

Bylaw Amendment: Local Church Governing Council (Elders/Church Council)

Section 1: Establishment of a Local Oversight Body

Each local church affiliated with the Vineyard Movement shall establish a Local Governing Council (also referred to as the Board of Elders, Church Council, or similar oversight body), which shall serve as the primary accountability body for the pastoral leadership and all church operations.

Section 2: Purpose and Authority

The purpose of the Council is to:

- Provide spiritual and operational oversight of the church's ministries, finances, and leadership
- Ensure the church remains aligned with Vineyard's values of integrity, accountability, and servant leadership
- Act as a check on the power of paid pastoral staff, including in matters of hiring, discipline, and termination
- Respond to and investigate serious ethical, financial, or abuse-related concerns as necessary

Section 3: Composition

- The Council shall consist of no fewer than five (5) and no more than nine (9) members, appointed by a majority vote of the existing Council or nominated and affirmed through a transparent selection process outlined by the church's governance manual.
- No paid staff members or pastors of the local church may serve on the Council.
- No immediate family members (as defined below) of any current staff or Council members may serve on the Council simultaneously.
- All members must be in good standing with the local church and demonstrate spiritual maturity, integrity, and a commitment to Vineyard values.

Section 4: Definition of Immediate Family

For the purposes of these bylaws, "immediate family" includes:

- Spouse or domestic partner
- Parent, stepparent, or parent-in-law
- Child, stepchild, or child-in-law
- Sibling, step-sibling, or sibling-in-law
- Any person residing in the same household

Section 5: Term and Rotation

- Members shall serve staggered three-year terms, renewable once, with no more than one-third of the Council rotating off in any calendar year.

- A one-year sabbatical is required before a former Council member may be reappointed after serving two full consecutive terms.

Section 6: Meetings and Decision-Making

- The Council shall meet at least quarterly and more frequently as needed, especially in times of transition, crisis, or complaint.
- All meetings must maintain quorum (defined as a majority of current members) to take official action.
- Meeting minutes shall be recorded and made available to the congregation upon request, with the exception of sensitive personnel or disciplinary matters.

Section 7: Conflict of Interest and Recusal

- Any Council member with a potential conflict of interest—including familial, financial, or relational ties—must disclose the conflict and recuse themselves from related discussions and decisions.
- Council members must sign an annual Conflict of Interest disclosure and adhere to the church's Code of Conduct.

Section 8: Role in Accountability of Pastoral Staff

- The Council shall serve as the reviewing body for concerns or allegations involving pastoral staff.
- The Council has authority to initiate an independent investigation, suspend pastoral privileges, or recommend termination in accordance with due process and denominational policies.
- Pastors may provide reports and recommendations to the Council but shall have no vote or governing power over its deliberations.