12 – Leadership Transitions

Short-term pastoral absence plan, emergency leadership coverage, and long-term transition principles. Continuity of leadership documentation.

- Overview: Leadership Transitions
- Leadership Handoff Quick Card — April 2026
- Leadership Handoff Guidelines — April 2026
- Pastoral Emergency-Coverage Plan

Overview: Leadership Transitions

Status

Implementation status: Approved

Principle (from Streamline)

Lukaszewski's principle: Every church will face leadership transitions — planned, unplanned, and emergency. Written plans for short-term pastoral absence, emergency coverage, and long-term transition principles prevent crisis from becoming catastrophe.

Mayflower's Current Practice

Governance & Document References

- Mayflower Constitution and Bylaws — pastoral vacancy provisions
- Position Descriptions #01 Senior Pastor, #02 Elder, #03 Deacon, #12 Moderator

Open Questions

- Where is the sealed long-term plan stored?

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

Leadership Handoff Quick Card — April 2026

> **Note (April 2026):** Earlier drafts referenced a "Ministry Coach" role that was not approved. References have been removed. At Mayflower, ministry teams work with the board (elders, deacons, or trustees) that oversees their team or group; that board is the team leader's first call for supervision, succession, and leader development.

MAYFLOWER CHURCH

Leadership Handoff — Quick Card

A one-page reference. See the full Leadership Handoff Guidelines (April 2026) for detail.

FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1	2	3	4	5
Stewardship The team belongs to Christ. Hand it back in good order.	**Team First** Measure success by how the ministry continues.	**Notice Is a Gift** 60–90 days where life allows. Bylaws govern officer terms.	**Document It** Write it down before you need to. Don’t leave knowledge in your head.	**Bless and Release** Step back. Pray. No back-channels. Trust the Lord.

PLANNED HANDOFF — When you know it’s coming

1. Talk to your supervisor first. Senior Pastor, board chair, or Servants Council — before telling the team.
2. Name a target date. A handoff without a date drifts. Pick a realistic last day and work backward.
3. Identify a successor. Bylaws govern officer roles. For ministry teams, work with the board (elders, deacons, or trustees) that oversees your team.
4. Build a handoff document. Use the checklist below. One to three pages.
5. Run a transition window. Final 4–6 weeks: shadow → co-lead → watch them lead. Clean last day, not a slow fade.
6. Communicate. Coordinate with your supervisor on what gets said, when, and to whom.

UNPLANNED HANDOFF — When life intervenes

Prepare now (in normal seasons)

• Keep an up-to-date handoff document on a church-shared drive your supervisor can access without contacting you.
• Make sure at least one teammate knows the rhythms well enough to keep the lights on.
• Keep contacts and credentials list with the document, not in personal files.

In the moment

• Contact your supervisor as early as possible — Senior Pastor, deacon, board chair, or another elder.
• Authorize an interim point of contact (assistant leader, co-leader, or one named by elders/Servants Council).
• Where bylaws govern (officer seats, pastoral vacancy, treasurer succession), follow the bylaws.
• Care for the leader stepping back. They should not have to manage the handoff alone.

WHAT GOES IN THE HANDOFF DOCUMENT (1–3 PAGES)

☐ **Mission and scope. What this team does at Mayflower; what falls in and out of the role.**	☐ **Annual rhythm. Predictable beats mapped to the church year (services, events, evaluations, budget).**
☐ **Team roster.** Members, gifts, seasons, pastoral notes a successor should know.	☐ **Recurring tasks.** Weekly, monthly, quarterly, annual responsibilities — with how they're actually done.
☐ **Tools and credentials.** Systems, shared resources, who holds the keys. Note where passwords are kept — don't paste them.	☐ **Key relationships.** Vendors, partner ministries, denominational contacts, and any sensitive history.
☐ **Open items.** Anything in flight that the successor will inherit.	☐ **Lessons learned.** What's working, what you'd change, what you'd warn the next leader about.

FIRST CALL → Talk to your supervising leader before anyone else. Senior Pastor, the relevant board chair, or the Servants Council — depending on your role. You do not have to walk this alone.

Leadership Handoff Guidelines — April 2026

> **Note (April 2026):** Earlier drafts referenced a "Ministry Coach" role that was not approved. References have been removed. At Mayflower, ministry teams work with the board (elders, deacons, or trustees) that oversees their team or group; that board is the team leader's first call for supervision, succession, and leader development.

Mayflower Church

Leadership Handoff Guidelines

April 2026

Purpose

Every leader at Mayflower will eventually hand off the work entrusted to them — by election cycle, life change, season of ministry, or unforeseen circumstance. These guidelines exist so that when that happens, the team and the ministry are cared for as well as the leader.

This document is not a rigid procedure. It is a reference for any leader who anticipates stepping back — or who wants to be ready in case life requires it suddenly. We will return to it together at evaluations and check-ins.

Who This Applies To

These guidelines are written for everyone who carries a leadership role in the life of the church, including:

- Officers — elders, deacons, trustees, the Church Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Assistant Financial Secretary, Auditor, Moderator, Clerk, and members of the Board of Finance and Servants Council.

- Pastoral and counseling leaders — the Senior Pastor and the Director of Biblical Counseling.
- Ministry team leaders — leaders of Worship, AV, Missions, Prayer, Hospitality, First Impressions, Discipletown, Nursery, Scripture Reading, EQUIP, Evangelism, Baptism, Shoebox, Senior Luncheon, Women's Ministry, Bible Fellowship Groups, and any other team Mayflower deploys.

Where the Mayflower Constitution and Bylaws govern an officer's term or vacancy, those bylaws take precedence over anything in this document. These guidelines describe how a leader stewards the handoff well within whatever framework applies to their role.

Five Guiding Principles

1. **Leadership is a stewardship, not a possession.** The team you lead belongs to Christ and to His church. Plan your handoff the way a faithful steward returns what was entrusted to them — in good order and with care for the next steward.
2. **The team comes first.** A good handoff is measured by how well the ministry continues, not by how gracefully you exit. Decisions about timing, communication, and successor identification should be evaluated against that standard.
3. **Notice is a gift.** Where life allows, give as much advance notice as you can. *Sixty to ninety days is a reasonable target for most ministry roles.* Officer terms are governed by the bylaws, but advance notice of a non-continuation or mid-term resignation gives the Servants Council the runway it needs.
4. **Document so the team is not stranded.** Most ministries depend on knowledge that lives in one person's head. Make a habit of writing it down before you need to. The handoff should not require you to be available to answer questions afterward.
5. **Bless and release.** When the handoff is complete, step back. Resist the temptation to second-guess your successor, hold parallel authority, or maintain a back-channel with the team. Pray for them, stay available if they reach out, and trust the Lord with what comes next.

Planned Handoff: When You Know It Is Coming

This is the most common scenario — a season is ending, a family change is on the horizon, you sense the Lord moving you out of the role, or your term is approaching its end and you do not plan to continue. Walk through these steps:

1. Talk to your supervising leader first.

Before telling your team, talk with the person you report to (the Senior Pastor, the relevant board chair, or the Servants Council, depending on your role). This protects your team from learning through rumor and gives leadership time to think about succession.

2. Name a target date and put it on the calendar.

A handoff without a date tends to drift. Pick a realistic last-day-of-service date in conversation with your supervising leader, and work backward from there.

3. Identify a successor or successor pool.

Where the bylaws assign succession (officers, treasurers, pastoral roles), follow the bylaws. For ministry team leaders, work with the board (elders, deacons, or trustees) that oversees your team to identify someone you have already been developing or to begin a focused development conversation. Do not wait until the last week to start this work.

4. Build a handoff document.

A simple written summary of how the ministry actually runs. See the checklist in the next section.

5. Run a transition window.

For at least the final four to six weeks, lead alongside your successor: shadow, then co-lead, then watch them lead while you step back. End with a clean last day rather than a slow fade.

6. Communicate with the team and the church.

Coordinate with your supervising leader on what gets said, when, and to whom. Most leaders underestimate how much the team values being thanked and being told who comes next. The congregation typically appreciates a brief announcement when a visible role changes hands.

Unplanned Handoff: When Life Intervenes

Sometimes a handoff cannot wait — illness, family crisis, accident, sudden relocation, or in rare cases, removal. The aim is the same as a planned handoff, just compressed. Two things make this manageable in the moment: preparation done before it was needed, and a culture that does not panic when leaders need to step away.

Preparation now (do this in normal seasons)

- Keep an up-to-date written summary of the ministry — the handoff document described below — in a location your supervising leader can access without needing to contact you (e.g., a church-shared drive, not a personal device).
- Make sure at least one other person on the team — an assistant leader, a co-leader, or a trusted teammate — knows the rhythms of the role well enough to keep the lights on for a season if you cannot.
- Keep a short list of the contacts and credentials someone would need in your absence: vendors, key volunteers, scheduling tools, shared accounts. Store this with the handoff document, not in your personal files alone.

In the moment

- As early as you (or someone advocating for you) reasonably can, contact your supervising leader — the Senior Pastor, deacon, the relevant board chair, or another elder.
- Authorize an interim point of contact for the team. This may be your assistant leader, a co-leader, or another leader designated by the elders or Servants Council.
- Where the bylaws govern (vacant officer seats, pastoral vacancy, treasurer succession), follow the bylaws. For ministry roles, the elders or Servants Council will name an interim arrangement.
- Care for the leader is not optional. The person stepping back, especially under hard circumstances, should be prayed for, supported, and protected from being asked to manage the handoff alone.

The Handoff Document: What to Write Down

Whether the handoff is planned or unplanned, your successor (or interim) needs the same basic information. Aim for one to three pages — enough to run the ministry without you, no more.

- Mission and scope of the role: what this team exists to do at Mayflower, what falls inside the role, and what does not.
- Annual rhythm: the predictable beats — services, events, training, evaluations, budget cycles — mapped to the church year, including the August Leadership Summit and any quarterly checkpoints relevant to this role.
- Team roster: members, their gifts, their seasons, and any pastoral notes a successor would benefit from knowing.
- Recurring tasks: weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual responsibilities, with notes on how each is actually done.
- Tools, accounts, and credentials: what systems are used, where shared resources live, and who holds the keys (Planning Center, BookStack, shared drives, vendor accounts, building keys, etc.). Do not paste passwords into the document; record where they are kept.
- Key relationships: vendors, partner ministries, denominational contacts, congregants who depend on this ministry, and any sensitive history a successor should be aware of.
- Open items and current decisions: anything in flight that the successor will inherit.
- Lessons learned: what is working, what you would change, and what you would warn the next leader about.

How This Fits Into Mayflower’s Rhythms

These guidelines are not meant to live in a drawer. They show up in three places in Mayflower’s normal cadence:

- **Onboarding.** When a leader steps into a role, this document is part of the orientation packet. The first conversation is about leading well; an early conversation includes how a healthy handoff eventually looks.
- **Annual check-ins and evaluations.** At each leader’s annual evaluation or performance check-in, three handoff questions belong on the agenda: Is the handoff document up to date? Who could step in if you suddenly could not? Is the Lord stirring anything in you about your season in this role?

- **Leadership Summit and quarterly gatherings.** Once a year (typically at the August Leadership Summit), Mayflower's leaders take time to think corporately about who is being raised up behind them. A culture of handoff is built across the body, not just in private conversations.

A Closing Word

Moses trained Joshua. Paul trained Timothy. Jesus poured Himself into the Twelve, then sent them out. Handing off leadership well is not the failure of leadership — it is one of its highest expressions. Mayflower will be served by leaders who hold their roles loosely, develop those coming behind them, and trust the Lord with what they hand off.

If you are reading this because a handoff is on your mind, please talk with your supervising leader. You do not have to walk this alone.

Pastoral Emergency-Coverage Plan

Status

Implementation status: Approved

Purpose

To ensure the ministry of the Word, shepherding care, and church governance continue without interruption when the Senior Pastor is suddenly or temporarily unavailable. This entry covers short-term and emergency absence. It does not replace the provision for a pastoral vacancy in the Mayflower Constitution and Bylaws.

Scope

- **Planned absence** (vacation, study leave, illness with notice): handled in advance using the Leadership Handoff Guidelines.
- **Sudden absence or incapacity** (emergency, hospitalization, death): governed by this plan.
- **Vacancy** (resignation, removal, death): the church follows the Interim Pastor provision of the Mayflower Constitution and Bylaws (Article II) and the Guidelines for Seeking a Pastor (SBC). This plan bridges only until that process begins.

Coverage in the Senior Pastor's absence

1. **Shepherding oversight** passes to the Board of Elders as a body. The Board designates a lead elder who serves as the primary point of contact and coordinates coverage.
2. **Pulpit supply.** The Lord's Day sermon is covered by members of the Board of Elders and approved pulpit-supply preachers. The Elders approve every supply preacher for confessional alignment before he preaches.
3. **Pastoral care and counseling.** Urgent care and crisis counseling are handled by the Director of Biblical Counseling under the oversight of the Board of Elders.
4. **Convening and meetings.** The Moderator presides over any business meeting. In the Senior Pastor's absence the lead elder may call the Boards together for organization, consistent with Article II of the Mayflower Constitution and Bylaws.
5. **Communications.** The Church Secretary routes urgent matters to the lead elder and, when needed, informs the congregation in plain terms.

Trigger and escalation

On a sudden absence, the Board of Elders convenes within 48 hours, confirms coverage for the coming Lord's Day, and designates the lead elder. If the absence is expected to extend beyond six months or becomes a vacancy, the Elders initiate the Interim Pastor process under Article II.

Governance reference

- Mayflower Constitution and Bylaws, Article II (Pastors, Officers and Boards; Interim Pastor; Moderator).
- Leadership Handoff Guidelines (Book 12).

Review

Reviewed annually by the Board of Elders.

Part of the Operations Plan.