



# Brandywine Valley Church: Summary of Bylaw Updates

As our church continues to grow in health and mission, we want to keep our congregation clearly informed about the steps we are taking to strengthen the leadership, accountability, and clarity of our ministry structure.

These new Bylaws were written after much prayer, study of Scripture, evaluation of best practices among healthy churches, and review by ministry leaders and legal counsel. The goal is **to help Brandywine stay faithful to Scripture and positioned for fruitful ministry for decades to come.** Below is a summary of the primary proposed changes to the Bylaws and why they strengthen our church.

## 1. A Biblical and Clear Leadership Structure

The new Bylaws clearly articulate our leadership model as:  
**Elder-led, Deacon-served, Congregationally-governed, and Jesus-ruled.**

This strengthens our church by:

- Providing biblical clarity on the role of spiritual shepherding and doctrine.
- Clarifying operational areas and ministry support.
- Keeping the congregation firmly in its governing role on major decisions.

**Former Bylaws:** The Board of Deacons carried both spiritual and operational governance.

**New Bylaws:** A Board of Elders, composed of lay and pastoral representation, would be the highest governing board. Elders would be responsible for the spiritual leadership of the congregation including direction, doctrine, teaching, and congregational care.

## 2. A Clarified Ministry and Support Role for Deacons

**Former Bylaws:** The Board of Deacons operated as the highest governing board.

**New Bylaws:** Deacons:

- Serve under the leadership of the Elders.
- Support the practical, operational, and ministry-oriented needs of the church.
- Oversee various committees and ministry teams.

This allows Elders to focus on shepherding, teaching, prayer, and spiritual oversight—while Deacons continue to faithfully serve the church in tangible and strategic ways.

**Nate Keeler**  
*Lead Pastor*

**Todd Johnson**  
*Executive Pastor*

**Matthew McNutt**  
*Student Pastor*

**Kristi Pullig**  
*Director of Children's Ministries*

**Hayes Parnell**  
*Worship Arts Pastor*

### 3. Opening the Board of Deacons to Both Men and Women

One very meaningful change is that the Board of Deacons is no longer limited to men. We believe this reflects a more biblical understanding of the role of women serving as Deacons (see [Elders and Deacons: Brandywine Position Paper](#))

What this means practically:

- Godly, qualified women would serve alongside godly, qualified men as Deacons.
- The biblical office of Elder would remain male according to our understanding of Scripture, but the office of Deacon would be open to gifted men and women who meet the biblical qualifications.
- This better reflects the breadth of spiritual gifts in our body and allows more people to actively participate in servant leadership.

This allows official leadership recognition of women who have already been serving in significant ways. Now their service would also be expressed in the official role of Deacon.

### 4. Restructured and Clearer Processes for Hiring and Accountability of the Lead Pastor

**Former Bylaws:** The **Board of Deacons** carried primary responsibility for:

- Approving and removing pastoral hires and providing pastoral accountability.
- Search committees were formed under Deacon leadership.
- The congregation retained the authority to call or remove the Lead Pastor, but much of the process depended on Deacon action and interpretation.

While this structure worked, it placed **both spiritual oversight and operational authority** within a single board.

**New Bylaws:** The Board of Elders would carry primary responsibility for:

- Approving and removing pastoral hires and providing pastoral accountability.
- **Search committees** are intentionally formed with representation from Elders, Deacons, and church members.
- The congregation continues to have the final vote in calling or removing a Lead Pastor.
- Clearer processes are outlined for resignation, review, and removal, reducing confusion during difficult or sensitive moments.

This provides greater fairness, transparency, and protection for both the pastors and the church.

## **5. Simplified Structure of Permanent Committees**

**Former Bylaws:** Four Permanent Committees: Nominating, Finance, Personnel, and Property Committees

**New Bylaws:** Two Permanent Committees: Nominating and Finance Committees, which would remain unchanged in their purpose and roles.

### **What happened to the Personnel and Property Committees?**

Their responsibilities were not eliminated—they will be redirected under the leadership and oversight of the Deacons, staff, and ministry teams.

This helps us:

- Reduce redundancy.
- Provide clearer reporting lines.
- Avoid overlapping responsibilities.
- Keep leadership efficient and effective.

## **6. Clearer Roles and Better Alignment of Ministries and Committees**

The **new Bylaws** clarify and strengthen the oversight of:

- Financial stewardship and budgeting.
- Property and facility care.
- Benevolence assistance.
- Preschool ministry and other ministry teams.
- Temporary committees and ministry initiatives.

These responsibilities would sit with the Deacons under the leadership of the Elders. The Nominating Committee would continue to ensure trustworthy and qualified leadership for Elders, Deacons, and Permanent Committees. This structure maintains accountability and flexibility for ministry.

## **7. The Congregation Maintains its Biblical Authority for Governance**

Under the **new Bylaws** congregation continues to:

- Affirm Elders, Deacons, and Committee Members.
- Affirm and/or remove the Lead Pastor.
- Approve major financial decisions and budgets.

These changes do not reduce congregational influence—they seek to strengthen it through clarity and process.

## **Why These Changes Matter**

We believe these changes will make us more effective in fulfilling our mission: **To introduce people to Jesus Christ and help them follow him.**

The **new Bylaws** help us:

- Follow Scripture more closely.
- Strengthen accountability and transparency.
- Empower more leaders to serve.
- Remove confusion and overlap.
- Support long-term health and mission.

These changes are proposed with great care, input, prayer, and a desire to serve you well. If you have questions or want to learn more about these updates, please reach out to Pastor Nate or a member of the Board of Deacons. We're thankful for your partnership in the gospel and excited for the future God has for Brandywine Valley Church!

“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.” – Psalm 127:1