

“What is the difference between a church constitution and church by-laws?”

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Just think of the US constitution and legal statutes as an illustration. A church constitution, like the US Constitution, sets out the fundamentals and (usually) relates to the activities associated with coming together as one body, i.e. constituting as a body. These fundamentals are basic statements about the body and usually will only change in rare situations and only where there is a super majority agreeing to a change in fundamentals.

Church bylaws are like common statutes that govern our basic day-to-day lives. Church bylaws, like statutes, govern the day to day activities of the church and relate to the details that we seek to address. Bylaws and statutes are more fluid and respond more quickly to our circumstances. They still may embody fundamental ideas but remain fluid because the structure of our lives, society, and circumstances change.

Another illustration would be a house. The constitution is like the foundation of the home and the bylaws are like the walls and beams of the home. You may need to renovate every now and again as the needs of your family evolve, but you don't mess with the foundation very often – unless you live in Oklahoma and the ground starts sinking. Laying a foundation for your home shows an intention to build a home and sets the course for what the house could look like. A constitution does the same thing. It shows what you want to build and governs the course for what that (church) could be.