

Guide Structure

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Governance and Documentation Levels

Overview of Governance and Documentation Levels

Our church operates with a multi-layered governance system that ensures clarity, accountability, and consistency in how our community is organized and managed. This system reflects the various levels of decision-making and responsibility within the church, providing a structured yet flexible framework for how we operate. Each layer plays a distinct role in guiding our actions and aligning them with our shared values and mission.

Layer	Authority	Domain	Accountability
Bylaws	Congregation vote	Foundational governance structure and core principles	Entire congregation
Policy	Board of Trustees	Mission, vision, executive boundaries, board process	Board to the congregation, Board to the bylaws.
Organizational Guidance	Executive-Team or designated staff lead	Ministry-wide strategic interpretations of policy	Executive-Team to the Board
Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)	Staff or designated teams	Day-to-day operational consistency and implementation	Staff to Executive-Team
How To	Staff or designated teams	Practical, congregant-facing instructions for specific tasks	Staff to congregants and ministries they support

Bylaws

Purpose: The Bylaws are the foundational governing documents of our church. They establish the core principles and structures that define how our community is organized and how it operates.

Authority: The Bylaws are set and can only be amended by a vote of the entire congregation, ensuring that the most fundamental rules and principles are reflective of the collective will of the community.

Policy

Purpose: Board policies define the **mission-driven boundaries and priorities** within which the church operates. Rooted in policy based governance as directed by Foothills bylaws, these policies guide both the **Ministry** and the **Board** by articulating:

- **Vision/Ends:** The outcomes the church exists to achieve—what difference we seek to make, for whom, and at what cost.
- **Executive Directions:** Requirements for the execution of ministry
- **Executive Limitations:** Boundaries around the methods and means that staff may not use in pursuit of those Ends.
- **Board Process:** How the Board governs itself to act with integrity, accountability, and vision.

These policies live in the **Board of Trustees Policy Book** and form the operational between the Board and the Executive-Team.

Authority: Policies are established by the Board of Trustees through a voting process, reflecting the board's role in providing strategic oversight and ensuring that the church operates in a manner consistent with its mission and values.

Organizational Guidance

Authority: Executive-Team , or designated staff lead

Purpose: Organizational Guidance provides ministry-wide frameworks that interpret and operationalize board-level policy. More flexible than policy and more strategic than procedures, these documents offer consistent direction for how staff and ministries live out policies across varied contexts.

They answer:

- *What does this policy mean in practice? I.e. How is the executive team interpreting the board policy?*
- *How do we stay aligned as we adapt and evolve?*

[Template for Organizational Guidance.](#)

A Handbook is a curated collection of Organizational Guidances focused on a specific area of church life or ministry. While each individual guidance document may stand on its own, grouping them into a handbook provides clarity, cohesion, and ease of reference for teams and ministries navigating complex or evolving domains.

Standard Operating Procedures

Purpose: Procedures are practical, step-by-step instructions that help staff to enact the Organizational Guidance and daily operations. They are designed to ensure that specific tasks and processes are carried out effectively and consistently across the church.

Authority: Developed and maintained by staff or designated teams.

How To

Purpose: How To guides are practical, congregant-facing step-by-step instructions to enacting specific tasks and actions from the perspective of someone outside the system. These documents are written in an accessible manner for the audience that is expected to use them.

Authority: Developed and maintained by staff or designated teams, these guides provide the necessary detail to support the procedures, ensuring that actions are completed in alignment with church policies and values.

Shelves	Books
1. Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bylaws• Board Policy• Board Procedure<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Board Handbook• Governance Archive
2. Organizational Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personnel / Employee• Financial• Membership• Groups & Teams• Care & Support• Children and Youth• Database and Records• Building and• Facilities• Church Events• Communication• Legal

Shelves	Books
3. Standard Operating Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worship • Rites of Passage • Metrics • Event Reservations and Promotion • Caring • Church Center • Shared Ministry Covenanting
4. How To's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using Foothills Technology
Specific Use Case Shelves (Ie. Group Leaders)	

Documentation Templates

Organizational Guidance Template

A concise and clear title that stands alone and makes sense out of context.

1. Purpose

Why this guidance exists.

State the spirit of the guidance — what it seeks to clarify, support, or achieve. Be values-forward. Highlight how it aligns with our mission, values, or policies.

2. Organizational Guidance

The full content of the guidance.

- Use clear, actionable language.
 - If guidance involves steps or expectations, list them in bullet or numbered format.
 - If external or internal documents are referenced, link them directly.
 - If clarification or definitions are needed, include them in-line or link to a glossary.
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3. Related Content

Bylaws and Policies

This guidance interprets or implements the following:

- [Bylaw Article X - Membership Definition](#)
- [Board Policy - Safety and Inclusion](#)

Organizational Guidances & SOPs

This guidance is related to or informs the following documents:

- [Organizational Guidance - Behavior Covenants](#)
- [SOP - Incident Response Protocol](#)

Previous Version [Date]
Content of Previous Version of Guidance