

2026 Grove Bylaw Draft - Summary of Changes

1. Membership & Voting

- **Voting Rules:** Voting is still limited to active members who are 16 or older. The new text clearly states that **no absentee or proxy voting** is allowed.
- **General Wording:** Terminology is updated (e.g., using "people" instead of "persons"), but actual membership qualifications and processes remain the same.

2. Senior Pastor Search

- **Search Team Selection:** Clarified that the Deacon Body can propose a candidate to the church or establish a Pastor Search Team.
- **Voting Process:** The overall hiring process (one candidate at a time, 75% vote required) stays the same with clearer, tighter language.

3. Associate Pastors & Staff

- **Clearer Roles:** Associate Pastors and Ministerial Staff are now grouped together into a clear framework defining their specific ministry roles.
- **Hiring & Oversight:** Hiring procedures now mirror the Senior Pastor's process (requires a 75% vote), and all staff explicitly report to the Senior Pastor.

4. Deacon Ministry Structure

- **Definition:** Deacons are now defined by their ongoing qualifications rather than just their term of office.
- **Terms:** Shifted from 1-year terms on a fixed calendar to **3-year terms** starting upon election, with options for re-affirmation.
- **Selection:** Standardized into a clear 4-step process: Deacons recommend, members nominate, Deacons interview, and the church votes.
- **Officers & Limits:** Reduced officers to just **Chairman** and **Secretary**, adding a term limit of **no more than 2 consecutive years** in the same role.

5. Deacon Duties & Discipline

- **Job Descriptions:** Added formal job descriptions for the Deacon Chairman and Secretary.

- **Discipline:** Clarified that deacons who become disqualified can be removed if they refuse to resign. Added a conflict-of-interest rule if the issue involves the Chairman.

6. Teams & Committees

- **Ministry Teams:** Kept the same structure with slightly updated standardized language.
- **Committees Streamlined:** Identified the actual standing committees: *Service, Personnel, Buildings & Grounds, Stewardship, and Trustees*. Expanded older policies into broader guidelines.

7. Church Conferences & Communication

- **Modernized Notices:** Meeting notices can now be sent via **electronic channels** (email, text, app, social media) or announced at two consecutive services.
- **Leadership & Rules:** General rules for who leads meetings, church clerk duties, and meeting minimums (quorum) remain unchanged.

8. Finances & Records

- **Check Signers:** Checks can now only be signed by the **Church Treasurer or a designated Trustee** (removing general committee signers).
- **Giving Records:** Updated wording around routine annual giving statements and fixed minor typos.

9. Marriage & Sexuality Policy

- **New Addition:** Added an explicit section defining marriage as between one man and one woman. It restricts church facilities and pastoral staff to ceremonies that align with this statement.
- **Ordinances:** Standardized the wording for Baptism and the Lord's Supper (offered at least 4 times per year).