



Church Governance and the Most Common Types

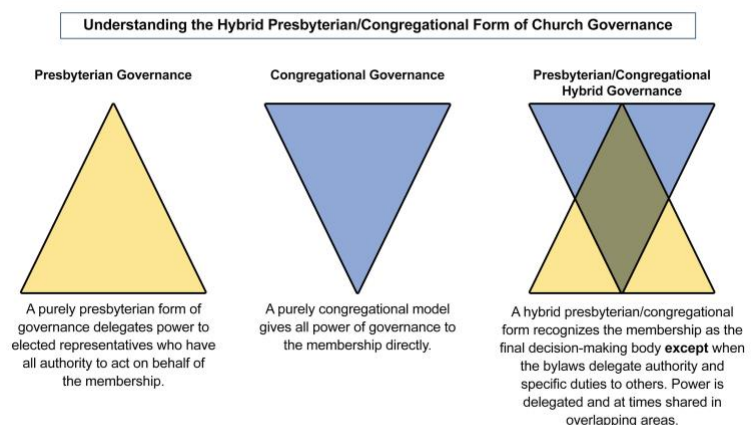
Although every church affiliated with the Assemblies of God shares similar doctrine, sovereign churches are given the freedom to choose their own governance, values, and vision. If you are in an already established church, you will want to know what your bylaws say about your church's governance.

The vision and doctrine of a church are important; but how a church makes decisions, who makes them, and the parameters of accountability are called governance. It sounds like a boring word, but governance is important if a person wants to be part of a church that can be trusted. There are three basic types of church governance:

1. **Episcopal governance** is an elaborate hierarchical structure with one priest or bishop who answers to another who answers to another until there is one potentate at the top who has final authority. They have clear lines of authority, but the lack of accountability can be problematic.
2. **Congregational governance** is the opposite. Church members meet to make all the decisions about budgets, ministries, policy, and even personnel. While everyone has a voice, these churches can be plagued with division, are often slow to change, and are usually small.
3. **Presbyterian governance** delegates authority and responsibility to elected representatives who have all authority to act on behalf of the congregation. They representatives can be effective but can also become disconnected and create an "us versus them" environment.

Most Assemblies of God churches embrace a hybrid presbyterian/congregational form of church government. See the illustration to the right.

This hybrid model recognizes the membership as the final decision-making body of the church but delegates authority and duties to others to act on their behalf. Power is delegated and, at times, even shared in overlapping areas. This enables most Assemblies of God churches to have sufficient accountability structures while, at the same time, benefitting from a board of directors and being led by visionary leadership. It helps with being accountable, decisive, and responsive all at the same time.



You can also watch an explainer video explaining the three common types of church governance at this link: [https://youtu.be/ K7wL37fXJo](https://youtu.be/K7wL37fXJo)