

09 – Decision-Making Framework

Decision thresholds, authority by threshold, escalation exceptions — shared with staff and trustees so routine decisions are made at the right level.

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Overview: Decision-Making Framework

Status

Implementation status: Approved by Servants Council

Date: 2026-05-30

What's in this book

- [Decision-Making Framework — April 2026](#) — the full document. Purpose, guiding principles, authority map, four domain threshold tables (financial / personnel / ministry / facility), eight escalation triggers, and day-to-day use.
- [Quick Reference Card — April 2026](#) — one-page companion for staff, board members, and trustees. The four-question check, financial tiers, domain summaries, and escalation triggers on one screen.
- **Overview** (this page) — status, principle, Mayflower's practice, references, open questions.

Principle (from Streamline)

Lukaszewski's principle: decisions should be made at the lowest appropriate level, with clear thresholds that escalate to boards only when warranted. Clarity about who decides what removes bottlenecks and prevents overreach. At Mayflower, this is shaped further by our bylaws' plural-governance commitments — the boards of Elders, Deacons, Trustees, and Finance each carry real authority within their domain, coordinated by the Servants Council.

Mayflower's Current Practice

The Framework document above is Mayflower’s practice as of April 2026. It does not create new authority: every line either restates a bylaw provision or proposes a working policy (marked **PROPOSED**) for the Servants Council to adopt under its coordinating authority. Where the framework conflicts with the bylaws, the bylaws govern. The Servants Council reviews the framework annually at its January meeting and whenever any bylaw is amended.

Governance & Document References

- Mayflower Constitution and Bylaws (Article II.A and II.B)
- Streamline: Healthy Church Systems — Lukaszewski (ch. 6–8, 10–13)
- The Guide to Healthy Church Operations — Ministry Brands
- Non-Pastoral Staff Hiring SOP (April 2026) — the hiring process referenced in tier P-3
- Event Evaluation Process and Event Debrief Template — supporting tiers M-2 and M-3

Open Questions

- Should tier F-2 (‘\$250–1,500’) require two signatures at a lower threshold than \$750? Board chairs to weigh in at the May Servants Council.
- Who holds the “house decision” when more than one board is equally affected and no obvious lead emerges (M-5 cross-board initiatives)? The framework defaults to Servants Council; that may need revisiting after a year of practice.
- Does the quick-card version need a printed copy in each board’s meeting binder? Recommended yes; confirm at May Servants Council.

Page template: Principle + Mayflower Practice. Part of the Operations Plan, adapted from Michael Lukaszewski’s Streamline: How To Create Healthy Church Systems.

Decision-Making Framework

— April 2026

Thresholds, authority, and escalation for staff, board members, and trustees. Drafted April 2026. Aligned to the Mayflower Constitution and Bylaws, Streamline: Healthy Church Systems, and The Guide to Healthy Church Operations.

“ **Status:** Draft v1.0 — April 2026. Bylaw provisions are in force as of March 15, 2026. Items marked **PROPOSED** are brought to the Servants Council for adoption under its coordinating authority. Next scheduled review: January 2027.

1. Purpose and Scope

This framework tells every staff member, board member, and trustee at Mayflower Church where a decision belongs — and where it does not. Its aim is simple: routine decisions should be made quickly at the right level, and weightier decisions should reach the people the bylaws and our shepherding convictions name. When the framework is followed, the congregation is served well, leaders are protected from carrying weight they should not carry, and the Servants Council spends its time on genuinely shared questions rather than on matters that belong to a single board or role.

The framework does not create new authority. Every line either (a) restates an authority already found in the Mayflower Constitution and Bylaws, or (b) proposes a working policy that the Servants Council may adopt under its authority to coordinate the church’s ministries. Proposed policy lines are marked **PROPOSED**. Where this framework conflicts with the bylaws, the bylaws govern.

2. Guiding Principles

Five principles hold the framework together. Each is drawn from Scripture, our bylaws, or the two operations guides the Servants Council has been reading this year.

Principle	What it means in practice
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Shepherd-led, plurally governed	The Board of Elders oversees the spiritual direction of the church (Bylaws II.B). The Board of Finance, Trustees, and Deacons steward specific domains. The Servants Council coordinates. No one office carries the church alone.
Decide at the lowest competent level	Streamline (Lukaszewski, ch. 10-13) teaches that clarity of role prevents bottlenecks. If a board member, chair, or staff lead is competent to decide, and the matter sits squarely within their domain and budget, they decide.
Escalate when the stakes change	The Guide to Healthy Church Operations frames five pillars — community, communication, staff effectiveness, stewardship, and safety. When a matter crosses pillars, or when any of the triggers in Section 7 appear, the decision moves up a tier.
Budget-authorized expenditures already have a plan	When the congregation approves the annual budget (Bylaws II.B, Board of Finance), it delegates spending authority to the accountable board up to the amount of each line item. Sub-thresholds in this framework live inside that delegation.
Transparency by default	Every tier-B decision and above is logged — in board minutes, in the Servants Council log, or in the quarterly Treasurer's report. The goal is not paperwork; it is the confidence of the congregation.

3. Authority Map: Who Holds What at Mayflower

The bylaws (Article II, Section B) name four boards, a Servants Council, and several officers. The table below summarizes what each body holds authority over — for the full description, see the bylaws.

Body or Officer	Primary scope of authority
Congregation	Ultimate governing body. Calls and terminates pastors (3/4 vote). Approves the annual budget, receives quarterly reports, approves non-budgeted expenditures over \$5,000 and any sale/mortgage/transfer of property over \$5,000, and votes on bylaw amendments, membership, and inactive-member rolls (2/3 votes where specified).
Board of Elders (with Pastor)	Oversees teaching, outreach, and worship ministries; approves Ministry Team charters; appoints teaching/outreach/worship teams; oversees the Memorial Fund. All Elder decisions are unanimous. Pastor is voting member.

Body or Officer	Primary scope of authority
Board of Deacons	Oversees service-related ministries (Sanctuary Preparation, Nursery, Hospitality); administers the Diaconate Fund and Adams Benevolent Fund; coordinates compassionate member care.
Board of Trustees	Cares for facilities, grounds, and physical assets; arranges repairs; oversees contracted services; insurance and utilities. Trustees may not sell, mortgage, or transfer property over \$5,000 without a congregational vote.
Board of Finance	Prepares and presents the annual budget; reviews major expenditures; approves non-budgeted expenditures under \$5,000; recommends non-budgeted expenditures over \$5,000 to the congregation; may authorize over-\$5,000 emergency spending subject to congregational affirmation.
Servants Council	Coordinates the work of all four boards and the Pastor. Receives and approves Ministry Team charters; forms ad hoc teams; updates the Pastor's contract and conducts the annual review; directs the hiring of non-pastoral staff.
Senior Pastor	Lead teaching Elder; voting Elder; ex-officio and advisor to all other boards and teams at his discretion; provides pastoral oversight to staff and ministries.
Church Treasurer & Financial Secretary	Receive, count, deposit, record, and disburse church monies per the approved budget and Board of Finance direction. Both are bonded at church expense. Prepare April and October quarterly reports.

A note on bylaw precedence: Where a threshold below appears to delegate authority the bylaws reserve to the congregation or to a specific board, the bylaw governs and this framework is read accordingly. In particular, the \$5,000 property transfer limit (Trustees), the \$5,000 non-budgeted expenditure limit (Finance), the 3/4 pastoral vote, and the 2/3 membership votes are bylaw thresholds, not adjustable by policy.

4. Financial Decision Thresholds

The bylaws fix one clear line — \$5,000 for non-budgeted spending and for property dispositions. This framework proposes four sub-tiers below that line, and restates the two bylaw tiers above it. All proposed tiers live inside the congregation's annual budget authorization; none overrides a bylaw.

Tier	Threshold or Scope	Authority to Decide	Notes & Bylaw Reference
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F-1	Up to \$250 Within an approved budget line. PROPOSED policy.	Ministry lead / staff member holding the responsibility (e.g., a ministry team leader acting under a board)	Routine consumables, supplies, small reimbursements. Receipt submitted to Financial Secretary within 14 days. Tracked in the responsible board's monthly line-item review.
F-2	\$250 – \$1,500 Within an approved budget line. PROPOSED policy.	Responsible Board chair (Elders chair, Deacons chair, or Trustees chair, per budget line ownership)	Chair signs off before purchase; logged in the next board minutes. Two signatures required (chair + one other board member) for purchases above \$750.
F-3	\$1,500 – \$5,000 Within an approved budget line. PROPOSED policy.	Responsible Board (majority vote) with written notice to Board of Finance	Recorded in board minutes and copied to the Treasurer within 7 days. Board of Finance reviews in its next monthly check of budget-vs-actual.
F-4	Non-budgeted expenditure under \$5,000 (any purpose, not anticipated in the annual budget)	Board of Finance (approval required)	Bylaw II.B, Board of Finance §4. Request submitted by the responsible board; Finance approves, denies, or escalates.
F-5	Non-budgeted expenditure \$5,000 or more Or any sale, mortgage, or transfer of property over \$5,000	Congregation (majority vote at a business meeting) Board of Finance presents	Bylaw II.B, Board of Finance §5 and Board of Trustees §4. Emergency variance: Board of Finance may authorize over-\$5,000 spending in an emergency, with congregational affirmation at the next scheduled meeting.
F-6	Annual budget The church's complete operating plan	Board of Finance proposes; Congregation approves at the October Quarterly Meeting	Bylaw II.B, Board of Finance §1. Each budget line names the accountable board.

5. Personnel Decision Thresholds

Personnel decisions carry both spiritual and legal weight. The bylaws place the Senior Pastor, other Pastors, and officers before the congregation; they place non-pastoral hiring with the Servants Council; and they place performance oversight with the supervising board. The Non-Pastoral Staff Hiring SOP (April 2026) governs the process for each non-pastoral hire.

Tier	Threshold or Scope	Authority to Decide	Notes & Bylaw Reference
P-1	Volunteer role assignment Placing a church member into a ministry volunteer role	Responsible ministry team lead, with board chair awareness	Aligns with Bylaws II.B, respective board responsibilities. Background check required for any role with minors.

Tier	Threshold or Scope	Authority to Decide	Notes & Bylaw Reference
P-2	Minor change to a non-pastoral job description (scope clarification, schedule adjustment, title refresh)	Supervising board (or Pastor, for staff he supervises) with notice to Servants Council	PROPOSED policy. Filed with the Servants Council secretary within 14 days.
P-3	Non-pastoral staff hiring (new role or filling an existing role)	Servants Council directs the hiring per the Hiring SOP	Bylaw II.B, Servants Council §8. Funding must exist in the budget or be approved under tier F-4/F-5 before offer is extended.
P-4	Performance review — non-pastoral staff Annual; may include interim check-ins	Supervising board chair (or Pastor, as applicable)	PROPOSED policy. Template reviewed by Servants Council; signed review kept in personnel file.
P-5	Performance review — Pastor	Servants Council	Bylaw II.B, Servants Council §7. Contract updates flow from this review.
P-6	Corrective action — non-pastoral staff Up to and including written warning or performance plan	Supervising board chair, in consultation with Pastor Servants Council informed in executive session	PROPOSED policy. Document every step in personnel file; involve counsel for any potential legal issue.
P-7	Termination — non-pastoral staff	Servants Council (recommendation) Board of Finance confirms funding impact	PROPOSED policy. Derived from Servants Council's authority to direct hiring (Bylaws II.B §8). Pastor-supervised role: Pastor recommends; Servants Council decides.
P-8	Pastoral calling or termination Senior Pastor or other Pastors	Congregation 3/4 vote by ballot of qualified members present and voting	Bylaws II.A §1 and §2. Called business meeting; Elders/Search Team recommend; at least one month's notice where practical.

6. Ministry Programs and Events

Streamline (ch. 6-8) calls the evaluation of regular programs and special events a core discipline of a healthy church. Mayflower's Event Evaluation Process and Event Debrief Template support tiers M-2 and M-3 below. Tier M-4 — launching a new ministry team — is bylaw-governed: the Servants Council receives and approves Ministry Team charters, and the Elders approve the establishment and participants of Church-related ministry teams touching teaching, outreach, or worship.

Tier	Threshold or Scope	Authority to Decide	Notes & Bylaw Reference
M-1	Running an existing, calendared ministry or event (within scope, budget, and policies)	Responsible team / ministry lead, under their board	Normal operational authority. Post-event debrief using the Event Debrief Template when applicable.

Tier	Threshold or Scope	Authority to Decide	Notes & Bylaw Reference
M-2	Significant change to an existing ministry or event (date move, format change, audience shift, >20% spend variance within line)	Responsible Board Servants Council informed	PROPOSED policy. If teaching content changes, Elder sign-off required (see 7-C).
M-3	Discontinuing an existing ministry or event	Responsible Board recommends; Servants Council affirms	PROPOSED policy. Use the Event Evaluation Process before discontinuation; congregation informed at next Quarterly Meeting.
M-4	Launching a new ministry team (including any new recurring program or ad hoc team)	Servants Council receives and approves the charter Elders approve establishment and participants for teaching/outreach/worship ministries	Bylaws II.B, Servants Council §6-7 and Board of Elders §3-5.
M-5	Cross-board initiative (any program led jointly by two or more boards)	Servants Council chairs; affected boards co-approve	PROPOSED policy. Written charter names the lead board, budget owner, and success criteria.
M-6	Public communications representing the church (press, letters to community, statements on public matters)	Pastor, with Elder consultation where doctrinal	PROPOSED policy. Routine announcements remain with responsible board.
M-7	Outside speaker, teacher, or musical guest	Pastor with Elder consent (Elder responsibility for teaching; Bylaws II.B §1-2)	Elders confirm alignment with Statement of Faith and Covenant.

7. Facility and Property Use

The bylaws place care of facilities, grounds, and physical assets with the Board of Trustees, working within the budget. The \$5,000 property-disposition line is a hard bylaw limit. Within that limit, the Trustees manage the building; the framework below makes the common decisions explicit.

Tier	Threshold or Scope	Authority to Decide	Notes & Bylaw Reference
B-1	Internal ministry use of the building (regular services, recurring ministry meetings, rehearsals)	Trustees chair under the facility-use policy Church calendar is authoritative	Routine; no further approval needed if calendar clears.

Tier	Threshold or Scope	Authority to Decide	Notes & Bylaw Reference
B-2	External or third-party use of the building (funerals for non-members, community groups, one-time external rental)	Board of Trustees	PROPOSED policy. Elders consulted for any use with teaching content. Certificate of insurance required from any outside party.
B-3	Routine repair or maintenance (within the approved Trustees budget line)	Trustees chair per tiers F-1 to F-3 Subject to financial thresholds	Bylaws II.B, Board of Trustees §1 and Financial Responsibilities.
B-4	Major repair, replacement, or improvement (not budgeted, \$5,000 or more)	Congregation approves per tier F-5 Board of Finance presents; Trustees scope	Bylaw II.B; construction projects \$5K+ require congregational approval.
B-5	Capital project (roof replacement, HVAC system, addition, renovation)	Congregation approves project and funding Trustees scope, Board of Finance funds, Elders shepherd	Bylaw II.B. Typically preceded by a designated Building Team (ad hoc, chartered through Servants Council).
B-6	Sale, mortgage, or transfer of property over \$5,000	Congregation	Bylaws II.B, Board of Trustees §4 — strict bylaw limit.
B-7	Insurance claim or property damage incident	Trustees chair notifies Pastor and Board of Finance within 24 hours	PROPOSED policy. Any injury, legal exposure, or claim above deductible — convene Servants Council (see 7-B, 7-E).

8. Escalation Exceptions

A decision that looks routine on the surface becomes non-routine the moment any of the following triggers is present. When a trigger appears, the decision moves up one tier — often to the Servants Council, and in some cases to the Elders or the congregation — regardless of the dollar amount or the domain.

Routing when a trigger appears: the decision-maker named in the normal tier pauses the decision and notifies the Pastor and the chair of the Servants Council within 24 hours. The Servants Council decides whether to (a) convene an extraordinary session, (b) refer to the Elders for a doctrinal or pastoral question, (c) refer to counsel, or (d) call a congregational meeting. Documented in the Servants Council log.

9. Using This Framework Day to Day

A working test for any decision is the four-question check:

1. Is the decision squarely inside my domain (board, role, ministry)?
2. Is the cost inside an already-approved budget line and under the dollar limit for my tier?
3. Is any Section 8 escalation trigger present?
4. Will I be comfortable explaining this decision in the next board meeting or quarterly report?

If yes, yes, no, and yes — decide. If any other combination — escalate. When in doubt, the right move is always to ask one level up; the cost of escalating a small matter is far less than the cost of deciding a big matter alone.

10. Adoption, Review, and Revision

Bylaw provisions in this framework are in force as of the March 15, 2026 adoption of the Mayflower Constitution and Bylaws. Items marked **PROPOSED** are brought to the Servants Council for adoption under its coordinating authority; once adopted, they become working policy of Mayflower Church, subject to the bylaws.

The Servants Council reviews this framework annually at its January meeting, and whenever any bylaw is amended. Proposed changes are logged, and the current version is distributed to every staff member, board member, and trustee within 14 days of any revision. The current version is also posted in the church office and circulated before each onboarding of a new board member or staff hire.

Document control: Version 1.0 — April 2026 (initial draft, presented to Servants Council). Next scheduled review: January 2027.

See also: [Quick Reference Card](#) (one-page companion) · [Overview](#). The source Word documents are attached to this page for download.

Quick Reference Card —

April 2026

Mayflower Church — Decision-Making at a Glance. Quick-reference card for staff, board members, and trustees. v1.0 · April 2026. Governed by the Mayflower Constitution and Bylaws.

“ This card is a summary. The full [Decision-Making Framework](#) is the authoritative companion, and the Mayflower Constitution and Bylaws govern where they conflict.

The Four-Question Check

Before you decide, ask:

- 1. Is the matter inside my domain?
- 2. Is the cost inside an approved budget line and under my tier?
- 3. Is any escalation trigger present?
- 4. Could I explain this at the next board meeting?

YES, YES, NO, YES → decide. Anything else → escalate one level.

Financial Thresholds

Tier	Amount	Who decides	Notes
F-1	Up to \$250, within budget line	Ministry lead / staff	Receipt to Bookkeeper ≤14 days.
F-2	\$250 – \$1,500, within budget line	Responsible Board chair	Two signatures above \$750. Logged in next minutes.
F-3	\$1,500 – \$5,000, within budget line	Responsible Board (majority)	Notice to Board of Finance ≤7 days.
F-4	Non-budgeted, under \$5,000	Board of Finance	BYLAW II.B — Finance §4.

Tier	Amount	Who decides	Notes
F-5	Non-budgeted, \$5,000 or more • OR any property disposition >\$5,000	Congregation (at business meeting)	BYLAW II.B — Finance §5; Trustees §4. Emergency: Finance may act, congregation affirms next meeting.
F-6	Annual budget	Congregation approves (Finance proposes)	BYLAW II.B — Finance §1. October Quarterly Meeting.

Personnel

- **P-1 Volunteer role assignment** — ministry team lead, with board chair awareness.
- **P-2 Minor change to a non-pastoral job description** — supervising board (or Pastor), notice to Servants Council. *PROPOSED.*
- **P-3 Non-pastoral staff hiring** — Servants Council directs, per Hiring SOP. *Bylaw II.B, Servants Council §8.*
- **P-4 Performance review (non-pastoral)** — supervising board chair (or Pastor). *PROPOSED.*
- **P-5 Pastor review** — Servants Council. *Bylaw II.B, Servants Council §7.*
- **P-6 Corrective action** — supervising board chair, with Pastor. *PROPOSED.*
- **P-7 Termination (non-pastoral)** — Servants Council recommends; Finance confirms funding.
- **P-8 Pastoral call / termination** — Congregation, 3/4 vote. *Bylaws II.A.*

Ministry & Events

- **M-1 Run an existing ministry or event** — responsible team / ministry lead.
- **M-2 Significant change** — responsible board, Servants Council informed.
- **M-3 Discontinue** — responsible board recommends; Servants Council affirms.
- **M-4 Launch a new ministry team** — Servants Council approves charter; Elders approve establishment for teaching/outreach/worship.
- **M-5 Cross-board initiative** — Servants Council chairs; affected boards co-approve.
- **M-6 Public communications** — Pastor, with Elder consultation where doctrinal.
- **M-7 Outside speaker / teacher / musical guest** — Pastor with Elder consent.

Facility & Property

- **B-1 Internal ministry use of the building** — Trustees chair; church calendar authoritative.

- **B-2 External / third-party use** — Board of Trustees; COI required. Elder consult if teaching.
- **B-3 Routine repair or maintenance** — Trustees chair per F-1 to F-3.
- **B-4 Major repair / replacement / improvement (not budgeted, \$5K+) —** Congregation per F-5.
- **B-5 Capital project** — Congregation approves project and funding.
- **B-6 Sale, mortgage, or transfer of property >\$5K** — Congregation. *Bylaw II.B.*
- **B-7 Insurance claim / property damage** — Trustees chair notifies Pastor and Finance within 24 hours.

Escalation Triggers

Always escalate — regardless of dollar amount or domain — when any of these are present:

- **A. Safety risk** to any person or property.
- **B. Legal exposure / insurance** — counsel should be consulted.
- **C. Doctrinal or confessional** — Statement of Faith, Covenant, or teaching content.
- **D. Pastoral care / member-discipline** sensitivity.
- **E. Reputational risk** to the church or ministry of the gospel.
- **F. Precedent-setting** — the first time the church is doing something, even small-dollar.
- **G. Significant dissent** among the leaders responsible.
- **H. Media / external authority** — inquiry, pressure, or request from civil authority.

Route: pause the decision. Notify the Pastor and the Servants Council chair within 24 hours. Council decides next step (extraordinary session, Elder referral, counsel, or congregational meeting).

Full [Decision-Making Framework](#) · [Overview](#). Source Word document attached to this page.