

Constitution Q&A

Dear Falling Waters family, as we establish our church's independence, the Elders have compiled this document to provide answers to some possible questions about the church's new Constitution and Bylaws. We hope this resource fosters understanding and unity as we move forward together to advance His kingdom. The document is far from comprehensive. So, if there are any questions that are unaddressed or answers that are unclear, we are happy to discuss those with you. May the Lord lead us in these final steps, just as He has each step of the way!

Developing the Constitution and Bylaws

1. What was the process the Elders went through to develop the Constitution and Bylaws?

As a church planted by Countryside Bible Church, Pastors Matt and Wally, and the other Elders of Countryside went through a detailed and prayerful process over the past two years to develop these founding documents. The process included gathering examples from like-minded churches, examining Scripture, and engaging in much prayerful discussion. We hope, trust, and pray that what has resulted from that process is a set of biblically sound documents that will help guide and preserve the gospel witness and governance of our church for generations to come.

Elder Leadership and Accountability

2. What does it mean that the church is Elder-led?

In an Elder-led church, the members of the congregation entrust the spiritual and practical oversight of the church to a group of qualified men known as Elders (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). The Elders are responsible for the shepherding, teaching, and oversight of the church in accordance with Scripture. However, this leadership is not independent of the Membership; members play an extremely important role.

3. How are Elders held accountable?

Elders are accountable to God for how they lead the church (Hebrews 13:17). They are also accountable to each other and to the Membership (1 Tim. 5:19). If an Elder disqualifies himself or fails to lead in accordance with Scripture, the Membership has the biblical right and responsibility to remove him from office. This ensures that no Elder leads without accountability and that the church is protected from ungodly leadership.

Membership Voting and Participation

4. If the Elders are entrusted to oversee the ministry, what role does voting play?

Depending on church tradition, congregations vary widely in what they hold formal Membership votes for. In developing the Constitution for Falling Waters, careful efforts were made to align the structure and practice of the church to the examples and principles of the New Testament. You'll note in the Constitution and Bylaws that the Membership will vote in three key areas:

1. Affirming or removing Elders: Members will vote to affirm men to the office of Elder or, if necessary, vote to remove an Elder who has disqualified himself (1 Tim. 5:19-20). This is among the highest and most important aspects of the Membership's corporate action.

2. Church discipline: When the church must take formal steps in church discipline, the Membership will be involved in voting in accordance with biblical practice (Matthew 18:15-17; Titus 3:10-11; 1 Corinthians 5:13; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8). This also is among the most sober and significant aspects of the Membership's corporate action.
3. Certain financial decisions:
 1. Any major real estate or property purchases over the financial threshold set in the Bylaws, the Membership will vote to ensure transparency and unity.
 2. Any un-budgeted costs in excess of the Constitutional limit would require a Membership vote of approval.
 3. The Membership will vote to approve the member(s) at large for the Finance Team that works with the Elders in developing the budget and tracking the church's finances.

5. Why won't the Membership vote on the annual budget?

While we believe input and transparency in financial matters are of great importance (2 Cor. 8:16-24), we also believe that the biblical responsibility for the church's finances rests with the Elders, as they are called to be "stewards" of the household of God (Titus 1:7). The New Testament term "steward" implies responsibility for both spiritual and financial oversight. The same word is used in Luke 16:1 as "manager" and Romans 16:23 for the "city treasurer." By focusing Membership votes on precedents and principles clearly present in Scripture, our aim is to ensure that leadership is exercised biblically along with the wise transparency and accountability. This is why the Elders work in collaboration with the Finance Team to ensure wise and prayerful financial planning. To give the Membership further voice in that process, they will vote to approve the member(s) at large on the Finance Team (See 1 Cor. 8:16-24).

6. How will the budget be shared and feedback given if the Membership doesn't vote on it?

We believe in the importance of every part of the body, as 1 Corinthians 12:21 reminds us: "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you.'" Though the Membership will not formally vote on the budget, the Elders are committed to transparency and collaboration. The Bylaws therefore stipulate that the Elders annually present the previous year's expenses and the upcoming annual budget to the Membership four weeks prior to the annual meeting. This gives the Members time to carefully review and consider the details and to ask questions and offer feedback in conversation with the Elders and Finance Team.

7. Are we going to have a vote to approve the Constitution and Bylaws?

While there will not be a formal vote, we are committed to a process that includes open discussion. To facilitate this, we'll be hosting round table discussions after the morning service on November 17 and 24 to answer questions and engage in dialogue. The Elders are also available to anyone individually as needed. Individual affirmation of the Constitution and Bylaws will come through transferring of membership to the new church. The process for this will be shared at our Membership meeting on the evening of November 24.

Financial Transparency and the Finance Team

8. What is the role of the Finance Team?

The Finance Team is empowered to represent and serve the broader congregation and collaborate with the Elders on financial management. This team provides a balance of perspectives and expertise, ensuring that the budget is sound and reflective of the church's needs and mission. The team also assists in evaluating pastoral pay to maintain fairness and accountability.

9. What if I have future questions or concerns about financial expenditures?

Our governing documents allow for any member in good standing to request a summary of church expenses for review at any time. In the event of disagreements or differing views, we aim to handle them through prayer, open communication, and biblical principles of unity and love (Ephesians 4:2-3).

Baptism and Membership Requirements

10. Why is baptism by immersion required for membership?

Depending on your church tradition, baptism may or may not have been required for membership. While baptism is not required to be a Christian, we believe that requiring believer's baptism by immersion for church membership aligns with the New Testament model of the early church. Baptism by immersion is presented as the first step of obedience following conversion, symbolizing one's identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4). In Acts, those who believed the gospel were baptized and then formally added to the church (Acts 2:41, 8:12, 10:47-48, 16:30-33), establishing a clear pattern of baptism before formal church inclusion. Furthermore, Jesus Himself was baptized by immersion (Matthew 3:16), and He commanded His disciples to baptize ALL new believers as part of their commission (Matthew 28:19), indicating the importance of this public profession of faith.

11. I was not baptized but I'm already a member under the Countryside Constitution.

What do I do?

We encourage every true Christian to be baptized in obedience to our Lord. Today is always the right day to obey His command! However, those who are members under the Countryside Constitution will not be required to get baptized in order to transfer membership to Falling Waters.