

Congregational Meetings - Electronic or Hybrid

In the season of Covid-19, the churches have faithfully responded creatively to how to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. Given this ongoing pandemic, congregations will find it necessary to hold congregational meetings electronic or hybrid. We hope these guidelines will provide a roadmap that will ensure an open and successful virtual gathering, allowing for thoughtful decision-making

Based on the Book of Order (silent on this matter) and Robert's Rules, electronic meetings are permissible **if permission is granted in the Bylaws.**

WHATS NEXT!

1. Your Church has **ALREADY** amended the Bylaws to allow for an electronic or hybrid meeting.
 - Do they include that all participants must be able to **hear and participate** in the meeting? If so...
 - **GREAT!**
2. Your Church has **HAS NOT** amended the Bylaws to allow for an electronic or hybrid meeting.
 - a) **Electronic ONLY meeting**
 - If the Bylaws do not allow or are silent for the congregation to meet electronically, this becomes a problem. **Church Bylaws can't be changed except at a REGULAR congregational meeting.**
 - When you meet in a way other than that described in your bylaws, it is an **EXTRAORDINARY MEETING**. Actions taken in an extraordinary meeting need to be approved at your **NEXT REGULAR MEETING** to be valid. In many circumstances, it all can be approved on a consent agenda.
 - It could be a while before the next **REGULAR MEETING**, do not forget to do it.
 - b) **Hybride Meeting**
 - Since you are meeting partially in-person, the **Stated Clerk's opinion** that it conforms to the existing Bylaw and can be considered a **REGULAR MEETING** under Presbyterian Polity.

Amending the Bylaws to reflect the use of Electronic or Hybrid meetings.

Should your current bylaws not include a provision for Electronic or Hybrid congregational meetings, we recommend that your first action at that congregational meeting be to amend your bylaws to include language that would allow you to make decisions Electronically in "times of natural disaster or global pandemic that does not allow the community to gather in person. ***This amendment would come as a recommendation from the Session.***

Examples of Bylaws amendments

- *"When times of natural disaster or global pandemic that does not allow the community to gather in person, the session, the deacons (trustees) and the congregation may meet electronically so long as all participants can hear and participate in the meeting."*
- *"Electronic Meetings of the congregation, Session, and other boards, committees, commissions and teams of the ... Presbyterian Church are permitted so long as all participants can hear and participate in the meeting."*

Any questions or concerns, contact the Presbytery office. 631-499-7171

[PC\(USA\) - Advisory Opinion Church in an Emergency/Pandemic](#)