

Proposed Bylaw Revision

September 17, 2023

Introduction and Background

What Are Bylaws?

1. Bylaws describe how a church is governed
 - o A church must submit to Scripture where it is clear about how a church should be governed, and it needs to apply wisdom where the Bible is silent.
2. Bylaws build *trust* through accountability
3. Bylaws give *efficiency* through clarity

Why Are We Revising Our Bylaws?

1. Realign our Bylaws with Scripture
2. Clarify the role of the Elder Board
3. Reduce the authority of the Senior Pastor
4. Clarify the oversight of congregations and ministries

Overview of the Revision Process

Aug 2022 – EB began drafting Bylaw revisions

Feb 2023 – Presented Bylaw revision to leaders

Sep 2023 – Presenting proposed Bylaw revision to all members

Jan 2024 – Goal is to approve the new Bylaws at the Annual Business Meeting

Please submit all feedback or questions by November 30

Major Changes		
Elder Board	Senior Pastor	Congregational Pastors
Shift governance from the Executive Board to the Elder Board	Reduce the authority of the Senior Pastor to be a “first among equals”	Define the relationship between the congregational pastors and Senior Pastor

Major Change #1	Elder Board	Shift governance from the Executive Board to the Elder Board
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1. The Bible teaches that a church is to be led by elders, not deacons or an "Executive Board."
 - **1 Timothy 5:17** – “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor...”
 - **1 Peter 5:1-2** – “So I exhort the elders among you... shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight...”
2. The revised Bylaws specify that:
 - The Elder Board leads and oversees the church
 - The Executive Board will be dissolved after an Elder Board is established
3. Key Quotes
 - “The government of this Church is vested in its membership and executed through the Elder Board.” (page 11)
 - “Whenever an Elder Board is established, the Executive Board shall be dissolved, and the Elder Board shall immediately assume the authority, functions, and responsibilities that are designated for it in the previous section.” (page 12)
 - “In general, the Elder Board has the authority to establish and oversee any ministries, teams, or committees within the Church. More specifically, each congregation and its ministries shall be directly overseen by that congregation’s respective Elders.” (page 12)

Major Change #2	Senior Pastor	Reduce the authority of the Senior Pastor to be a “first among equals”
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1. The Bible teaches that a church is to be led by multiple elders, not just one elder
 - **1 Timothy 5:17** – “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor...”
 - **1 Peter 5:1-2** – “So I exhort the elders among you... shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight...”
 - **Acts 14:23** - "And when they had appointed elders for them in every church..."
2. Bylaw Changes:
 - The current Bylaws give the Senior Pastor more authority than the other elders
 - In the revised Bylaws, the Senior Pastor is an elder who leads the Elder Board as a “first among equals”

3. Key Quotes

- “Supervising Staff. The Elder Board shall oversee and have the authority by a vote of two-thirds (2/3) to hire and dismiss any non-pastoral staff. In addition, this oversight and authority may be delegated to any person or group whom the Elders select.” (page 11)
- “A congregational Pastor shall be called for an indefinite term and by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Elder Board and by a two-thirds vote of the Church at a properly called business meeting...A congregational Pastor shall be dismissed by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Elder Board and by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Church at a properly called business meeting.” (page 14)

Major Change #3	Congregational Pastors	Define the relationship between the congregational pastors and Senior Pastor
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1. The current Bylaws do not describe:

- The role of congregational pastors and how each congregation is overseen
- The role of the Senior Pastor in relation to the congregational pastors and the congregations.

2. The revised Bylaws specify that:

- Congregational pastors directly shepherd and lead their respective congregations.
- The Senior Pastor is also a congregational pastor, not just an administrator over the congregational pastors.
- The Senior Pastor leads the entire pastoral team to maintain unity and give direction.

3. Key Quotes

- “A congregational Pastor shall serve the whole church as he has opportunity, but his primary responsibility shall be to shepherd his respective congregation. He shall lead and work with his congregation’s Elders to teach, shepherd, and oversee their ministries. He may also be known as the Lead Pastor if there is more than one Pastor in his congregation.” (page 14)
- “In addition to serving as a congregational Pastor, the Senior Pastor shall serve as the first among equals among all of the Pastors, serving and leading the Church in all its activities and advancing the religious interests of the Church. He shall work to maintain the unity of the Church and its leaders and shall serve the Pastors by coordinating, supporting, and giving direction on any all-Church related issues. He shall be an ex-officio member of all committees or boards.” (page 14)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Will we still establish an Elder Board if one congregation does not have elders?

No, we want to wait until all congregations have at least one non-staff Elder before establishing an Elder Board. We are praying for God to raise up and help us identify qualified Elders in each congregation so we can move forward together. The revised Bylaws say, “The Church shall not establish an Elder Board until each congregation has at least one non-staff Elder” (page 11).

2. After we establish an Elder Board, what happens if a congregation no longer has any non-staff elders due to term limits or other circumstances? Would the church no longer have an Elder Board?

No, we would seek to keep functioning with an Elder Board. If an elder reaches his term-limit, he could continue serving if he is approved by the Elder Board and the Church: “...if a congregation only has one non-staff Elder, at the end of that Elder’s second term, he may continue serving as an Elder for one additional year if he is approved by two-thirds (2/3) vote by the Elder Board and by two-thirds (2/3) vote by the Church. Furthermore, that Elder may continue to serve additional one-year terms as needed, provided that he is approved by the Elder Board and the Church, until there are a sufficient number of non-staff Elders” (page 15).

If a congregation no longer has any non-staff elders due to other circumstances, then a deacon could temporarily serve as a congregational representative: “... after an Elder Board has been established, if a congregation no longer has at least one non-staff Elder, the Elder Board may select one or more Deacons from that congregation to serve as congregational representatives on the Elder Board for a one-year term, provided that they are affirmed by a majority vote by the Church. Deacons serving as congregational representatives have voting rights on the Elder Board” (page 12).

3. Will elders have term limits, or will they be elders for life?

Term limits are not required nor forbidden in the Bible. Instead, term limits are a matter of wisdom. We believe term limits can be beneficial in order to give elders rest and provide a graceful way for them to step out of that office. Because of the higher qualifications and unique work of elders, we believe longer term limits are beneficial. So, elders would have a term limit of three years, and they can serve up to two consecutive terms before taking one year off (see page 15).

Also, it is important to recognize that the office or work of elders is the focus in Scripture, not the title. Being an elder is not a permanent title that is bestowed on someone. Instead, it is a work that one does for the Church, and therefore a term limit simply means that person takes a break from doing that work in a formal capacity.

4. Will there be a minimum or maximum number of elders to serve on the Elder Board from each congregation?

The Bible does not give a minimum or maximum number of elders, so the number of elders in a church is a matter of wisdom. The proposed Bylaws require at least one non-staff elder from each congregation so that all matters related to benefits for the staff elders (i.e. pastors) can be handled by non-staff elders in order to avoid a conflict of interest. Beyond that, we have chosen not to set a specific minimum or maximum number of elders. If we set the minimum number of elders too high, we may feel pressured to install an elder who is not biblically qualified in order to meet the minimum. If we set a maximum number of elders, we will hinder the church by preventing a qualified man from serving in that role.

5. If the Executive Board is dissolved once we establish an Elder Board, what would the deacons do?

The revised Bylaws state that “The Deacons and Deaconesses shall serve the practical needs of the church under the authority, oversight, and leadership of the Elders (e.g., Acts 6:1-7, 1 Tim. 3:8-13). Under the direction of the Elders, individual Deacons and Deaconesses or teams of Deacons and Deaconesses may be asked to oversee specific projects, tasks, or ministries which serve one congregation or the whole Church” (page 15). This could include a deacon of facilities, security, etc.

6. Would everyone who is hired automatically become part of the Elder Board?

Biblically, we recognize that the terms pastor, elder, and overseer (bishop in some translations) are used interchangeably to refer to the same office (Titus 1:5-7; Acts 20:17-18,28; 1 Peter 5:1-2). Therefore, anyone that is called to be a pastor at CGBC would also be an elder.

However, non-pastoral positions such as administrative assistants or directors would not become elders. The proposed Bylaws state that “The Elders may call additional ministers, ministry directors, etc. whose title, role, and function shall be determined by the Elders. Any such individual must meet the qualifications of Deacon or Deaconess in Article IV.C. 4 and shall be called by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Elder Board” (page 14).

7. What is the difference between an Associate or Assistant Pastor and the newly-added category of Congregational Pastor?

Each congregation will be led by a Congregational Pastor, and in addition, the church may call an Associate or Assistant Pastor to complement and assist the Senior Pastor and/or congregational Pastor:

- “A congregational Pastor shall serve the whole church as he has opportunity, but his primary responsibility shall be to shepherd his respective congregation. He shall lead and work with his congregation’s Elders to teach, shepherd, and oversee their ministries. He may also be known as the Lead Pastor if there is more than one Pastor in his congregation” (page 14).

- “An Associate or Assistant Pastor’s duties shall be to complement and assist the Senior Pastor and/or congregational Pastors in carrying out the ministry of the Church” (page 14).

8. What types of positions might fall under the new category of “Ministers, Ministry Directors, etc.”?

This could include roles like a Children’s Ministry Director or Music Minister. In addition, if we call a man to a pastoral role who is not yet ordained, we may give him the title of “Minister” instead of “Pastor” until he is ordained.

9. Why are we changing our Statement of Faith to say that Jesus Christ was “conceived” by the Holy Spirit instead of “begotten” by the Holy Spirit (page 3)?

The Bible teaches that the eternal Son of God is begotten of the Father (John 1:14 KJV), and He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the incarnation (Matthew 1:20).

10. Why did we remove the words “by immersion” in the membership requirements (page 7)? Do we still believe in baptism by immersion?

Yes, we still believe in baptism by immersion, and our Statement of Faith still affirms this (page 4). We removed the requirement that members must be baptized “by immersion” since we have, as an exception, baptized individuals using a different mode, such as sprinkling or pouring, particularly if they are unable to be immersed. But, we will still teach immersion as the norm, and we will practice immersion whenever possible.

11. In addition to the major changes, why were some minor changes made?

We loosened unnecessary requirements such as requiring that we offer membership classes every Spring and Fall, that Elder or Executive Board meetings must follow the latest edition of Robert’s Rules of Order (the latest edition is over 600 pages long), that all offerings must be deposited within 5 working days, that the Annual Business Meeting must be held within the first month of the year, etc.

12. Will we revise the Bylaws more in the future?

Yes. We are making necessary revisions right now to clarify our church’s governance and leadership structure, and we plan to make further revisions in the future to give greater clarity, accountability, and efficiency in other areas of the church.