

# Restructuring OPEN BIBLE

By Jeff Farmer, President

Sitting at my computer, thinking to myself: “How can I make this article appealing?”

Clamoring in my head: “It’s impossible.”

Sticking my heels in the sand: “By God’s grace I will!”

You see, the readership of the *Message of the Open Bible* extends far beyond our credentialed ministers. Those readers represent friends, relatives, congregants, and even colleagues in other movements. Their interest is not our corporate structure, but our passion and intention to fulfill the Great Commission. So in all likelihood they will skip my tantalizing title, “Restructuring Open Bible,” in favor of “Testify,” “News Around the World,” or hopefully the “President’s Perspective.”

I am guessing 40 percent of our ministers have an active interest in the current restructure initiative. Another 40 percent are relatively disengaged, but aware something is up. And probably 20 percent are just too busy to read about it, or don’t think it will impact their local church.

These “guesstimated” numbers will change as we approach June 2007 – our Biennial National Convention in Spokane, Washington. There the

highest governing body of our movement, the Association Convention Floor (registered ordained and regularly licensed Open Bible ministers and officially registered and seated church delegates), will approve a revised constitution and bylaws that contain restructure recommendations.

Yuk! Dry already. Does it help to understand the goal of this process is to reach one more lost sheep? Or a hundred, or thousands!! Every time one more lamb is rescued, heaven throws a party. More joy, to be sure, than for the ninety and nine sheep.

A strategic prayer and planning group carved out “Principles for Restructure.” They are important and should be revisited often in prayer:

- Our mission is to “Make and release disciples, plant churches, and send missionaries.”
- The local church is where mission happens.
- National and regional bodies cannot accomplish the mission but can influence its accomplishment through local churches.
- The primary focus of these bodies should be on “islands of health.”

- Restructure should not be done unless it results in genuine missional effectiveness.

From the beginning, prayer has been the foundation of all restructure activity and continues to be elevated as the single most important pursuit in this process. Open Bible has a rare opportunity during this hinge in history to hear afresh from God, and to get it right on our watch – in this hour – in this generation.

We all know the Church in America is asleep – or anemic at best. Meantime the Church in persecuted and poverty stricken nations is experiencing an outbreak from God. We can and we must have the same spiritual awakening, through prayer and fasting, and by embracing presence instead of programs, revival instead of ritual.

A task force of pastors and leaders conducted significant

research and carved out core values to serve as a compass for the National Board. The National Board is now in its fifth draft of recommendations as they remind themselves that “mission flows from a condition of the heart, not an organizational structure. Growth patterns in Open Bible will ultimately be measured by broken hearts of

compassion and unbending resolve to Great Commission obedience.”

Detailed restructure recommendations coming from the Board can be viewed in draft form (remember they keep changing as the Board fine tunes them) on our Web site: [www.openbible.org](http://www.openbible.org). In broad strokes the philosophic underpinnings driving the major changes are as follows:

- A change from election to appointment with ratification (except the president);
- A change from maintenance to mission effectiveness (thus accountability);
- A change from the paralysis of policy to flexibility and freedom (a permission-granting culture);
- A change from nationally-led programs to regional innovation and partnership with local churches.

Open Bible wants to lead from the throne room as well as the board room. Our greatest days will come when courageous shepherds lead their local churches into desperate cities and communities. Your prayers for our pastors and leaders are deeply coveted.



Jeff Farmer is President of Open Bible Churches. Prior to his election as President in 1995, he was the president of Eugene Bible College.

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