

# Annual Calendar Planning Process

MAYFLOWER CHURCH

Annual Calendar Planning Process

*Streamline System 04A — How We Build the Year*

Draft May 2026

## Governing Principle

The annual calendar exists to create space for a healthy rhythm of worship, discipleship, fellowship, and rest — not to fill every Sunday with programming.

We plan the whole year so that teaching, ministry, and special events serve the mission of **knowing Christ and making Him known**, and so that our leaders and families can prepare well. A good annual calendar does three things: it protects the pastor's study and rest; it honors the natural rhythm our congregation already lives by (school years, summers, holidays); and it sequences teaching and special events so that each one is given the planning and promotion it deserves.

## Purpose

This chapter describes the building of the **Events Calendar** — the master calendar of worship, teaching, ministry rhythms, governance, and special events. Once that calendar is approved, church staff develop the **Communications Calendar** and the **Operations Calendar** to align with it. It is the implementation chapter of System 04 (Master Calendar Integration).

## When We Plan

The annual calendar is built in **August** each year. A two-hour calendar-planning component is held as part of the Annual Leadership Summit (held in August on a Friday evening and Saturday until 2:00 p.m.). The calendar produced at the Summit covers the twelve months beginning the following January. For example, in August 2026, the church plans the twelve-month calendar that begins January 2027.

# Who Is Involved

Responsibility for the annual calendar is shared across three groups, in this sequence:

1. **Senior Pastor, Elders, and Deacons** — Meet ahead of the Summit to establish the initial framework: teaching series, worship ordinances, special events, and the ministry rhythm for the year. They bring a draft calendar to the Summit.
2. **Leadership Summit attendees (Team and Group Leaders)** — Review the draft framework during the two-hour planning session, raise conflicts, request additions, and give feedback from their ministry domains. Adjustments are captured in real time.
3. **Servants Council** — Reviews and gives final approval of the calendar at its August meeting. Once approved, the calendar is published.

# The Planning Sequence

The calendar is built in layers. Each layer is added to the annual view *before* the next one is considered, so that higher-priority items cannot be displaced by lower-priority scheduling pressure.

## 1. Senior Pastor's Study and Rest Weeks

The first items on the calendar are the Senior Pastor's vacation weeks, study weeks, and conference travel. These are placed first so they are not sacrificed to a calendar that is already full. Guest preachers and alternate teachers are identified for each Sunday the Senior Pastor is away.

## 2. Local School Calendar

Next, the Kingston Public Schools calendar (and the calendars of sending towns where a significant number of our families live) is laid over the year. Three-day weekends, Spring Break, Winter Break, school end and start dates, and major school events are all noted. These are not dates we avoid teaching on — but they are dates we do not build major outreach or programming events around, because many of our families will be away.

## 3. Teaching Series

With pastoral absences and school breaks in view, the teaching series are planned for the full year. The goal is a twelve-month view of what will be preached, with room for responsive adjustments. Teaching series are mapped to the congregation's rhythm — a vision-setting series near the start of the ministry year, hospitable or outreach-oriented teaching during seasons when new people are most likely to attend, and sustained expositional work during stable months.

## 4. Worship Rhythm and Ordinances

The Lord's Supper and baptism Sundays are placed on the calendar next. Our regular cadence for the Lord's Supper, any scheduled baptism services, and significant worship services (Good Friday, Easter, Christmas Eve, Thanksgiving) are all confirmed at this stage.

## 5. Office Closure Weeks

The church office is usually closed the week following a major church holiday — typically **the week after Christmas** and **the week after Easter**. These closures are placed on the calendar now, before ministry and event scheduling, so they are not inadvertently booked over.

Staff are not required to be off during office-closure weeks. Individual staff members may continue to work (often from home, with a lighter load) or may take the week as vacation, at their discretion and in coordination with the Senior Pastor. The closure applies to the office as a point of contact for the congregation — no standing meetings, no open office hours, and no broad communications during those weeks unless pastorally necessary.

## 6. Congregational Governance

Quarterly Congregational Meetings are held on the **last Sunday of the first month of each quarter** — the last Sunday of January, April, July, and October. These dates are non-negotiable on the annual calendar. Annual members' meetings or other governance events are added at this stage.

## 7. Annual Leadership Summit and Back to Church Sunday

The next Annual Leadership Summit (August, Friday evening through Saturday) and **Back to Church Sunday** (the last Sunday of August) are placed on the calendar. These frame the start of the new ministry year and should not be scheduled against other major commitments.

## 8. Ministry Rhythms

Recurring ministry events are mapped onto the year: Bible Fellowship Groups, EQUIP Discipleship Training, Men of the Word, Brothers Bibles & Bacon, Ladies' Community Bible Study, Women's Ministry gatherings, the Senior Luncheon schedule, and any other standing ministry rhythms.

**Summer posture.** Mayflower uses summer as a season of rest. Bible Fellowship Groups, Bible studies, and EQUIP Discipleship Training do not normally continue through the summer months. Summer programming is intentionally light, with the exception of specific summer-season offerings (e.g., summer reading, a summer cookout) planned deliberately in that spirit.

## 9. Special Events

With the recurring rhythm set, special events are placed on the calendar. These are the “big days” that require the most planning and promotion. A typical year includes Easter, Mother's Day and Father's Day observances, a summer kick-off event, Back to Church Sunday, an outreach or hospitality Sunday, and Christmas Eve. The guiding principle is not to overcrowd the year with special events — three or four major ones, given the planning they deserve, serve the church better than a full calendar of half-planned events.

# Output and Publication

The approved annual calendar is exported as an **ICS file** and imported into the **Planning Center Events Calendar**. From there, Team Leaders, Group Leaders, Board members, and members of the congregation can subscribe to the calendar on their phones and computers. The calendar updates automatically as events are edited in Planning Center.

# Communications and Operations Calendars

Once the annual **Events Calendar** is built and approved, church staff develop two downstream calendars that align to it:

- **Communications Calendar.** The Communications Lead builds the communications cadence backward from each event on the Events Calendar: *Bellringer* printing deadlines, weekly email themes, Sunday announcement windows (two-week, one-week, final reminder), and social media beats. The aim is that the congregation hears about every major event with enough lead time to participate.
- **Operations Calendar.** The Operations Lead builds the operations rhythm underneath the Events Calendar: building and resource bookings, room turnovers, setup and teardown assignments, hospitality supplies, A/V preparation, and vendor coordination. A rolling three-month operations view is published for Team and Group Leaders each quarter.

Both calendars are derivative of the approved Events Calendar, not independent plans, though there will be items on these calendars that serve as reminders and markers for ministry milestones. Changes to the Events Calendar flow downstream to Communications and Operations; changes originating in Communications or Operations that affect the Events Calendar are referred back to the Senior Pastor for clarification or communication to the appropriate boards and teams.

## Approval

The Servants Council reviews and approves the annual calendar at its August meeting. No major events or all-church initiatives should be added to the calendar after approval without Servants Council concurrence, other than pastoral care events and items that do not require broad communication.

## Maintenance Cadence

The annual calendar is reviewed on a quarterly cadence:

- **Quarterly check-in** — The Senior Pastor reviews the next quarter with the ministry leaders, confirms the Communications and Operations calendars are aligned, and flags any adjustments.
- **Mid-year adjustment** — A light February review to confirm the Spring/Easter plan is on track.
- **Summer handoff** — In July, preparation for the August Summit begins, with the next year's framework taking shape.

# Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- **Don't schedule major events against school breaks or three-day weekends.** Many of our families will be away. Let the school calendar guide us here.
- **Don't publish without Servants Council review.** Each domain — Sunday Morning; Administration and Operations; Discipleship and Care; Missions and Evangelism — should see the calendar before it is finalized.
- **Don't overcrowd the calendar with special events.** Three or four major events, done well, outperform ten half-planned ones.
- **Don't skip the downstream calendars.** The Events Calendar is only the first layer. Staff must build the Communications and Operations calendars on top of it — otherwise events get poorly communicated, or the building and resources are double-booked.
- **Don't break the summer rest posture** without deliberate agreement. Summer is intentionally a lighter season at Mayflower.
- **Don't leave the pastor's study weeks until last.** If they are not placed first, they will not happen.

# How This Chapter Fits

- **Implements System 04 (Master Calendar Integration).** The umbrella overview lives in the companion chapter; this chapter is the operating procedure.
- **Holds the meetings governed by System 06 (Meeting System).** Elders, Deacons, Trustees, Board of Finance, Servants Council, Team Leaders, and Congregational Business Meetings all sit on the calendar produced here.
- **Anchors System 11 (Annual Goals).** The August Leadership Summit, where the calendar is built, is the same gathering at which the annual goals are refreshed.
- **Routes through System 09 (Decision-Making Framework).** Major events and all-church initiatives that arise after the calendar is approved are escalated to the Servants Council per the framework's escalation triggers.

*“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.” — Ecclesiastes 3:1*

# Document Control

**Version:** 1.0 — May 2026 (initial draft, presented to Servants Council).

**Drafted / Updated:** Drafted April 20, 2026 (BookStack revision #3); reformatted for hard copy May 2026.

**Owner:** Senior Pastor, in coordination with the Servants Council.

**Approval:** Servants Council, August meeting (annual).

**Review cadence:** Annually, prior to the August Leadership Summit; and whenever any related bylaw is amended.

**Next scheduled review:** August 2026 Leadership Summit.

## Sources

- *Streamline: How to Create Healthy Church Systems* — Michael Lukaszewski.
- *Mayflower Constitution and Bylaws* — for the Quarterly Congregational Meeting cadence.
- *Master Calendar Integration* (System 04, May 2026) — umbrella chapter.
- *Meeting System* (System 06, April 2026) — for the meetings that ride on this calendar.

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Revision #5

Created 2026-04-20 17:40:41 UTC by Anton Brown

Updated 2026-06-02 02:41:36 UTC by Anton Brown