

THE ROAD TO SOVEREIGNTY

Congratulations!

As you plan to move towards sovereignty, here are a few things to help you.

PROCESS

Here are some steps for sovereignty:

- Review several styles and select the parts that fit best for you and your church. Jeff Leake's document on Church Governance is a great resource in this process (<http://www.reachnortheast.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/seven-values.jan08.pdf>).
- Sample Bylaws are available at <https://tinyurl.com/PDSamples>
- After you have written your Bylaws, please review the Church Bylaws Essentials section that follows. This has been approved by our PennDel Presbytery.
- Once you and your church leadership team have written your Bylaws, submit it to your sectional committee or parent church for approval.
- Once your sectional committee or parent church has reviewed it and given their approval, pass it on to me (tom@penndel.org). I will review it for Home Missions approval.
- After I approve it, Pastor Immel will review it for final District approval.
- My assistant, Danielle Debley, will then send you and your Presbyter the paperwork for the set in order meeting.
- Your Presbyter would lead the set-in order meeting at your church where approval is granted for your Bylaws, church board and sovereignty. Be sure to have members sign the charter roster form at the meeting.
- Once that meeting is held, you will send the application, charter form and processing fee to Jeff Marshall, the PennDel Secretary-Treasurer, for Presbytery approval.
- Once approved, it will go to Springfield for approval.
- You will then receive notification that you are a sovereign Assembly of God church.

QUESTIONS?

Please don't hesitate to contact us with questions. We are here to help you walk through this process. – Tom Rees (tom@penndel.org or 717.580.8188)

CHURCH BYLAWS ESSENTIALS

NOTE While it is true that churches are no longer required to file a 1023 Form applying for tax exempt status, it is necessary that churches follow the same stringent requirements that the IRS imposes on all other non-profit organizations for Bylaws' content.

REQUIREMENTS

- A concise statement of your tax exempt purpose
- A board of directors and statement defining their responsibilities, how they are elected/appointed, and the length of their terms.
- A dissolution clause – if the organization ceases to exist, assets must go to another non- profit or a government entity.
- An inurement clause – No director or officer can have a legal right to any assets of the corporation.
- An indemnification clause – insurance coverage for officers and directors
- A conflict of interest clause - See 1023 Form instructions for a sample
- A statement detailing who sets the compensation of officers and directors and how the amounts are determined
- A statement detailing membership requirements, voting rights, and responsibilities
- A statement that the organization will not engage in or sponsor any political activity
- A statement detailing how contracts for work or service are assigned/granted and how this will be handled if this contract is bided for by an office/director
- A statement detailing how funds will be raised and who will determine how they are disbursed

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There should be a minimum of five board members and not more than two of these should be related.
- There needs to be accountability for all leadership, and that accountability needs to be fully defined.
- No officer/director should have an indefinite term.
- Those handling finances should be screened and bonded/insured.
- A conflict resolution procedure should be defined in detail.
- All compensation should be fair and reasonable and should be given commensurate with the assigned duties. Compensation should be compared with the compensation given by other similar organizations of comparable size in your location.
- It is wise to have an election process defined for officers/directors.
- If officers/directors are appointed, they should be ratified by the membership.

This list is not an exhaustive list of requirements or recommendations. It is to be viewed as a minimum listing of essentials.