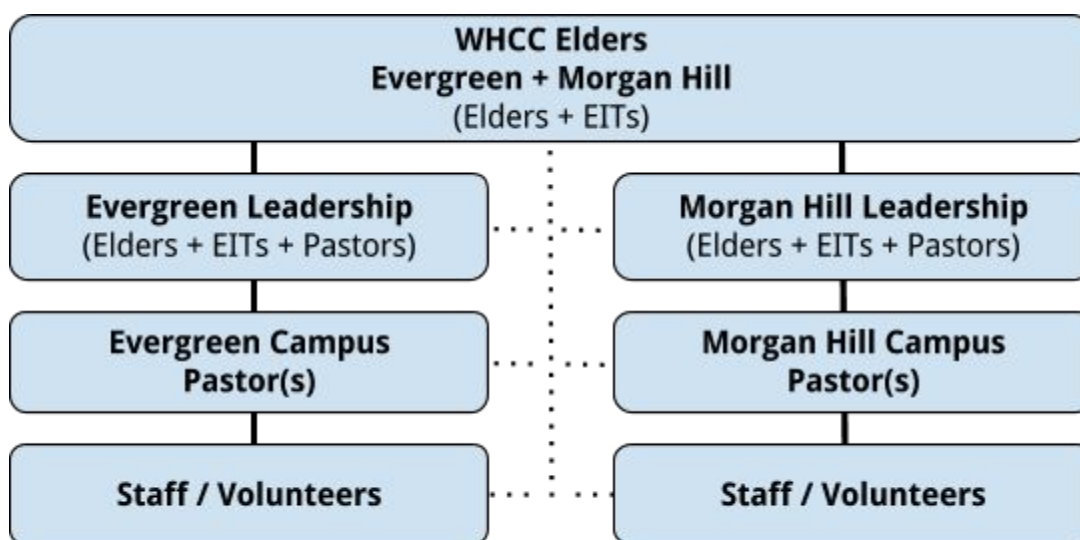


# West Hills Community Church Leadership and Operational Structure

## How does the leadership team function at West Hills?

Everyone who serves at West Hills regardless of title — elders, pastors, staff and volunteers — does so under Jesus' authority. Jesus Christ is the head of the church. He is our chief shepherd and pastor. Elders and others who exercise authority do it in His authority as servant leaders (1 Peter 5:3-4). God uses people with varying gifts and roles to carry out the work of the ministry (Romans 12:3-8, Ephesians 4:11-14).

West Hills is an elder led church. Our elders are responsible to God for shepherding His people (Hebrews 13:17), and carry out this role by working within a leadership team consisting of elders, elders-in-training (EITs), and pastors. This team is made up of people who have different gifts and abilities who work together to shepherd our church family. While there is a structure, we do not operate as a strict hierarchy. The leadership team, staff, and volunteers work together to serve one another and our church family in mutual humility.



.... Dotted lines indicate that we are not strictly hierarchical. Decisions and issues can be taken to the full elder board if needed for discussion and input.

We operate on the principle of unity rather than majority rule (where votes determine what is done). No one person has absolute authority except for Jesus, our ultimate Head. No one person is autonomous in authority or responsibility.

## How does the West Hills leadership structure help protect leaders and the congregations they serve?

There are two significant concerns when appointing a pastor, elder or other leader. One concern is that a person may have unchecked authority resulting in bad decisions or abuse of power. The other significant concern is that a leader may carry too much responsibility for the ministry or too great a burden for people and be overwhelmed.

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The West Hills leadership structure protects us in both of these areas. No one person has full authority. The fact that we have a plurality of leaders with authority residing with the elders as a group means that every leader — elder, pastor, staff or volunteer — serves under the authority of the elder board. Nothing we do as a church is off limits for the elders to ask about, help with or provide direction to.

The West Hills leadership structure is intended to release people to use their differing skills, gifts and roles and to share the workload. This mitigates one person being overwhelmed with responsibility since the authority and responsibility for ministry is carried by a group of people. Practically this looks like sharing elders, staff and volunteers within a congregation and between our congregations when a need arises.

### **How are West Hills congregations the same? How are they different?**

West Hills is one church which currently has two congregations. We are committed to establishing additional congregations if in God's providence there is an opportunity for gospel ministry in a particular location or among a particular group of people.

There are different models for aligning multiple congregations. On one end of the spectrum are churches where all congregations are nearly identical in how they look and operate, very much like a chain such as Starbucks. On the other end of the spectrum are denominational churches where each congregation is essentially a separate entity with no significant connection to any other congregation. The West Hills model has elements of both.

Congregations subscribe to the same mission, philosophy and doctrine. They also share common legal, financial and business operations. They align in things that contribute most to effective gospel ministry across our church family and in places we serve. They have freedom to contextualize in areas that best support gospel ministry to a specific group of people or location.

Some ministry areas are shared across campuses because they provide practical benefit. Some of these benefits include releasing people and resources to the work of the ministry and working together to accomplish more than any one congregation could do on its own.

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**Some areas are shared because they relate to core aspects of who we are as a church family or because there is a significant benefit in working together across our congregations.**

**Under the West Hills model, the following areas are shared by or aligned to support all congregations:**

- Core beliefs
- Core values
- Philosophy of ministry <sup>1</sup>
- Elder process <sup>2</sup>
- Deacon process <sup>3</sup>
- Membership process <sup>4</sup>
- Business operations
- Missions
- Counseling
- Benevolence
- All-congregation events / initiatives

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<sup>1</sup> Applies to elements/areas specifically approved by the elder board as applicable to all campuses. Examples would be existing or future documents that articulate a philosophy of ministry for worship, preaching, counseling, missions, benevolence or other areas important for alignment. Philosophy of ministry refers to the foundational ideas and concepts that underlie processes, policies or ministry activities.

<sup>2</sup> Process features a common set of critical steps and criteria but has room for flexibility in execution at the congregation level. For example, elder candidates are equipped to be elders in West Hills before being installed; the specific books / actions used to equip a particular elder may be different from congregation to congregation.

<sup>3</sup> Process features a common set of critical steps and criteria but has room for flexibility in execution at the congregation level. For example, deacon candidates must meet the character requirements of Scripture, but may be identified in multiple ways at the congregation level.

<sup>4</sup> Process features a common set of critical steps and criteria but has room for flexibility in execution at the congregation level. For example, membership shares a common membership agreement but individual congregations may have different approaches to how new members are assimilated (e.g., a class or a one on one meeting).

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**Some areas are better aligned to the needs of an individual congregation. The following are examples of ministry areas that are contextualized to individual congregations:**

- Order of service
- Music
- Community groups
- Congregation specific events / initiatives
- Children's ministry
- Youth ministry
- Facilities
- Volunteers

Regardless of if an activity is shared or unique to a congregation, all activities occur under the authority of the West Hills elders and are overseen by the local campus elders. The West Hills elders may adjust these areas depending on opportunities the Lord presents to our church family.

### **How do West Hills staff members from different congregations work together?**

West Hills has vocational staff who due to being employed by West Hills have the unique opportunity to focus fully on gospel ministry in our church family. Some of our staff have duties related to a single congregation, while others have duties that support all congregations.

The congregation(s) served and specific role / duties a staff has are under the authority of the elders. Staff roles, duties and congregation served are subject to congregation needs and based on skills, gifts, interests and ministry experience.

Although staff may be assigned to a particular congregation or ministry area, West Hills operates for the overall good of Jesus' body. Therefore, all staff are expected to maintain unity in Christ in support of the ministry God has given West Hills as a whole (Eph. 4:2-4).

Practically this means three things:

- Staff from all congregations meet together as needed to take an active interest in each other's ministries for the purposes of encouragement, accountability, coordination, and partnership.
- Staff work together to support critical needs and emergencies within our church body even if those needs are in another congregation or ministry area.

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- Staff actively seek the good of other ministry areas and congregations even if there is an element of personal sacrifice in doing so such as releasing a valued volunteer to another area or volunteering for a project to help another staff or congregation out.