

Bethlehem Bylaws Amendment to Allow Electronic Congregational Meetings

(introduced in writing at July 26 All-Church Quarterly Strategy Meeting)

Background

Bethlehem's current [bylaws](#) make explicit provision for Council of Elder meetings to be held via electronic communication:

Bylaws, Article II **Church Government**, Section 2 **Elders**, item e. **Organization**:
“Meetings of the Council of Elders may be held at any location and may be conducted by means of electronic communication through which the Elders may simultaneously hear each other.”

However, our bylaws do *not* make a similar provision for congregational meetings. Rather, they regularly reference “[members present and voting](#)” when describing who is able to participate in casting a vote to decide issues. According to *Robert's Rules of Order*, cited in Bethlehem's bylaws as the “[rules governing \(our\) business meetings](#)” and “[recognized as the general pattern for the conduct of the business meetings of the Church](#),” a meeting is “a single official gathering of its members in one room or area.”

Although [Minnesota statutes](#) make provision for electronic corporate meetings, Bethlehem will need to amend our bylaws to explicitly allow them to occur.

Amendment Process

1. July 7, 2020: The Council of Elders approved incorporating an amendment to Bethlehem's bylaws that allows business meetings to be conducted by means of electronic communication. After reviewing several options, the Council delegated authority to the Lead Team to finalize detailed amendment wording before the July 26 All-Church Quarterly Strategy Meeting (which the Lead Team did—“Option 2” from July 7, 2020 document).
2. July 26, 2020: Introduced the new amendment (*Bylaws Article V **Meetings**, Section 2 **For Business**, item g. **Electronic Meeting***) through a written motion, per our bylaws process for amending the bylaws.
3. October 18, 2020: The congregation votes to affirm (or not) the amendment. Provided the amendment passes, Bethlehem can then begin exercising this option, starting with our 2020 Annual Meeting in December.

Motion

The Council of Elders recommends Bethlehem amend its bylaws by added new item “g **Electronic Meeting**” to its *Bylaws, Article V **Meetings**, Section 2 **For Business***:

*“When approved by the Council of Elders, any member business meeting may be conducted as an electronic meeting by remote communication using [guidelines](#) established by the Council of Elders. All members whose remote participation in a meeting complies with such guidelines are considered to be ‘present’ for all purposes under these By-Laws and *Robert's Rules of Order*. All members ‘present’ by any of these means have the same rights as members. The Council of Elders is not required to offer remote communication for a meeting, and no member has a right*

to demand participation by remote communication for any meeting for which the Council of Elders has not approved it.”