

Suggested Glossary of Governance Terms

This is not meant to be an all-inclusive list of terminology used in a congregation's constitution or bylaws. For the sake of good order within a synod, it is helpful to have a vocabulary of governance terms that are used and understood consistently within our church body.

A. Member / Baptized Member — any man, woman or child who wishes to be part of the congregations (The will of children is expressed by at least one parent.)

B. Communicant Member — any man, woman or child who has received the instruction and made the confession of faith necessary that they might partake of Holy Communion

C. Voting Member — a male head of household who functions when congregation-wide decisions need to be made that exercise authority

D. Council (Church Council; Executive Council; Council of Ministry) - Top level of church administration charged with broad coordination of ministry efforts including making authoritative decisions; generally, any secondary level of administration (Board, Committee, Team, Group) will have a

E. Board — Secondary level of church administration charged with making some authoritative decisions about a narrow aspect of congregational ministry

F. Committee, Team, Group — Action-oriented service associations that plan and coordinate various congregational ministry efforts

G. Officer / Councilman — Member of the council, involved in authoritative decision making; elected by the congregation; subcategories would include: president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer

H. Elder — Spiritually mature male member that assists the pastor(s) with shepherding efforts; in smaller congregations, elders and councilman may be synonymous, i.e. the elders-as council model

I. Coordinator — Service position (non-authoritative) that coordinates the effort of a Committee, Team, or Group

J. Director (President, Administrator, Director, Chair, Head) — Authoritative position that directs the activity of a Board or Council

K. Business Meeting — a congregational meeting to approve ministry plans and/or elect officers

L. Open Forum — a meeting to discuss ministry objectives and other congregational issues

M. Consensus-building — a process of regular two-way communication between congregational leaders and communicant members to determine ministry efforts that fit the congregation's mission/purpose statement and long-range plan. This communication occurs 1) by using verbal, print, and/or electronic communication to share information and 2) by holding regular open forums to discuss that information.

N. Position description — a statement of the major duties and responsibilities of a congregational position; designates whether the position potentially exercises authority over men (and thus is limited to men) or whether the position is primarily coordinating service (and thus open to any spiritually mature member)

