

PROPOSAL TITLE: Replacement of *The Mount's Constitution and Bylaws*.

WHAT IS THE GENERAL PROPOSAL?

The proposal is to replace the current Constitution and Bylaws with the proposed version.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE BEHIND THE PROPOSAL?

1. Historical Context

- **2016 “Transition” Document.** The current Constitution and Bylaws were adopted during the church’s transition from a congregational governance model to an Elder Plurality system.
- **Incomplete Shift.** While this shift marked a significant step forward, the 2016 document did not fully complete the transition and retains elements of the congregational model.

2. Limitations of the Current Document

- **Need for Enhanced Clarity.** While the current document has served the church well, it lacks the clarity and detail needed to fully support the church’s evolving mission and vision for the future.
- **Not Aligned with Current Practices.** Portions adapted from external sources do not reflect how The Mount operates today or needs to operate in the future.
- **Content Style and Structure.** The document is written in a formal, legalistic style and organized in a way that can feel confusing or somewhat disjointed, making it challenging to effectively address the church’s evolving needs.

3. The Need for a New Framework

- **Growth Challenges.** As The Mount continues to grow as a multi-site church, the current Constitution and Bylaws no longer provide the necessary framework to support this growth.
- **Governance Transition.** A new governing document is necessary to fully establish the Elder Plurality governance model by providing a sound framework for shared leadership, theological alignment, and the adaptability needed for future growth.

4. Vision for the Proposed Rewrite

- **Clear Structure.** The proposed rewrite establishes a clear and practical structure to meet the future needs of our staff and operations.
- **Forward-Looking.** It ensures the governing document remains legally and doctrinally sound while being forward-looking and adaptable.
- **Mission Alignment.** The revision positions The Mount for continued expansion and ministry impact, ensuring effectiveness in fulfilling its mission.

5. Focus of the Revisions

- **Improved Clarity, Consistency, and Readability.** The most significant changes are structural and stylistic, designed to enhance clarity, ensure consistency, and improve overall readability.
- **Substantive Updates for the Future.** Several substantive updates address the church’s governance, leadership structure, practicality of operations, aligning them with The Mount’s multi-site vision and mission to support future growth.

WHAT WILL CHANGE IN THE CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS? (Article designation and order reflect the proposed Constitution and Bylaws)

Preamble. The Preamble has been rewritten and expanded into a clear, Scripture-based statement that establishes the purpose of the Constitution and Bylaws.

Article 1. Name of the Church. This article has been rewritten and expanded to address multisite relationships and establish consistent naming conventions. The church's name, as required by the state of Virginia, is filed with the State Corporation Commission (SCC).

Article 2. Purpose and Posture of the Church. The opening paragraph on the "Purpose" of the church has been rewritten to emphasize its foundation in the Great Commandment and Great Commission. Additionally, three new paragraphs have been added to articulate the church's "Posture."

Article 3. Statement of Beliefs. The former "Confessions of Faith" section has been rewritten and renamed to address concerns identified in the current version, providing greater clarity and alignment with the church's doctrine.

Article 4. Ordinances. This article has been rewritten and expanded to define what an Ordinance is and explain why it is observed. It also clarifies that the ordinances – Baptism and Communion --are not requirements for salvation but are reserved for believers.

Article 5. Covenant Community. The former "Church Covenant" article has been replaced with a new "Covenant Community" article built around a series of "We commit..." statements. This Covenant outlines the commitments that unite the community of believers and serves as a transition into the next article on Membership.

Article 6. Membership. Membership has been introduced as a desire to enter into the Covenant Community defined in the previous article. The key changes include:

- **Privileges and Expectations:** Membership now clearly distinguishes between the "Privileges" and "Expectations" of membership, with the expectations explicitly tied to the commitments outlined in the Covenant Community.
- **Discipline and Dispute Resolution:** Both Discipline and Dispute Resolution have been formally integrated into this article.
- **Active and Inactive Status:** The distinction between "Active" and "Inactive" member statuses has been removed. Instead, specific criteria for terminating membership are provided.
- **Minimum Age for Membership:** The minimum age for membership is now set at 18, with an option for students at least 16 years old to become members with parental consent. This change encourages high school students to take this step, aligning with the goal of integrating them into the life of the church as adult members.

Article 7. Church Governance and Leadership. This article consolidates several sections, unifying information about the Board of Elders/Directors, Lead Pastor, Staff, Pastors, and

Deacons. The updates provide a clearer and more cohesive understanding of the church's leadership structure and governance.

- **Governance – Board of Elders & Board of Directors.** The governance section has been revised to address confusion in the current document, which separates the Board of Directors and the Board of Elders into distinct articles. The updated structure presents these as a unified Board, with clearly defined technical distinctions where necessary. This approach streamlines the governance structure while maintaining clarity around specific roles and responsibilities.
 - **Operational Oversight by the Board and Staff Empowerment.** The relationship between the Board and the staff has been more clearly defined. While the church operates under a "Staff-Led, Elder-Guarded" model, this phrasing has sometimes led to ambiguity. The updated section outlines the specific roles, responsibilities, and interactions between staff and the Board, ensuring alignment with the church's mission and governance structure.
 - **Extend the Elder Term from 3 to 4 Years.** The Elder term has been extended from three to four years. Under the current structure of four lay Elders, the rotational sequence is inconsistent, with a 1-1-2 replacement pattern requiring a 50% turnover every third year. The four-year term allows for a consistent replacement of 25% of lay Elders annually, providing greater stability and continuity in leadership.
- **Lead Pastor.** The responsibilities of the Lead Pastor have been rewritten, and the "Lead Pastor Vacancy" section expanded, incorporating lessons learned during the 2020–21 vacancy. The revised section includes a detailed transition plan to guide the church through a vacancy, ensuring clarity, stability, and effective leadership during such periods. Additionally, a clause has been introduced allowing for the termination of the Lead Pastor by a unanimous affirmative vote of the lay Elders.
- **Staff.** This new section replaces the "Pastoral Staff" section in the current document, which reflected a more Pastor-centric staff structure. Recognizing the evolving needs of a growing, multi-site church, this expanded section provides clear definitions of staff roles and responsibilities.
 - **Lead Pastor as the Administrative Leader.** The Lead Pastor is designated as the administrative leader of the church, responsible for determining the size, scope, and organizational structure of the staff. This ensures that staff development aligns with the church's mission and growth objectives. Oversight of this process now rests with the Board, replacing the role previously held by the Personnel Committee. The Board retains approval authority for major staff changes, ensuring a balanced partnership between pastoral leadership and governance oversight.
 - **Executive Staff.** A new section on Executive Staff highlights their critical role in providing oversight for ministries and operations, ensuring strategic alignment, effective management, and continuity of leadership. Appointments of Executive Directors now require 3/4 Board approval, promoting alignment between the Lead Pastor and the Board on senior leadership decisions. The authority to remove Executive Directors remains solely with the Lead Pastor, preserving leadership autonomy while maintaining accountability.
- **Pastors.** The section on Pastors has been streamlined to clarify the roles and expectations of all individuals recognized as Pastors within the church, whether or not they hold designated "Pastor" staff positions. A new section outlines the unique roles and responsibilities of Campus Pastors, reflecting their essential contributions to the multi-site

model. Additional details, including qualifications and ordination, are addressed in the Article on Ordination.

- **Deacons.** A new section formalizes the Deacon Program, outlining its role in supporting the church's mission by addressing practical needs and fostering a culture of service within the congregation. By codifying the program, the Deacon ministry is established as a vital and well-structured component of the church's leadership framework.

Article 8. Ordination, Commissioning and Licensing. This article outlines the church's established practices regarding Ordination and Commissioning, ensuring clarity and consistency. Ordination is reserved for Pastors and, in some cases, Elders, reflecting their spiritual leadership roles within the church. Elders and Deacons are commissioned to affirm their call and responsibilities in serving the church body. Additionally, the article codifies that all men serving in Pastoral roles must be ordained by the Board through a process known as "Local Ordination." This ensures that Pastors are officially recognized and affirmed in their calling and commitment to the church's mission and doctrine.

Article 9: Financial Policies. This article underwent a substantial rewrite, though it largely retains the same substantive principles as the previous version. One significant addition is a section outlining the policy on gifts, which replaces the vague directive in the current document stating that "the Board must establish and maintain a written Gift Acceptance Policy." By incorporating the gift policy directly into the document, we ensure clear guidance and accountability for the acceptance and management of gifts, aligning with the church's financial stewardship practices.

Article 10. Meetings. This article has been rewritten to clarify the details of Members' Meetings, ensuring they are well-defined and aligned with the church's governance practices. A notable change is the removal of the requirement for an annual Members' Meeting, as final budget approval and Elder appointments are now the responsibility of the Board. Additionally, the article includes a section on Sunday Worship, emphasizing its central role in the life of the church as a time for worship, teaching, and community gathering.

Article 11. Supplemental Documents. This section replaces the former Article IX and establishes the necessity of internal documents that provide clear and detailed instructions tailored to the church's diverse functions and roles. These documents may include handbooks, operating procedures, and guidelines to ensure consistency and accountability across all areas of ministry and operations. The Elders will maintain comprehensive documents for the Board and the Deacons, while each Executive Director will oversee documents detailing procedures, guidelines, and standards for church employees and ministry volunteers within their respective areas.

Article 12. Associations. This article provides flexibility in the organizations with which the church affiliates, reaffirming its core identity as a Southern Baptist church. It allows for partnerships that align with the church's mission and values while maintaining the freedom to adapt affiliations as necessary to best serve the church and its ministry goals.

Article 13. Indemnification. This article has been rewritten with clearly defined sections to improve readability and understanding. The updated structure provides a straightforward explanation of the church's indemnification policies, ensuring that members, leaders, and staff understand their protections and responsibilities under the church's governance.

Article 14. Amendments. This article has been rewritten for clarity and organization, without substantive changes. The revised version specifies that amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws require a three-fourths (3/4) majority vote of the Members for approval, ensuring broad agreement within the congregation for any changes.