

# How are decisions made at Bon Air Baptist Church?

First, a quick lesson in church government...

**There are three basic models for church decision-making:**

1) **The Episcopal Model.** "Episcopal" comes from the Greek word for "bishop," so any churches/denominations that have bishops (Roman Catholic, Methodist, etc.) follow this model. This means that ultimate decisions about new ministers, property, and other big decisions, are made by the bishop.)

2) **The Presbyterian Model.** "Presbyterian" comes from the Greek word for "elder." Presbyterian churches, many non-denominational churches, and others, have "elders." With this model, ultimate decisions are made by elders—people chosen by the church to offer leadership and give direction.

3) **The Congregational Model.** Baptists are among those who follow the Congregational form of church government. In other words, ultimate decision-making authority rests with the congregation.

## So how does that work at Bon Air Baptist Church?

**At Bon Air, the big decisions are made by the congregation.** In accordance with our Bylaws, we have four regular business meetings per year in January, April, June, and September. The regular business meetings are generally held the third Wednesdays in the four designated months at 6:15 pm. In those business meetings, we conduct the business of the church including, but not limited to, approving new members, receiving financial reports, making changes to the church Constitution or Bylaws, approving budget changes, hiring ministerial staff, approving other personnel actions, and approving the buying or selling of real property. Recommendations and motions are brought to the meetings through teams, staff, church members, or other church organizations for consideration by the congregation. The necessary quorum for conducting business at a regular business meeting is 100 members.

**On the months when there is not a regular business meeting, the business of the church is conducted by the Ad Interim Church Business Group** (usually referred to as "Ad Interim"). This is a group of eleven members (plus eleven alternate members) approved annually by the congregation (upon nominations by the Senior Pastor and Moderator) to make decisions on behalf of the congregation. Ad Interim cannot make decisions about ministerial personnel, cannot increase the budget, and cannot amend the Constitution or By-Laws, but is authorized to handle other business matters. Any matter that may alter significantly the mission, values, and vision of the church is deferred to the next regular meeting.

We also have "special called business meetings" to deal with matters that arise and need the congregation's immediate attention. For example, when we are going to call a new

staff member or discuss the annual budget, there is typically a special called business meeting. The Bylaws include specific criteria for special called business meetings.

**Most items for discussion by Ad Interim, or in the regular business meetings, come from our Teams (some churches call them “committees”).** For example, an issue that has to do with our finances probably would come from the Stewardship Team. A recommendation regarding one of our missions programs might come from the Domestic Missions Team or the International Missions Team, etc. An issue regarding the overall direction of the church probably would come from the Ministry Coordination Council (see below). Many issues originate with Teams and are considered by the Ministry Coordination Council before being brought to the church for official action, either through Ad Interim or a regular business meeting.

Of course, with a church the size of Bon Air, the congregation cannot be involved in all decisions. The church staff makes day-to-day operational decisions within church-approved policies and procedures. Yet the staff brings the “big calls” to the church for the congregation’s consideration.

### **Who charts the course, sets the direction, helps the church with strategy?**

These things are the work of the MCC—the Ministry Coordination Council. (See description of MCC in other Joy of Belonging material.) The senior pastor chairs this group and its role is to coordinate the various ministries of our church, doing our best to catch God’s vision for us and to encourage the church in embracing that vision.

### **What about the deacons?**

At Bon Air, the deacons are primarily caregivers. They attend to the needs of people assigned to them, and they nurture the unity and well-being of the church. While the senior pastor keeps them apprised of developments within the church, and while they are key leaders in the church, the deacons at Bon Air do not function as a “board” as do the deacons in some Baptist churches.