, a Nonprofit Organization, (the “corporation”) in the State of Texas shall be _____; _____, Texas _____. The corporation may have such other offices, either within or without the State of Texas, as the Board of Trustees may determine or as the affairs of the corporation may require from time to time.
- 1.2 Registered Office and Registered Agent: The corporation shall have and continuously maintain in the State of Texas a registered office, and a registered agent whose office is identical with such registered office, as required by the Texas Business Organizations Code. The registered office may be, but need not be, identical with the principal office of the corporation in the State of Texas, and the address of the registered office may be changed from time to time by the Board of Trustees.

ARTICLE 2: PURPOSE

Said organization is organized solely for religious, educational, and charitable purposes, including for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under the section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

No part of the net earnings of this organization shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to, its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the organization shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in

furtherance of the purposes set forth in the purpose clause hereof. No part of the activities of this organization shall be the carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and this organization shall not participate in, or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

ARTICLE 3: DISSOLUTION

Upon the dissolution of this corporation, assets remaining shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or corresponding section of any future federal tax code to another Church of Christ or a Church of Christ affiliated University.

ARTICLE 2: CORPORATION MEMBERS AND OFFICERS.

The corporation shall have no members or officers.

ARTICLE 3: BOARD OF TRUSTEES

3.1 GENERAL POWERS

The affairs of the corporation shall be under the control and management of the Board of Trustees, per Texas Business Organization Code § 22.201 and following. The members of the Board of Trustees are designated as the officers of the corporation. Per Texas Business Organization Code § 22.204, the corporation will always have at least three (3) trustees.

3.2 TRUSTEES

There will be a minimum of three trustees at all times, with at least one of the trustees being a Shepherd if any exist and at least one of the trustees being a Deacon if any exist and one being a member who is neither a Shepherd or Deacon. Shepherds or Deacons will not constitute a majority of the trustees. Trustees will be appointed for 5 year period, renewable after sitting out for one year. Expiration of terms will be staggered. The Pulpit Minister will be a member of the Board of

Trustees as long as he is the Pulpit Minister.

3.3 CHAIRMAN: The Trustees may designate one of the Trustees to act as Chairman of the Board of Trustees for a period of six months, and shall not be for consecutive periods. Upon written consent signed by the other Trustees as to a particular transaction, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees is authorized to be the sole signatory to sign all documents on behalf of the corporation in said particular transaction.

3.4 MEETINGS OF THE BOARDS OF TRUSTEES:

Regular monthly meetings of the Board of Trustees will begin at 7:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month.

Special meetings of the Board of Trustees may be called by or at the request of the Chairman or any two Trustees. The Chairman or any two Trustees calling a meeting of the Board may fix any place within _____ County, Texas for the meeting.

Notice of a special meeting of the Board of Trustees shall be sufficient if such notice of the place, day and hour of the meeting of the Board is given to the Board during the Sunday morning assembly immediately preceding the holding of such meeting, or at such other reasonable times as allowed under the circumstances. Per Texas Business Organization Code § 22.002, the Board may allow a Trustee or Trustees to participate in a meeting by Remote Communications Technology.

Quorum: A majority of the Board of Trustees shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of the Board. If less than a majority of the Board is present at any meeting, the meeting may be adjourned from time to time without further notice.

Manner of Acting: The act of a majority of the Board present at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the board of Trustees unless the act of a

greater number is required by the law or by these Bylaws.

- 3.5 INFORMAL ACTION BY TRUSTEES: Any action required by law to be taken at a meeting of Trustees or action which may be taken at a meeting of the Board of Trustees, may be taken without a meeting if a consent in writing setting forth the action so and is signed by all members of the Board of Trustees.

Article 4: CONGREGATIONAL BUSINESS MEETINGS

- 4.1 QUARTERLY BUSINESS MEETINGS: A quarterly business meeting of the congregation will be held beginning at 7:00 p.m. on the first Wednesday February, May, August, and November. Decisions will be made by a majority vote of the Ministry Active Members of the congregation.
- 4.2 SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETINGS: Special business meetings of the congregation may be held beginning at any time at any location within _____ County, Texas at least one week after notice of such meeting is given at a Sunday morning service of the congregation including the time, location, and reason for the special meeting. Decisions will be made by a majority vote of the Ministry Active Members of the congregation.
- 4.3 A summary report of the status of all congregational committees will be distributed to all attendees at Quarterly Business meetings, said report including 5 report items agreed upon by each committee chair and the liaison Shepherd.
- 4.4 Meeting Facilitator: Chairman of the Board of Trustees will act as Facilitator for the Congregational Business Meetings.

ARTICLE 5: COMMITTEES

- 5.1 The Board of Trustees, by resolution adopted by the majority of the Trustees present at a meeting at which there is a quorum, may designate and appoint one or more committees in addition to the following standing committees, which, to the extent provided in said resolution, shall have and exercise the authority of the

Board of Trustees in the management, operation, and maintenance of the corporation.

5.2 Any committee formed will be delegated authority in writing and shall report back to the Board of Trustees on up to five agreed upon report items monthly.

5.3 FINANCE COMMITTEE: A Finance Committee shall be formed to handle all funds and make all disbursements of such funds. All funds will be distributed within an approved budget unless specifically approved otherwise by a majority vote of the Board of Trustees.

DEPOSITS: All funds of the corporation shall be deposited from time to time to the credit of the corporation in such banks, trust companies, or other depositories as the Board of Trustees may select.

SUPPORT: The Board of Trustees may accept on behalf of the corporation any contribution, gift, bequest, or devise for the general purposes or for any special purpose of the corporation

BOOKS AND RECORDS: The corporation shall keep correct and complete books and records of accounts and shall keep minutes of the meeting and proceedings of the Board of Trustees and committees having any of the authority of the Board of Trustees.

5.4 BUDGET COMMITTEE: A Budget Committee shall be formed to collect input from various activities into a budget format and present it to the Board of Trustees for approval.

5.5 NOMINATION COMMITTEE: A Nomination Committee shall be formed and maintained to collect nominations from the congregation for consideration as new Shepherds, Deacons, and Board Trustees. Such nominations shall be submitted to a regular quarterly business meeting and approved by a majority vote of the Ministry Active Members.

Similarly, the Nomination Committee can submit names of Trustees, Shepherds,

and/or Deacons to be removed from those positions by submission of their names to a Business Meeting and approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the Ministry Active Members present, but only if a quorum of more than fifty percent of Ministry Active Members is present.

- 5.6 BUILDING & GROUNDS COMMITTEE: A Building & Grounds committee shall be formed to administer the construction and maintenance of all buildings and grounds..

ARTICLE 6: CONTRACTS

The Board of Trustees may authorize any agent or agents of the corporation, in addition to the Chairman so authorized by these Bylaws, to enter into any contract or execute and deliver any instrument in the name of and on behalf of the corporation. Such authority may be general or confined to specific instances.

ARTICLE 7: FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the corporation shall begin on the first day of January and end on the last day of December each year.

ARTICLE 8: SEAL

The Board of Trustees shall provide a corporate seal, which shall be in the form of a circle and shall have inscribed thereon the name of the corporation.

Article 9: DEFINITIONS

SHEPHERD: A plurality of appointed spiritual leaders of the congregation qualified in accordance with I Tim. 3:1-7 & Titus 1:5-9. Whose primary roles are to shepherd the flock, delegate roles to members, and mentor the members in doing those roles.

DEACON: An appointed leader of the congregation qualified in accordance with I Timothy 3:8-13 who receives delegated authority and oversight from the

Shepherds.

MEMBER: A baptized believer in Jesus Christ who has placed themselves under the leadership of the Shepherds of the congregation if Shepherds have been appointed or of the congregation itself if no Shepherds have been appointed.

MINISTRY ACTIVE MEMBER: A member of the congregation who is active in any committee or ministry of the congregation for a minimum of thirty minutes per month.

EXPECTATIONS OF MEMBERS: Attending a weekly worship service, attending a Bible class, spending time in daily prayer, serving in a ministry or committee when practical, sharing your faith, financially supporting the church, and growing in faith and love for God and each other

ARTICLE 10: AMENDMENTS TO BYLAWS

The power to alter, amend or repeal the bylaws or to adopt new bylaws shall be vested in the Board of Trustees, and as such these bylaws may be altered, amended or repealed and new bylaws may be adopted by the majority of the Trustees present at any regular meeting or at any special meeting, if at least 10 days' written notice is given to all Trustees of an intention to alter, amend or repeal these bylaws or to adopt new bylaws at said meeting, and the intention is announced in a Sunday morning worship service of the church.

ADOPTED AND RATIFIED AND APPROVED by the Board of Trustees of the Luther Community Church of Christ effective on this ____day of _____, 20XX.

Signatures of the initial Board of Trustees affixed below to show adoption of the Bylaws for the Luther Community Church of Christ:

_____, Trustee

_____, Trustee

_____, Trustee