



Principles of Association

Purpose of the Church

The church is to make, baptize and teach disciples of Jesus Christ in fulfillment of the Great Commission¹. The church is to build those disciples to love the LORD in the depth of the Great Commandment² and is to exhort them to manifest the LORD's presence in all arenas and in all circumstances³.

¹Matthew 28:19-20; ²Matthew 22:37-38; ³Isaiah 43:1-7 and 1 Corinthians 10:31

Benefits and Commitments of Association

In acting upon the church's purpose, FiveStone Churches recognizes the value of multiplying the reach of ministry by planting local churches and by associating with existing local churches for the purposes of renewal and strengthening.

FiveStone Churches intends to bless all member churches through the mutual exchange of ministry, consulting services, research, conferences and seed money devoted to church planting and leader development.

FiveStone Churches believes in a biblical standard of autonomous, elder-governed local churches. "We influence by relationship, not mandate."

God is glorified when like-minded church leaders associate with one another in order to foster relationships that Edify, Protect, Encourage and Support.

Independence and Autonomy of the Local Church

FiveStone Churches is committed to the independence and autonomy of the local church led by a plurality of elders chosen from within the local congregation. FiveStone Churches is not to control the local church and its leaders but, rather, is to influence by relationship, not mandate. We Edify, Protect, Encourage and Support church leaders and rely on healthy relationships to influence churches toward courageous and steadfast faithfulness to the LORD in the work of ministry.

Partner and Supporting Churches

Categories of FiveStone Churches members:

- Partner
- Supporting

Distinctives of a Partner Church:

- adopts and abides by the FiveStone Churches *Principles of Doctrine, Government and Practice*.
- adopts and abides by the FiveStone Churches *Principles of Association*.
- one or two members of a Partner Church may be represented on the Elders Council.

Distinctives of a Partner Church with representation on the Elders Council:

- adopts and abides by the FiveStone Churches *Principles of Doctrine, Government and Practice*.
- adopts and abides by the FiveStone Churches *Principles of Association*.
- one or two members of a Partner Church may be represented on the Elders Council.
- determines, with other Elders Council members, when and whether a church should be added to or removed from the Elders Council and/or from the FiveStone Churches organization;
- faithfully participates in and shares the responsibilities involved in Elders Council meetings and activities.
- serves a two-year term on the Elders Council, and may roll off of the Elders Council after the two-year service commitment is completed;
- if, after completing a two-year term, a Partner church rolls off of its seat(s) on the Elders Council, that church will remain off of the Elders Council for at least one year;
- a Partner church that rolls off of the Elders Council has the option—if the current Elders Council members agree by consensus—to roll both seats back onto the Elders Council for another two-year term after the one-year absence is completed;

Distinctives of a Supporting Church:

- adopts and abides by the FiveStone Churches *Principles of Doctrine, Government and Practice*;
- adopts and abides by the FiveStone Churches *Principles of Association*;
- no representation on the Elders Council.
- a Supporting Church will move to Partner Church status at the beginning of its third year of participation as a Supporting Church.
- after a church has attained Partner Church status, the church will remain as a Partner Church for as long as it participates in FiveStone Churches.

Independence and Autonomy of FiveStone Churches

FiveStone Churches is an independent organization and is not, and never will be, a ministry arm of any individual church. The organization is governed and protected by a board—the **Elders Council**—which is primarily composed of pastors and elders from a selection of the organization's member churches. The Elders Council functions as a true governing board and will not function as a titular or nominal advisory board.

Composition of the Elders Council

- Senior Pastors from select Partner Churches;
- a member of a FiveStone Churches Partner church who serves as Executive Director of FiveStone Churches;
- leaders of Partner churches or FiveStone Churches staff or others from outside the FiveStone network as deemed appropriate by existing members of the Elders Council.

Responsibilities of the Elders Council

The Elders Council provides governance and protection to FiveStone Churches. The Elders Council serves as a true governing board and is not to function as a titular or nominal advisory board.

The relationship of the Elders Council to its Executive Director is similar to the relationship of a church's elder board to its senior pastor. As the senior pastor of a local church moves as a primary leader among the church's elders, so the Executive Director of FiveStone Churches is to move as a primary leader in relationships within the Elders Council and among the leaders of member churches. The Executive Director is responsible to cast vision and execute organizational direction as agreed by the Elders Council.

The Elders Council:

- determines whether a church will be received into participation in the FiveStone Churches network;
- determines whether a specific Partner church will be added or removed from representation on the Elders Council;
- approves investment of seed money for efforts to plant and renew churches;
- will conduct quarterly business meetings or meetings as it deems appropriate;
- will conduct an annual meeting.
- desires to bless member churches through the mutual exchange of ministry, consulting services, research, conferences and seed money devoted to church planting and leadership development.

The leadership of FiveStone Churches:

- recommends to the Elders Council all church planting and church renewal and church strengthening efforts;
- casts vision and creates plans and programs to prepare senior pastor candidates and other leaders for the work of ministry;
- recommends investment of seed money for efforts to plant or renew local churches;
- helps the senior pastor of a planted or renewed church in the selection of elders for the church;
- participates with the elders of a local church in selecting a new Senior Pastor for any church planted or renewed by FiveStone Churches whose Senior Pastor leaves that role for any reason within the first five years of the church's first worship service.

Funding the work of FiveStone Churches

The work of FiveStone Churches will be funded by each Partner Church and each Supporting Church according to guidelines set and approved by the Elders Council. The Elders Council has sole authority to revise any aspect of the contributions schedule as it deems appropriate and commensurate for all member churches.

The following guidelines govern contributions from member churches:

- in the fourth calendar quarter of each year, the Elders Council will establish a monthly contribution schedule for compliance by all member churches in the subsequent calendar year.
- contributions begin in the first month of a church's participation as a Partner or Supporting member of FiveStone Churches.