

Top 12 Governance Proposal Questions

1. The governance proposals largely clarify and develop concepts related to church membership. How is membership vital to the Christian life?

The local church is to Christians as water is to fish. Created and sustained by God's Spirit, the church is the environment God designed for each of us to live the Christian life well. Take a few moments to reread the Membership Statement of Fellowship with that in mind (see [page 4](#) of the proposals). As Ephesians 3 says, it is through the church that the wisdom of God is known. What a beautiful life God calls us to - *together!*

2. What prompted the need for the proposals?

Church on Mill's last revision to the Bylaws occurred in 2015 when members responded to the Bible's teachings by adopting a congregationally-governed, elder-led, and deacon-served structure. This period of time was captured by the phrase "God's Church, God's Way." As the commitment of membership gradually became more meaningful, and biblical passages on instruction and discipline began to be applied to church life, it became clear another revision would aid in providing simplicity, clarity, and unity to our practices as a congregation.

3. Who developed the proposals?

During the Members Meeting in October of 2018, the Elders asked for volunteers who would work together on proposed revisions. Two members responded. These members seeded a team that spent much of 2019 carefully considering [improvements](#) to the Constitution and Bylaws of Church on Mill. That team included Scott Wakefield, Katie Turner, Mike Bond, Ruth Shumate, and Pastor Chuck. Once the team's work was complete, the proposals then went to the Elders, who later presented them to both the Deacons and Gospel Community Leaders prior to bringing them to the entire church for prayerful consideration.

4. Have any revisions to the proposals been made?

Two changes were made to the proposals since the Members Meeting on October 20, 2019. First, in Article II., Section 1., A. of the Bylaws proposal, the phrase "(normally by immersion)" was added to clarify Church on Mill's continued commitment to this mode of baptism. Second, in Article II., Section 1., B. of the Bylaws proposal, the phrase "at a regular or special meeting of the members" has been simplified to "at a members meeting." These changes are reflected in the final proposal to be voted on during the January 26, 2020 Members Meeting.

5. If the changes are adopted during the Members Meeting on January 26th, all members will be asked to affirm the Membership Statement of Faith and the Membership Statement of Fellowship. What does "affirm" mean?

Since these statements summarize what we believe and how we commit to live together as a church, it is important to explicitly affirm them. "Affirm" means one believes, will uphold and support, and holds no settled convictions against the content of the Membership Statement of Faith and the Membership Statement of Fellowship. To say that more simply, affirm means one understands these statements to be accurate expressions of what the Bible teaches. Affirm does not mean someone must have mastered each theological concept: we all will continue to grow together. As we grow, affirmation will help sustain unity around shared beliefs and

commitments. Affirmation will also set an example to others who may consider joining in the future, providing clarity and simplicity about our life in Christ as a church.

6. What happens if a current member chooses not to affirm the Membership Statement of Faith and Membership Statement of Fellowship?

If the revisions are adopted in the Members Meeting on January 26th, an important transition period will begin. Per the Bylaws, all members will need to give affirmation. This will provide a meaningful way to renew and remind us of our commitment to God and each other as Church on Mill. Any member who does not affirm the statements during the January 26th Members Meeting will have until mid-May to do so. To give ample time for any existing members who may be hesitant or are simply not yet ready to affirm, the transition will last nearly four months (Jan 26 - May 17, 2020). Since these statements form the essence of what it means to commit to Church on Mill, any current member who chooses not to give affirmation will be announced at the May 17th Members Meetings as a former member. The elders will seek to shepherd each member with tender care through this four-month transition period.

7. What about children and youth?

As stated in the proposed bylaws, church membership is for anyone who has made a confession of faith in Christ, gives evidence of regeneration, has been baptized after his or her confession of faith, and will affirm the Membership Statement of Faith and the Membership Statement of Fellowship. God can and does save children and youth. When, by God's grace, a young person meets these important expectations and has parental consent, membership can and ought to be embraced. Of course, children and youth will have a different level of maturity and availability than many adults, but there is no better place to grow than among brothers and sisters in Christ.

8. The proposed Bylaws seem to speak more explicitly to issues of instruction and discipline than our existing Bylaws. How is such instruction and discipline loving?

Consider this both personally and corporately. Personally, until Jesus returns, each of us will perpetually be in need of some form of instruction or discipline. Because God's work of transformation in each of our lives is not yet complete, we need each other's help to continue to mature in the Lord Jesus Christ. Each word of instruction and each act of discipline are expressions of godly love. Corporately, God entrusts the responsibility for the membership of the church to the members of the church (see Matthew 16 and 18). To act together to receive fellow Christians into the church and, if ever necessary, to exclude people who claim Christ but are living in outward, serious, and unrepentant sin from the church is to follow what God clearly commands. Loving God and each other always includes obeying God (1 John 5:2-3).

9. Why do the proposed Bylaws state that a member not subject to church discipline may voluntarily resign his or her membership (Article II, Section 3, A. 3.)?

There are at least four reasons. First, Church on Mill is not the only local church. A member may choose to join another church without unnecessary limitation. Second, thankfully, the Constitution of the United States provides the right to assemble and disassemble freely and without encumbrance. Including this statement in the Bylaws makes this important freedom explicit. While leaving should never be an attempt to escape the loving, protective discipline that God has entrusted to the church for the good of his people, choosing to move on from Church on Mill with the intent to join another church is not inappropriate. Third, this statement is in many like-minded church bylaws and is recommended by those who specialize in church

governing documents. Finally, should the elders or members ever, sadly, become abusive, controlling, or heretical, this provision provides protection for a member to resign and join elsewhere in good conscience, without fear of disobeying God's design for his church.

10. What if I have additional questions about the proposed revisions?

Hopefully you have already engaged in one or more of the many formal and informal opportunities provided since the proposals were disseminated last October, but even if not, questions and comments are greatly desired. For remaining formal opportunities, please refer to question 12. For private conversations, please simply reach out to one of your Elders directly (Randy Hagler, Tad Skinner, Chuck Newkirk, and Todd Diehl).

11. What should I read or listen to in order to learn more about the Bible's teachings that influenced the proposed revisions?

First, start with the Bible itself (Matthew 16:13-19, Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1-5, Ephesians 4, and Titus 3:10-11 are especially helpful on the topics of membership, instruction, and discipline). Second, listen carefully to this [sermon series](#) on the church from 2018. These sermons cover the theology driving all of the revisions. Third, check out one or more of the following books (listed from shortest to longest): Joe Thorn, *The Character of the Church*; Thom Rainer, *I Am a Church Member*; Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership and Church Discipline*; Thabiti Anyabwile, *The Life of God in the Soul of the Church*; Mark Dever, *The Church*; Robert Cheong, *God Redeeming His Bride*; Gregg Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*; Mark Dever ed., *Polity*; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*.

12. What are the remaining steps in the process?

- a. Final Version of Proposals and FAQ's Distributed to All Members (Jan 12)
- b. Q&A Discussion Forum (Jan 12, 3:00-4:30pm)
- c. Monday Meeting (Jan 13, 6:00-8:00pm)
- d. Monday Meeting (Jan 20, 6:00-8:00pm)
- e. Two Votes in Members Meeting – Bylaws Revisions and Membership Statement of Fellowship Added to the Church Constitution (Jan 26, 6:00pm)
- f. *If Adopted* – Beginning of Transitional Period: Existing Members Affirm Membership Statement of Faith and Membership Statement of Fellowship (Jan 26 - May 16)
- g. *If Adopted* – Conclusion of Transitional Period: Any Lack of Affirmation from Existing Members will be Recognized in Members Meeting as a Resignation of Membership (May 17, 6:00pm)