

The New Prospect Restoration Plan

Strong pastoral leadership. Independent financial oversight. An informed congregation.

A complete plan for how New Prospect should be governed, with the congregation as final authority under Christ. [Read it here](#), or [open the printable PDF](#).

Why we need this now

This plan returns New Prospect Baptist Church to Bible-based, member-led governance: open books, honest records, qualified leaders chosen by the members, and no one person or family holding all the keys.

Let all things be done decently and in order. **1 Corinthians 14:40**

- **No church business meeting in more than three years.** Members have not voted on a budget, reviewed spending, or elected officers in that time.
- **No minutes and no financial reports** that members can read.
- **A significant loss of church funds** through the misconduct of a person entrusted with them. The congregation has not received a full accounting of the amount, how it happened, or what has been recovered.
- **Pay and staffing decisions** funded by our tithes have not come before the church.

This is not about any one person. It is about a structure that left too much in too few hands. The fix is to restore what Baptist churches have always practiced: the congregation, under Christ, governs its own affairs.

What we ask the church to do: a member moves, "I move that New Prospect Baptist Church adopt the Resolution on the New Prospect Restoration Plan as printed." A second member seconds. The congregation discusses and votes. The church, not any one person, decides. The full resolution is at the end of this plan.

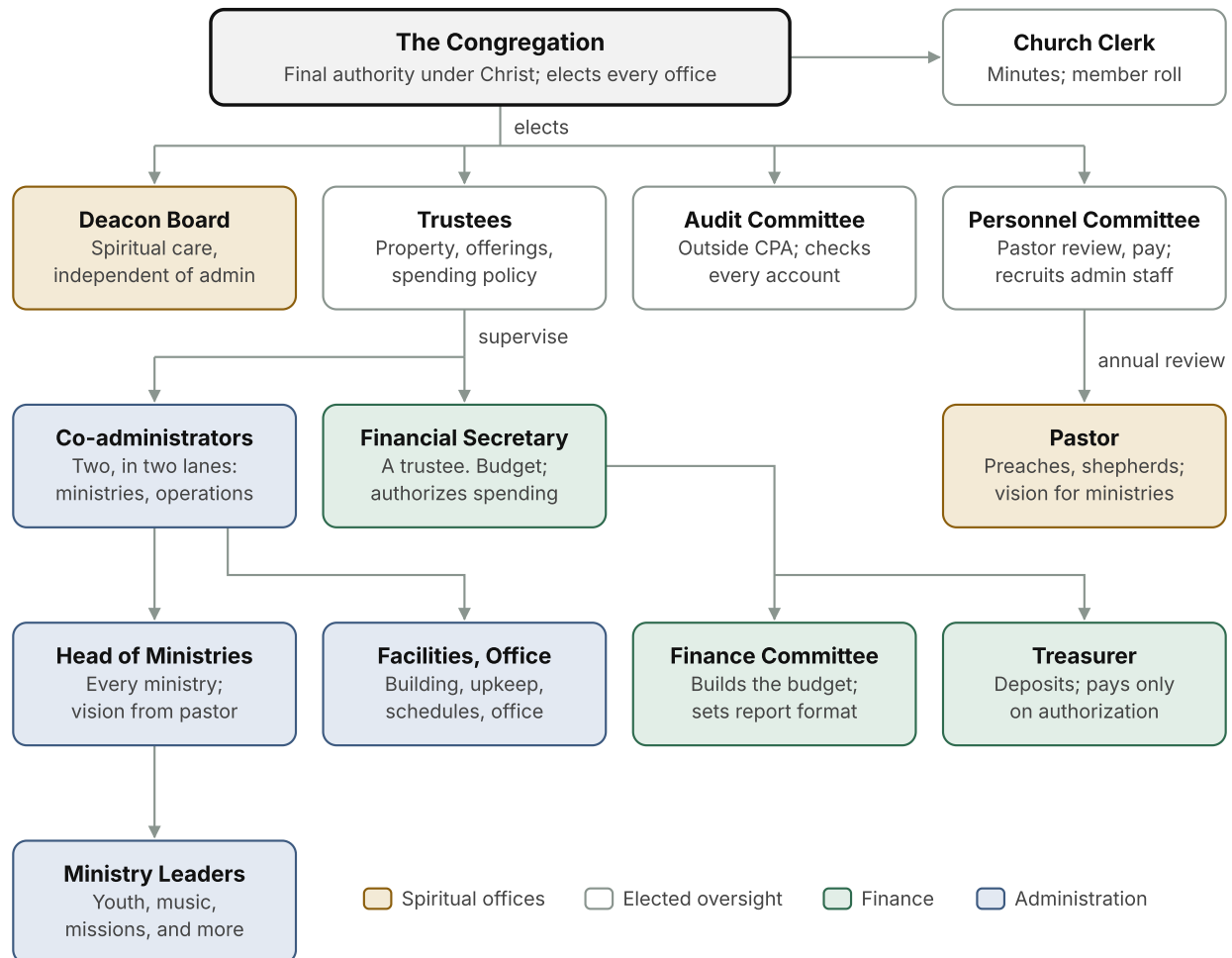
New Prospect today, and under the plan

	TODAY	UNDER THE PLAN
Business meetings	None in more than three years	At least every three months, under Robert's Rules, with written minutes
Budget and salaries	Not presented to members	Adopted by member vote; pastor and executive pay set independently and disclosed; other payroll shown by function
Who checks the money	The same chain that handles it	An independent Audit Committee and an outside CPA, every year
Choosing trustees	Effectively controlled by one office	Nominated by members, qualified by written rules, elected by ballot, received with the right hand of fellowship
Family and favoritism	No written rule	Relatives of staff barred from oversight boards; all ties disclosed
Daily operations	Run through one executive appointed by one office	Two co-administrators who answer to the elected Trustees
When money goes missing	Handled quietly	Forensic audit, police report, insurance claim, report to members

How the church would be organized

The congregation elects every office, and each branch has its own lane. **The spiritual offices** (the pastor and the Deacon Board) preach, teach, and care for the flock. **The**

elected oversight bodies hold the property, check the books, and review the people who serve. **The finance offices** plan, authorize, and handle the money in separate hands. **The administration** runs the church day to day.



The Trustees supervise both the co-administrators and the Financial Secretary; the Audit Committee checks every account; the Personnel Committee reviews the pastor. No one supervises, audits, or sets the pay of the person who appointed them.

Decisions only the congregation can make

- Adopting the annual budget, including total payroll and the pay of the pastor and executive staff
- Calling or dismissing a pastor (two-thirds vote); confirming the co-administrators
- Buying, selling, or borrowing against property; taking on any debt

- Electing trustees, deacons, the Financial Secretary, the Treasurer, committee members, and the clerk
- Amending the constitution and bylaws (two-thirds vote, read at two meetings)
- Receiving the annual audit

Who does what

Every role has a written job, a clear line of accountability, and someone independent watching it.

ROLE	CHOSEN BY	WHAT IT DOES	ANSWERS TO
Congregation	All members in good standing	Final authority. Adopts the budget, calls the pastor, approves debt and property, amends the bylaws, elects every office below.	Christ
Deacon Board	Congregation	Spiritual care, benevolence, visiting the sick and shut-in, care of members. Independent of the administration.	The congregation
Board of Trustees (7)	Congregation, by ballot	Holds church property in trust. Counts every offering. Sets spending policy and authorization limits. Supervises the co-administrators. Reviews finances every month.	The congregation
Financial Secretary	Congregation; serves as a trustee	Prepares the preliminary budget. Authorizes spending within the approved budget and written limits. Organizes and chairs the Finance Committee. Reports monthly. Signs no checks and reconciles no accounts.	Trustees and congregation; checked by the Audit Committee

ROLE	CHOSEN BY	WHAT IT DOES	ANSWERS TO
Finance Committee	Organized by the Financial Secretary; members confirmed by Trustees	Builds the budget with input from every ministry and organization. Sets the form of financial reports. Uses the Clerk's membership figures for planning.	Trustees
Treasurer	Congregation	Deposits the counted offering. Pays bills only on the Financial Secretary's written authorization. Keeps the bank accounts.	Trustees; checked by the Audit Committee
Audit Committee (3 to 5)	Congregation, separately from the trustees	Hires the outside CPA. Reviews reconciliations and exceptions. Receives concerns from anyone. Reports straight to the members.	The congregation
Personnel Committee (5)	Congregation	Pastor's annual review and pay recommendation. Recruits the co-administrators and administrative staff. Keeps job descriptions and annual reviews.	The congregation
Church Clerk	Congregation	Minutes of every meeting. The official membership roll. Confirms in writing that nominees meet the qualifications.	The congregation
Pastor	Called by the congregation	Preaches, teaches, shepherds. Gives spiritual vision to the ministries. Holds no financial office and signs no checks.	Congregation, through the Personnel Committee

ROLE	CHOSEN BY	WHAT IT DOES	ANSWERS TO
Two Co-administrators	Recommended by Personnel, confirmed by the congregation	Run daily operations in two lanes: one over the ministries, one over facilities, the office, and staff. Major decisions take both. A disagreement goes to the Trustees.	Trustees
Head of Ministries	Co-administrators, with the pastor's input	Coordinates every ministry, its calendar, budget, and leaders.	Ministries co-administrator; spiritual direction from the pastor
Facilities and Office	Co-administrators	Building and grounds, maintenance, scheduling, the church office.	Operations co-administrator
Ministry Leaders	Head of Ministries	Lead each ministry within its approved budget.	Head of Ministries

Rules for the administration

- The co-administrators may be paid or volunteer. Neither may be related to the pastor, any staff member, or each other, or serve as a trustee.
- Every dollar passes through separate hands: trustees count, the Treasurer deposits and pays, the Financial Secretary authorizes, someone who does neither reconciles, and the Audit Committee checks.
- Every role has a written job description and an annual review.

The Stewardship Council

New Prospect once had a joint board, where trustees, deacons, the finance officers and lay members sat at one table so that no single board worked in the dark. That safeguard was taken apart. The plan restores it as the Stewardship Council, alongside the independent Audit Committee.

The Stewardship Council

Chaired by a church elder elected by the congregation, who holds no other office

TRUSTEES

- Trustee Board Chair

FINANCE OFFICERS

- Financial Secretary
- Treasurer

DEACONS

- Three deacons

MEMBERS

- Lay members, elected at large
- A ministry leader

Pastor: attends every meeting as a non-voting member, so he is always informed but never votes on money or his own pay.

- Every voting member serves unpaid and is not related to church staff.
- Meets every month and reviews the Financial Secretary's report side by side with the Treasurer's bank balances.
- Reviews any spending or commitment of \$5,000 or more before it is reported to the members.
- Brings the trustees' care of property and money together with the deacons' care of the members and the needs of the ministries.
- Hears concerns from any member and can ask the Audit Committee to look into anything.
- Reports to the congregation at every quarterly business meeting.
- Handles no money itself. The Audit Committee stays fully independent of it and answers only to the members.

A new Board of Trustees

Trustees hold the church's property and money in trust for the members. **Eligibility is set by the written bylaws. No individual may approve or block a candidate.**

Qualifications

- **Member of New Prospect for at least nine continuous years**, in good standing, faithful in attendance and giving.
- **Experience in the work:** finance, accounting, or business; or building maintenance, construction, facilities, or operations.
- **Of good report:** signs a conflict-of-interest statement and consents to a financial background check before taking office.
- **Not employed by the church** and not related to the pastor or any paid staff member.

Nine years reflects Scripture's instruction that officers not be novices and that they "first be proved" (1 Timothy 3:6, 10). Where special expertise is needed, the Audit Committee may bring in an outside CPA as an advisor without lowering the bar for trustees.

How trustees are elected

1. Any member may nominate a qualified member. Nominees are announced at least two weeks before the vote.
2. The Clerk confirms in writing that each nominee meets the qualifications.
3. The congregation votes by secret ballot at a business meeting. The count is recorded in the minutes.
4. Those elected are installed on Installation Sunday and received with the right hand of fellowship.

Seven trustees serve staggered three-year terms, no more than two terms in a row, then one year off. Trustees elect their own chair each year.

Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. **Acts 6:3**

Installation Sunday and the right hand of fellowship

Once a year, after the election results are certified, the church restores its long tradition of receiving its officers with the right hand of fellowship. **The ballot decides who serves; the right hand of fellowship is how the church publicly stands behind the people it chose.** The two stay separate: a secret ballot protects every member's free choice, and the fellowship that follows is a covenant, not a count.

And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship. **Galatians 2:9**

Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. **Acts 6:6**

In Galatians, the leaders of the church gave Paul and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship to show they recognized and trusted their calling. In Acts, the whole church chose seven men to handle its resources, set them before the apostles, and the apostles prayed and laid hands on them. New Prospect follows both patterns: the members choose, and the church receives and blesses those it chose.

The order of service

1. **Presentation.** The newly elected trustees, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, committee members, and deacons come forward. The Clerk reads each name and office.
2. **The charge.** The church reads the covenant of the office: *Will you serve this church faithfully, handle the Lord's resources honestly, keep no secrets from the members you serve, and give account to this church?* Each officer answers: *I will, God being my helper.*
3. **The laying on of hands.** The pastor and the deacons pray over the officers and lay hands on them, as in Acts 6:6. Deacons being ordained receive the laying on of hands in the church's customary way.
4. **The congregation's affirmation.** The whole church stands and extends its right hand toward the officers while a prayer of consecration is offered. Every member takes part from their seat, in a church of any size.
5. **The right hand of fellowship.** Current officers, ministry leaders, and any member who wishes come forward to shake each officer's hand. When the line is long, the officers form a receiving line after the service so no one is rushed.

The clerk records the installation in the minutes. Taking part in the line is always voluntary: a hand given freely means something.

Ending favoritism and family control

Church positions and church money are never handed out by relationship.

- No relative of the pastor or any staff member serves on the Trustees, Audit Committee, or Personnel Committee, or as a co-administrator.
- No person supervises, audits, or sets the pay of the person who appointed them.
- Hiring a relative of any officer or staff member requires disclosure and Personnel Committee approval, recorded in the minutes.
- Every officer and staff member signs a yearly disclosure of family ties and business dealings with the church.
- No contract goes to a business owned by an officer, staff member, or their family without disclosure and a Trustee vote.
- Raises happen through the budget the members adopt, never privately.

How church money will be protected

Every dollar passes through separate hands, and an outside accountant checks the whole chain every year. This keeps New Prospect's own tradition, where the Financial Secretary authorizes and the Treasurer pays, and adds the safeguards it was missing.

STEP	WHO	RULE
Counting	Trustees	Two or more unrelated trustees count and sign every count sheet; a copy goes to the Financial Secretary
Depositing	Treasurer	Deposits the same or next business day; the deposit must match the count sheet
Authorizing	Financial Secretary	Authorizes within the budget and written limits; larger items need a Trustee vote; anything outside the budget goes to the members
Paying	Treasurer	Pays only on written authorization with an invoice; two signatures over a set amount; no one approves their own expense; the pastor is not a signer

STEP	WHO	RULE
Reconciling	An independent reviewer	Someone who neither authorizes nor pays reconciles every account monthly
Checking	Audit Committee	Reviews reconciliations and exceptions; hires the outside CPA for the annual audit or review
Accounts	Trustees	No church account outside the books; every account is audited
Insurance	Trustees	Crime or fidelity coverage on everyone who handles money
Reporting	Financial Secretary	Monthly to Trustees, quarterly to the church, annual audit to every member
Concerns	Audit Committee	An outside contact where anyone can report a concern without retaliation

If money is ever stolen again

1. Remove the person's access to accounts, keys, and records that day.
2. The Audit Committee, not staff, hires an independent forensic accountant.
3. Report to the police and the prosecutor; file an insurance claim.
4. Tell the congregation the facts at a business meeting.
5. Seek full repayment. No private settlement that hides the loss from the members.

Why this is best practice

Every part of this structure is already working in respected churches and is required by the leading standards for church finances. We did not invent it; we gathered it.

FEATURE OF OUR PLAN	WHERE IT IS ALREADY PRACTICED
Lay trustees, not staff, oversee finances and facilities	Church of the Highlands (Alabama): its trustees are lay members, not staff, who oversee finances and facilities

FEATURE OF OUR PLAN	WHERE IT IS ALREADY PRACTICED
The board is elected by the members	Eagle Brook Church (Minnesota): its board is elected by the members and oversees finances, personnel, and legal approvals
An outside audit every year	Crossroads Church (Cincinnati): conducts independent third-party financial audits every year
Staff kept off the oversight board	Gateway Church (Texas): rewrote its bylaws in 2024 so staff no longer serve as elders
A board with an independent majority that hires the CPA	ECFA Standards 2 and 3, the leading accreditation for churches and ministries
Pastor's pay set independently, with comparable data, in writing	IRS regulations (Treas. Reg. 53.4958-6), which protect a pastor from penalty taxes when pay is set this way (Church Executive)
Administrators run operations so the pastor can preach and pray	Acts 6:2-4
Members vote on the budget, the pastor, debt, and bylaws	Historic Baptist polity, still standard in Baptist congregations (Baptist News Global)
Members may examine the books and minutes	Ohio Revised Code 1702.15, for nonprofit corporations

Where our plan goes further

- **Deacons stay fully independent**, as the church office Scripture names alongside the pastor (1 Timothy 3).
- **New Prospect's own tradition, strengthened:** the Financial Secretary authorizes and the Treasurer pays, as before, now with written limits, independent reconciliation, and an Audit Committee over both.
- **Two co-administrators, not one executive**, so no single appointee controls operations. Both answer to elected trustees, and neither touches the money.

- **The right hand of fellowship restored**, so the members publicly receive and stand behind every officer they elect.

What happened where these safeguards were missing

CHURCH	WHAT HAPPENED	WHAT THEY CHANGED
National Baptist Convention USA (1999)	Its president was convicted of racketeering and grand theft involving millions. His board forgave him before trial, and one fund was kept outside the audit.	A lasting lesson for Black Baptist churches
Harvest Bible Chapel (2019)	An outside review found a "massive corporate governance failure"; a few leaders controlled about a fifth of the budget.	One elder board; finance committee reports to it
Willow Creek (2018)	Boards could not oversee the founder for decades; all elders resigned.	Independent review; outside reporting hotline
Gateway Church (2024)	Leaders knew of wrongdoing and stayed silent; giving fell 35% and staff were laid off.	Staff barred from the oversight board
Mars Hill (2014)	Its "accountability" board included the pastor and his own staff.	The church dissolved

Each of these churches adopted reforms like ours only after scandal. We can adopt them before the next one.

Resolution on the New Prospect Restoration Plan

Whereas the members of New Prospect Baptist Church, under Christ, are the final earthly authority in the affairs of this church, as Baptist churches have held throughout their history;

Whereas no church business meeting has been held in more than three years, and the members have received no budget, financial report, or minutes in that time;

Whereas the church has suffered a significant loss of funds through the misconduct of a person entrusted with them, and the members have not received a full accounting;

Whereas Scripture directs that the things of God be handled honestly "not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2 Corinthians 8:21) and "decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40);

Be it resolved that the members of New Prospect Baptist Church, acting to the full extent of the authority the church's governing documents and Ohio law give them:

1. Adopt the New Prospect Restoration Plan as the direction for reforming the governance and financial oversight of this church.
2. Establish a Governance Review Committee of seven members, none employed by the church or related to the pastor or any staff member, elected by the members in the manner the current bylaws allow, to draft amendments to the constitution and bylaws carrying out this Plan and present them to the members within 90 days under the amendment procedure of the current bylaws.
3. Establish an Audit Committee of three members under the same rule, elected the same way, which shall engage an independent forensic accounting firm to review the church's finances for the full period of the reported loss and at least the past five years, and report its findings in writing to the members. Officers and staff shall give the firm full access to all records, and its reasonable cost shall be paid from church funds.
4. Direct that the church hold a business meeting at least once every three months under Robert's Rules of Order, with minutes kept by the clerk and available to any member on request.
5. Direct that within 60 days the members receive the church's articles, constitution and bylaws; its income, expenses, and account balances for each of the past three years; total payroll by function and the approved compensation of the pastor and executive staff; and a written account of the loss of funds, all recovery efforts, and the controls now in place.
6. Direct that, until the forensic review is reported, no debt, property transaction, executive pay increase, or new paid position be approved without a vote of the members.
7. Affirm that nothing in this resolution removes the pastor from office or limits his calling as preacher and shepherd of this church.

8. Provide that each part of this resolution takes effect to the full extent the church's current governing documents permit, and that any part requiring a bylaw amendment or further notice be placed before the members at a properly noticed business meeting within 30 days.

MOVED BY	SECONDED BY	DATE
Vote: For	Against	Abstain

How to bring it to a vote (Robert's Rules of Order)

1. **Get the floor.** Stand, say "Mr. Moderator," and wait to be recognized.
2. **Make the motion.** "I move that New Prospect Baptist Church adopt the Resolution on the New Prospect Restoration Plan as printed."
3. **Second.** Another member says, "I second the motion." The moderator must then state the motion and allow discussion.
4. **If the chair rules it out of order** and you believe the ruling is wrong, any member may say, "I appeal the decision of the chair." With a second, the congregation decides.
5. **If the vote is unclear,** any member may call "Division!" to require a counted vote. Ask that the motion, vote, and count be recorded in the minutes.

If the meeting was called only for other business: a special meeting may act only on its stated purposes. Move instead: "I move that the Resolution on the New Prospect Restoration Plan be placed on the agenda of a business meeting, with written notice to all members, held within 30 days." If members are kept from meeting at all, Ohio law by default lets the lesser of 10% of voting members or 25 voting members call a meeting, unless the church's own rules set a different number (ORC 1702.17), and the persons calling it may give the written notice (ORC 1702.18). A petition form for this is available on the website.

Sources

- ECFA Seven Standards of Responsible Stewardship

- Church of the Highlands: leadership
- Eagle Brook Church: church leadership
- Crossroads Church: audit reports
- Church Executive: compensation errors and IRS rules
- Baptist News Global: who's in charge in Baptist churches
- Ohio Revised Code 1702.15, 1702.17, 1702.18
- Chronicle of Philanthropy: Lyons verdict
- MinistryWatch: Harvest governance failure
- ChurchLeaders: Willow Creek report
- Religion News Service: Gateway elders removed
- Christian Post: Gateway giving drop
- Christianity Today: Mars Hill board

Scripture quotations are from the King James Version. Legal points describe Ohio law and federal tax rules in general; the church should confirm how they apply with its own attorney.

Prepared by Torrance Jones and members of New Prospect Baptist Church, Cincinnati, Ohio, October 2026, for discussion and decision by the congregation.