

2025 Bylaws FAQ

Revised 8/10/25

Call to Action:

1. **What do I need to do?** Church Bylaws must be approved by our Covenant Partners to be enacted. The Bylaws will be presented for vote at our Annual Congregation Meeting on September 21, 2025. Voting will occur by electronic or paper options.

Definitions:

2. **What is ECO?** Menlo Church belongs to ECO: The Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. The denomination's beliefs are captured in the [Essential Tenets](#) that affirm the Trinity and the incarnation of Christ. The denomination believes that the Church is a living organism that needs life-giving resources to help it grow, thrive and multiply. It is committed to cultivating a healthy, diverse, resource-rich ecosystem where pastors and congregations can flourish.
3. **What is Session?** The Session is the governing body of Menlo Church, composed of Elders who are elected by the congregation's Covenant Partners (members). Elders are volunteers who serve 4-year terms and they oversee the governance and spiritual life of the church.
4. **Who are Covenant Partners?** Covenant Partners (members) are congregants who have been baptized, have professed their faith in Jesus Christ, and who actively pledge to participate in the life of Menlo Church by praying, serving and financially supporting its mission and ministry. They are eligible to vote on congregational matters.

If you are unsure about your partnership (membership) status, or you would like to take the next steps toward becoming a Covenant Partner, please contact your campus pastor.

5. **What is the Annual Congregation Meeting (ACM)?** It is a yearly gathering of church members to conduct the business of the church.
6. **What are Bylaws?** They are a set of internal rules and guidelines that govern a church's operations, structure, and practices.
7. **What is the purpose of the Bylaws?** Bylaws are created to guide and control the operation, management and oversight of an organization. Bylaws also serve as "guard rails" that designate rights and responsibilities of Elders, Staff and Covenant Partners (members). They are supplemented by more detailed policies and procedures that guide ministry and operations.

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8. **What is the difference between an Associate Pastor and an Assistant Pastor, according to ECO?** Associate Pastors and Assistant Pastors are both members of the presbytery with voice and vote, and the main difference between them has to do with how they are called and in what capacity they serve the church.

- Associate Pastors are called by vote of the congregation and also have voice and vote on Session.
- Assistant Pastors are called by the lead pastor and Session, and are not voting members of Session.

Other than the lead pastor, Phil, Menlo Church only calls Assistant Pastors.

Background Information:

9. **Why are the Bylaws being updated?**

- a. To ensure that we are compliant with current CA non-profit law, and with ECO's governing documents
- b. To remove dated information. The current Bylaws were written when we were joining the ECO denomination in 2014. Some of the language pertains only to the transition from one denomination to another.
- c. To revise the Bylaws to focus on an enduring set of governing rules which outline its structure, decision making principles, and to ensure order and clarity
- d. To move appropriate detail of the policies and procedures to other documents maintained by the Session and Staff.

10. **Who was involved in the review and updating of the Bylaws?** In accordance with our current Bylaws approved in 2014, in 2023 the Session appointed a Bylaws Advisory Committee composed of Elders and Covenant Partners (members) and requested that they review the Bylaws and recommend modifications to best support the structure and ministry of Menlo Church.

The Committee's input was evaluated by the Session and the process continued by hiring an attorney who focuses on Church and California non-profit law. In addition, Session's Governance Committee consulted with ECO personnel to ensure that our changes were in alignment with our denomination.

Highlights of Changes:

11. **Where can I read the proposed 2025 Bylaws:** The proposed Bylaws can be found [HERE](#)

12. **What are the key changes? The changes are summarized as:**

- a. Ensuring compliance with current CA non-profit law and with ECO governing documents

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- b. Focusing on an enduring set of governing rules, supported by Session & staff policies
- c. Aligning with the multi-site structure & plan for emergencies

13. **Where can I find a summary of the changes?**

For a higher level summary of changes refer to: [HERE](#)

For further detail by Bylaw Article & Section refer to : [HERE](#)

14. **What was deleted from the 2014 Bylaws and not included in the proposed Bylaws?** Please refer to the summary documents listed in the previous question.

Here are some examples of items not included in the proposed new Bylaws:

The 2014 Bylaws provide detail about Session Committee structure and membership. In practice each of the committees has developed a charter that describes its roles and responsibilities. The charters are reviewed and updated periodically as needed to remain aligned with current needs, and they are approved by Session.

References to Deacons and Ministry Elders have been removed. Congregational care at one time was provided by Deacons, however this now occurs in life groups and other ministry groups, as well as through pastoral staff. Menlo Church does not have Ministry Elders.

The 2014 Bylaws provide details concerning the role of Corporate Officers, President, Chief Financial Officer and Secretary, The proposed new Bylaws state the need for the officers, but their roles are not described in detail.

The 2014 Bylaws include provisions that are now addressed through policies. Examples are Section 11.4, Conflicts of Interest and Related-Party Transactions and Section 13.3 Gifts.

15. When ECO, our denomination, changes its documents, does Menlo Church have a say? Yes, Menlo Church has strong representation in our denomination and our local presbytery and individuals from Menlo are actively involved. ECO is focused on guiding the theology of the church, not so much providing guidance on the governance and operation of churches. The congregations that comprise our denomination are united in the core beliefs and theological positions, but vary widely in the expressions of church, size, and philosophies on operations. Our Bylaws focus on the governance and operation of the local church while linking back to ECO for our theological unity with our denomination.

16. When/how will we vote on these changes? The updated Bylaws will be taken to a vote by Covenant Partners in September 2025 with electronic or paper vote options.

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17. **Does a “yes” vote mean I accept all revisions?** Yes.

18. **When will the changes take effect?** If Covenant Partners approve the 2025 Bylaws, the changes will go into effect after the votes have been tabulated.

Contacts:

19. **If I have questions, who can I contact?** The email for Menlo Church’s Governance Committee is Governance@menlo.church

20. **How do I contact the Session Clerk?** The email to contact the clerk is: Sessionclerk@menlo.church