

# Why does the Network need to figure out what it is?

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One of the things that the Network needs to reform is that it needs to identify what it is. There is a great deal of opportunity for confusion and dishonesty in Network churches without a clear definition of what the Network is.

I've lived through this myself. In the process of coming to the conclusion that we need to leave the Network because Steve Morgan is disqualified by his dishonesty and the Network Leadership team disqualified by their sin in showing partiality to Steve Morgan and protecting themselves above the flocks that they are shepherding, there arose disagreements about what the Network is. Others, including my dear friend and the pastor at South Grove, claim that Steve Morgan and the Network Leadership team are not his leaders, that they don't have leadership authority over our church. I see it very differently, both on paper and in practice. This, in part, led to the resignation of 2/3 of South Grove's board and the departure of several core families at South Grove.

It's also important to understand lines of accountability, where local churches' Network dues go and what they're used for. It's important to understanding local church governance.

For many of us, we've heard over and over that it is loose affiliation of churches held together by relationships.

In 2022, it is very difficult to believe that line. The Network prescribes quite a lot of things to their member churches. Many of these are prescribed in a publication that Steve Morgan wrote called "Our Story and How We Do Church." Originally I read this publication when it was shared to me by my local church pastor. Now, it is [publicly available through the folks at LeavingTheNetwork.org](#). Even so long ago as 11 years (a long time as the Network is reckoned), there was a great deal prescribed.

The format of Sunday Service is prescribed:

- It must include announcements, and prescribes how they're done. The person doing announcements must not be awkward. That person must be warm and confident. Announcements must be brief. If a church does worship first, announcements take place immediately after worship ends.
- Preaching is prescribed to be topical, expository preaching.
- Preaching schedules need to be planned out 6 – 12 months in advance.
- A series should be 3 – 6 weeks long.
- Preaching should last between 30 and 40 minutes.
- Pastors must preach from a simple, one page outline.
- Worship through song is prescribed to be 20 to 25 minutes (3-4 songs).
- Music must be "quality."
- Specific worship leader behaviors are required: do this, don't do that.
- A service always concludes with prayer.
- Prayer is "hands on prayer." The Network prescribes *how to pray*.

How a church does small groups is prescribed by the Network.

How the Board of Overseers / Elders functions is prescribed by the Network.

- The board should be small for a new church, 3 – 4 members, and should include the "sending" pastor.
- Board members are appointed by the lead pastor, ratified by existing overseers.
- Decisions must be made unanimously.
- When a church gets over 300 people, it may increase its board to 5, and later maybe 6.

The Network prescribes Team Meetings, including that this is the place where the Lord's Supper is taken. This is also the time reserved for "exercising spiritual gifts."

The path to membership in a local church is prescribed by the Network.

How churches are planted is controlled by the Network.

Training church planting pastors is done by the Network.

## The Network has much more control than we cared to admit.

The bylaws make that control clear as well.

The Network has officers and established leadership. It has standards for removal of its leaders.

The Network can remove a church.

A local church is not entitled to vote on "Network decisions."

Meanwhile, several local church decisions require the consent of the Network Area Coach – removal of a member of the local church board of overseers, or removal of a lead pastor.

The appointment of a new Lead Pastor requires the approval of the **entire Network Leadership team**.

Network churches **agree to function under the coaching and leadership of the Network Leadership team**. Each church and their board agree to follow the leadership of the Network Leadership team.

Each church gives 5% of its tithes to the Network.

## The Network needs to admit what it is and act accordingly.

It is simply deceptive to suggest that the Network does not have control over local churches. While the Network Leadership team and the Network Area Coaches may choose to strategically wield the power with a lot of leeway (as was the case for South Grove in its area), the power remains. The obligation to follow the Network Leadership remains. The prescriptions on "how we do church" remain.

Either the Network must relinquish its power and be what it claims to be – a loose affiliation of churches held together by relationships – or fess up to what it is: a small denominational hierarchy with federated control.

To continue on pretending to be something that it is not is dishonest.

November 17, 2022 jason  [Uncategorized](#)

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