



MODEL E Region-Pastor-Elder Council Governance Model Bylaws

Importance

ARTICLE 1. NAME, PURPOSE, AND MISSION

The name of this corporation is (Name of church). The purpose of the (Name of church), hereafter referred to as the church, is to glorify God and bring people to Jesus Christ using all methods and means to globally make disciples, develop leaders, and plant churches. The church's mission as a nonprofit religious corporation, organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, and educational purposes, is to minister to spiritual, emotional, physical, and social needs.

ARTICLE 2. OFFICE AND LOCATIONS

The principal office of the church is in (City, State). The elder council of the church may change the principal office from one location to another with approval from the regional board. Any such change shall be recorded in corporation minutes, but shall not be processed as an amendment to these bylaws. The elder council may establish places to conduct meetings.

ARTICLE 3. AFFILIATION AND GOVERNANCE

Section 1. Affiliation

(Name of church) is a member church by affiliation with Open Bible Churches, an Iowa corporation, having agreed to abide by the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual. Our statement of faith shall be consistent with the Statement of Faith of Open Bible Churches. The church is an integral part of the (Name of region) Region of Open Bible Churches, an (Name of state) corporation.

Section 2. Governance Documents, Records, and Reports

The church shall keep and maintain at least the following corporate documents:

- A. Articles of Incorporation and amendments;
- B. Statement of Faith and amendments;
- C. Bylaws of the church and amendments;
- D. Current partnership record, with contact information;
- E. Minutes of meetings of the elder council;
- F. Financial reports and records; and
- G. Open Bible Manual.

TITLE: Required

Required of all corporations.

CONTENT: Strongly Recommended

You do not have to use this exact language.

Remember this is not your vision, which involves ministry specifics; it is the grand purpose/reason for why you exist as a church, the mission God has given you as a body.

LAST SENTENCE: Required

This sentence is a requirement of the IRS to show compliance with section 501(c)(3).

TITLE: Required

All corporations must officially establish their business location.

CONTENT: Strongly Recommended

Under this form of governance, regional board is the proper entity to have this authority.

TITLE: Required

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required

According to the bylaws of the Association this is a requirement of affiliation. The Open Bible Manual defines and guides our partnership and decisions.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required

You may add to this list, however, this is the minimal list of corporate documents all affiliated churches are required to keep on file. It is for your church's protection.



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Section 3. Availability of Records

All records shall be open at all times to the inspection of the lead pastor, church’s elder council, the regional board, and national and regional representatives of Open Bible Churches, and to all other parties as required by state law.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Required
Accountability and state law requirement

Section 4. Reports

The lead pastor, officers and members of the elder council shall submit reports requested by the regional board or by authorized national and regional representatives of Open Bible Churches, giving a full and accurate accounting of spiritual activities, attendance, property, and finances.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Required
Accountability requirement

Section 5. Governance Conflicts and Omissions

When there is a conflict between bylaws of the church and the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual, or when the bylaws of the church are silent, the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual shall prevail. In the event of a conflict between any provisions in the Open Bible Manual or bylaws of the church between the laws or regulations of the state, county, or city, only the provision in conflict shall be of no effect. The church believes in abiding by the laws and regulations of its country, state, county, and city. However, should a situation arise where any law or regulation of the country, state, county, or city is in opposition to or impinges on the closely held religious beliefs of the church, as espoused in the Open Bible Manual, the church reserves the right to utilize its First Amendment right to the free exercise of religion (Acts 4:1-21).

TITLE: Required
FIRST TWO SENTENCES: Required
LAST TWO SENTENCES: Recommended
There should not be confusion, which can lead to conflict, about the source of authority to which all levels of the Association, ministers, and affiliated churches subscribe. This also is a protection against state, county, and city laws and regulations invalidating the entirety of your church’s bylaws if there is but one point of conflict between your bylaws and government regulations.

Section 6. Personal Liability

The private property of directors, officers, partners, the region and members of the regional board of directors, and partners of this church shall be exempt from corporate debts and liabilities.

TITLE: Strongly Advised
CONTENT: Strongly Advised
You need to protect your leaders from claims against their personal property.

Section 7. Officer and Director Indemnity

No officer, director or employee acting in accordance with bylaws shall be liable except for willful misconduct. No officer, director or employee shall be liable for any action taken by that person in good faith in furtherance of the ordinary affairs of the corporation, even though not authorized by the bylaws then in effect.

TITLE: Recommended
CONTENT: Recommended



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ARTICLE 4. PARTNERS

Section 1. Definition

Partners are individuals who regularly worship with, participate in and support the ministries of the church, have completed a required partnership course, and subscribe to the statement of faith of the church. Partners exercise privileges of participation but have no vote in the governance of the church. (Name of Church) has no members.

Section 2. Eligibility

Any individual desiring partnership must attend the church on a consistent basis for (insert time period, such as three months) and:

- A. Demonstrate evidence of a new birth experience and a consistent, Christian life. (John 1:12-13, 3:3-7; Acts 4:12; Romans 6:4, 10:9-10; Ephesians 4:17-32, 5:1-2; 1 John 1:6, 7.)
- B. Demonstrate a cooperative, accountable, and Christ-like spirit as instructed in Scripture. (Ephesians 2:1-16.)
- C. Commit to faithfully attend and participate in the meetings and ministries of the church and regularly contribute to its financial support in obedience to Scripture and as an expression of unity with fellow partners. (Malachi 3:10; Luke 6:38; John 13:1-17; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8, 9; Philippians 4:9.)
- D. Subscribe to the statement of faith of the church.
- E. Abstain from all immorality condemned in Scripture, which shall be considered grounds for refusing partnership.

Section 3. Process for Acceptance

- A. Individuals desiring to be partners of the church shall request to enroll in the partnership class. The lead pastor will evaluate and determine readiness for enrollment. The class shall include, but not be limited to, the purpose and mission, statement of faith, history, bylaws, and governance structure of the church, the responsibilities and privileges of partnership, and relationship with Open Bible Churches. Class participants shall receive a copy of the church bylaws.
- B. Upon completion of the partnership class, participants shall submit a signed affirmation to the lead pastor they are in accord with the purpose, statement of faith, bylaws, and the pastors and leaders of the church. The lead pastor and elder council shall inform class participants of their acceptance as partners.

Section 4. Privileges

Privileges of partnership include but are not limited to:

TITLE: Required

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: *Recommended for the region-pastor-elder council model of governance.*

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Recommended

You may rewrite membership, eligibility requirements for your church. This is a basic standard of eligibility that covers the essence of membership without appearing legalistic. Some churches may decide to specifically include tithing as a financial requirement. Some churches may begin the membership age at 18. Some churches may feel certain sinful actions, such as homosexuality, ought to be specifically proscribed, although item F calls for members to abstain from all immorality condemned in Scripture.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Strongly advised

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Strongly Advised



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- A. Spiritual Covering** – Have the benefit of a spiritual covering from those whom God has placed over them in leadership of the church.
- B. Participation** – Have opportunity to attend the worship services and functions of the church.
- C. Fellowship** – Have opportunity to receive the intangible benefits of fellowship with this body of believers and the added relationship with the Open Bible family of churches, covenanting to grow together in community, love, and grace.
- D. Instruction** – Have opportunity to benefit from balanced doctrine and teaching from the Word of God.
- E. Spiritual Growth** – Have opportunity to grow in service to the Lord through the church as giftings are recognized by the lead pastor and church leaders and nurtured and activated through training and teaching.
- F. Ministry** – Have opportunity of involvement in outreach ministries through the church, extending through the Open Bible family of churches in the United States and around the world.
- G. Partnership** – Have voice and vote in church matters, as defined in these bylaws.
- H. Giving** – Have opportunity to sow financially into the ministries of the church by honoring the Lord with their first fruits – bringing their tithes, offerings, and other gifts of love to the church for His work.
- I. Accountability** – Have the assurance Open Bible Churches provides a covering of accountability for their pastors and governing board.

Section 5. Responsibilities

The Apostle Paul admonishes us to be devoted to brotherly love, honoring one another above ourselves (Romans 12:10). Accordingly, partners of the church shall demonstrate a maturity of understanding that partnership involves more than receiving benefits and privileges. Jesus instructs us, as we have freely received, we must also freely give (Matthew 10:8). The church is one body with many partners each with distinct giftings and functions, and therefore partners shall accept responsibility to submit their lives and activities (Romans 12:1) through:

- A. Prayer** – Cultivate a personal prayer life and be faithfully devoted to consistently pray for the pastor and leaders, partners and ministries, and participate in the prayer focuses of the church.
- B. Faithfulness** – Be faithful to the doctrines of the church’s statement of faith, to assemble for worship, to establish healthy relationships with the church body, and to grow in fellowship.
- C. Love and Care** – Walk in love and demonstrate loving care for the church body, personally making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.
- D. Identification** – Identify with and demonstrate loyalty to the purpose, mission, vision, leadership, and teachings of the church and accept this church body as the focus of their fellowship, prayer, offerings, and teachings.
- E. Teachable Spirit** – Desire to grow in the grace of the Lord, maintain teachable spirits, and follow the teachings of the pastors and church leaders.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Strongly Advised

CONTENT A-H: Strongly Advised



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- F. **Service** – Humbly pursue opportunities for involvement in the ministries of the church as abilities and giftings are recognized by the pastors and leaders of the church.
- G. **Financial Support** – Financially support the church through tithes, offerings, and gifts in like measure as the Lord blesses, recognizing God uses financial support to enable the church to fulfill its purpose, mission, and vision.
- H. **Witnessing** – Follow biblical instruction to lead others to Christ and make disciples.

Section 6. Discipline

- A. **Purpose** – Discipline is a biblical exercise for which God holds the church responsible and accountable. Its design is to preserve Bible standards, protect integrity and anointing, and bring the offender to repentance, redemption, and restoration to God, self, family, and others. (2 Samuel 12:1-14; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:3-11; Galatians 6:1-5; James 5:19-20.) In the spirit of Galatians 6:1-2, the church is committed to the healing and restoration of the fallen.
- B. **Process** – Partners other than the lead pastor found guilty of conduct contrary to Scripture, teaching contrary to the statement of faith, causing conflict among the partners, or failure to be in harmony or cooperation with the program of the church, the lead pastor, or these bylaws shall be confronted first by the lead pastor and, if necessary, by the elder council and regional board. The regional board may be asked to intervene by the lead pastor or elder council with partner discipline. Partners who refuse to repent or receive corrective discipline in the spirit of restoration may be dismissed from partnership by the regional board upon recommendation of the lead pastor. Partners accused of wrongdoing or under discipline forfeit the right to resign from partnership. Resignations from partnership are possible only by partners not accused of wrongdoing and not under discipline. Partners who are dismissed from partnership shall be notified by mail by the secretary of the church.

ARTICLE 5. CORPORATE OFFICERS

The officers of the church corporation shall be the lead pastor, who shall serve as president, a secretary, a treasurer and, if so determined by the regional board, a vice president.

Section 1. Eligibility

An officer must be a partner in good standing of the church and living a godly Christian life.

CONTENT: Strongly Advised

This section could be much more expansive. Some churches, particularly Presbyterian in governance, include lengthy, detailed, disciplinary procedures in their bylaws. We do not believe bylaws should be burdened with detailed discipline content. However, it is important for your bylaws to define discipline and explain how it is applied. That is what this model content accomplishes and why it is strongly advised.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required

Corporate officers must be listed. Most affiliated, church corporations do not have vice presidents. This only makes provision for a vice president to accommodate churches that function with a vice president. If you prefer, you may delete the V.P. portion and conclude with treasurer.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Recommended



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Section 2. Appointment and Term of Office

The lead pastor shall be the president of the corporation for a term concurrent with service as lead pastor. Upon recommendation of the lead pastor, the regional board shall appoint, continue in office, or terminate the other officers of the corporation and determine terms of service.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Strongly Advised

This linkage of lead pastor and president of the corporation should be clear.

Section 3. Vacancy or Incapacity

In the event of a vacancy or incapacity of an officer other than the president, upon recommendation of the lead pastor, the regional board shall appoint a successor and determine the term of service.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Strongly Advised

Section 4. Resignation

Except for the office of president, officers shall provide 30 days written, signed notice of resignation to the president.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Strongly Advised

Should not be less than 30 days.

Section 5. Accountability

The president shall be accountable to the regional board and the elder council. Other officers shall be accountable to the regional board and the president for faithfulness and fulfillment of their duties.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required

All officers of a corporation must have lines of accountability, the president to the regional board and the elder council and other officers to the president.

Section 6. Duties

- A. President** – The president is the chief executive officer of the church corporation, implements the directives of the regional board, is a member of the elder council, and shall act as chairman of all meetings of the elder council. The president shall serve as member ex-officio of all church bodies and organizations of the church.
- B. Secretary** – The secretary shall keep accurate minutes of all elder council meetings and may act as secretary of any other body or committee as desired by the lead pastor. The secretary shall provide for the safekeeping of all records and documents of the church, sign legal papers, and perform other duties as required by the lead pastor and regional board.
- C. Treasurer** – The treasurer shall supervise the receipt and deposit of all funds of the church in accordance with the finance provisions of these bylaws. The treasurer shall keep accurate records of all receipts and disbursements, maintain and distribute donor receipts according to IRS policy, submit monthly reports to the lead pastor, elder council and regional board, and an annual and other reports requested to the regional board. With the approval of the regional board, the treasurer shall establish an accountable plan of internal control. All records shall be open at all times to inspection by the lead pastor, members of the elder council, national and regional representatives of Open Bible Churches, and to other parties as required by state law.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required

This required content sufficiently details corporate duties that must be assumed and carried out by officers. If you add a vice president, those duties must be stated as item B., before Secretary.



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Section 7. Combined Offices

One person may hold two or more offices, except the office of the president.

TITLE: Recommended

CONTENT: Required

Some churches combine the secretary and treasurer responsibilities, which this accommodates. However the president should never assume an additional officer position – too much control in one person.

Section 8. Discipline

The president shall be under the disciplinary authority of Open Bible Churches. Other officers shall be under the disciplinary authority of the regional board.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required

Because the lead pastor is the president, discipline of the president is under Open Bible Churches.

ARTICLE 6. GOVERNING BOARD

Section 1. Definition

The regional board shall act as the governing board of the church and shall work in concert with the lead pastor and elder council in performing its responsibilities.

TITLE: Required

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required

Section 2. Responsibilities of Governing Board

The governing board shall:

- A. Serve as the board of directors of the corporation.
- B. Manage the legal and primary financial affairs of the church.
- C. Approve the annual budget, with salaries for all paid personnel.
- D. Authorize the purchase of insurance for all properties owned by the church.
- E. Conduct a biennial review of the lead pastor as prescribed in these bylaws.
- F. Approve all decisions regarding the sale, mortgage, lease, property use agreements, or purchase of real property.
- G. Sign legal papers such as deeds, mortgages, leases, and property use agreements that have been approved in accordance with these bylaws.
- H. Review all monthly financial reports.
- I. Appoint all staff pastors and other personnel, both paid and unpaid, upon recommendation of the lead pastor and elder council.
- J. Appoint the lead pastor of the church with input from the church’s elder council.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required

Section 3. Biennial Review

The regional board shall biennially review the lead pastor using tools provided by the regional executive director. Members of the elder council shall have opportunity to provide written, signed input during these reviews.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required



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- A. Satisfactory** – Upon completion of a satisfactory biennial review of the lead pastor, the regional board shall notify the pastor and the elder council.
- B. Unsatisfactory** – Upon completion of an unsatisfactory biennial review the lead pastor’s term of service shall cease. The lead pastor’s final day of service shall be 30 days after notice is given to the pastor, the elder council, and the partners.

ARTICLE 7. ELDER COUNCIL

Day-to-day operations of the church corporation are carried out by the elder council upon approval by the regional board.

Section 1. Definition

The elder council is an advisory body to the lead pastor and regional board.

Section 2. Eligibility

Members of the elder council shall be individuals whose character is consistent with the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9 and who demonstrate the gifting, ability, and maturity necessary to fulfill their duties. (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12:28-31.) A qualified candidate shall be a partner in good standing of the church for not less than 12 months.

Section 3. Composition

The elder council shall consist of not fewer than three individuals of legal age according state law, a majority of whom must be other than employees or staff and/or related to the lead pastor or other members of the elder council by blood or marriage. The lead pastor shall be a member of the advisory council and as serve chair.

Section 4. Appointment

The members of the elder council shall be nominated by the pastor and appointed by the regional board.

Section 5. Vacancy or Incapacity

In the event of a vacancy or incapacity of a member of the elder council, upon recommendation of the lead pastor, the regional board shall appoint a successor to fulfill the uncompleted term of service.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required

When a church’s highest governing authority is the regional board, the church must still have an elder council to handle the church’s day-to-day management.

TITLE: Required

Content: Required

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Strongly Advised

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Strongly Advised

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Strongly Advised



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Section 6. Term of Appointment

The term of appointment shall be one to three years. Terms of office shall commence from the date of appointment by the regional board, or as separately provided by the regional board. Members of the elder council may be reappointed, but no member may be appointed to an indefinite or life term.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Strongly Advised
LAST SENTENCE: Required

Section 7. Responsibilities

- A. Provide a spiritual covering of prayer, guidance, counsel, encouragement, fellowship, comfort, and relational accountability to the lead pastor and partners.
- B. Manage the daily care, maintenance, disbursements, and routine operational matters of properties owned by the church. Individual members of the elder council shall not independently make decisions in the name of the church.
- C. Assure accurate monthly records of the financial receipts and expenditures of the church are maintained and reported to the regional board.
- D. Provide counsel to the regional board in the pastoral-selection process.
- E. Handle all routine matters of the church.
- F. Initially arbitrate conflicts within the church.
- G. Communicate with the regional board on all substantive issues other than routine matters.
- H. Approve the development and discontinuance of church ministries or departments and committees, which shall be accountable to and their responsibilities and authority defined by the lead pastor and elder council.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Strongly Advised

Section 8. Accountability

The elder council is accountable to the lead pastor and the regional board.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Required

Section 9. Discipline

Members of the elder council shall be subject to discipline as prescribed in these bylaws for partners.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Required

Section 10. Dismissal

Members of the elder council may be dismissed for the causes prescribed in these bylaws for partners and by adhering to the process prescribed in these bylaws for partners.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Required

Section 11. Meetings and Quorum

Meetings of the elder council shall be held at least quarterly at places and times determined by the lead pastor. Notice shall be provided at least seven days in advance by publication in the church bulletin, newsletter, letter, or electronically. A majority of the elder council shall constitute a quorum.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Required

Section 12. Minutes

Minutes shall be kept of all meetings of the elder council and distributed to each council member.

TITLE: Required



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ARTICLE 8. LEAD PASTOR

Section 1. Definition

The lead pastor is the shepherd of the flock. The lead pastor, under the guidance of God, in consultation with the elder council of the church, and in partnership with Open Bible Churches, will provide vision and practical direction to the church body.

Section 2. Eligibility

The lead pastor shall exemplify the characteristics of a godly Christian life and possess the qualities of a spiritual leader as stated in 1 Timothy 3:1-13. The lead pastor shall be a credentialed minister in good standing with Open Bible Churches.

Section 3. Pastoral-Selection Process

The pastoral-selection process shall be conducted as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual for churches under the governance of the region-pastor-elder council model. The process will be under the leadership of the regional executive director or representative. The regional executive director or representative will work in consultation with the elder council to assist in a search for and selection of an eligible lead pastor.

Section 4. Pastoral Review

The regional board shall biennially review the lead pastor for purposes of providing positive feedback, suggesting areas needing attention or correction, and determining continuation of appointment.

Section 5. Duties

The lead pastor shall:

- A. Be the spiritual leader of the church. The lead pastor shall minister to the spiritual needs of and guard the congregation against dissension and be devoted to the mission of the church.
- B. Call and lead meetings of the elder council.
- C. Consistently work to strengthen Christian life among the partners and in the community.
- D. Have full responsibility for the supervision of all services and meetings of the church, except as otherwise provided in these bylaws or by the regional board of directors. Have general supervision over all ministries and auxiliary activities, and be an ex-officio member of all church bodies.

TITLE: Required

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Recommended

This is not intended to be a comprehensive description of everything the pastor does but a general, umbrella definition of the lead pastor's role.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: First sentence Recommended

LAST SENTENCE: Required.

Open Bible Churches' bylaws include the last two sentences as requirements for affiliated churches. This is an aspect of the Association's protection of churches.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required

Stipulated in the Open Bible Manual. This is another aspect of the Association's protection of churches.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: I Required

A-H Recommended



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- E. Be responsible, with the treasurer and elder council of the church, for deposits and disbursements of all funds, records, and reporting of finances.
- F. Recommend members of the elder council as prescribed in these bylaws.
- G. Recommend all pastoral and staff positions and personnel, both paid and unpaid, for approval by the elder council and appointment by the regional board.
- H. Be responsible, in consultation with the elder council, for biennial reviews and evaluations of staff pastors, members of the elder council, administrative staff, and ministry leaders. All evaluations shall be sent to the regional board for review.
- I. Provide at least 30 days written notice to the elder council and regional executive director prior to resignation.

Section 6. Financial Support

- A. **Compensation and Benefits** – The lead pastor shall be compensated for services by a compensation and benefits package. The elder council shall review the lead pastor’s compensation and benefits package at least annually. The elder council shall submit the compensation and benefits package to the regional board for final approval.
- B. **Housing Allowance** – The lead pastor may annually submit a signed request to the regional board for a portion of his compensation to be classified and recorded in minutes as housing allowance and excluded from federal taxes as provided by the IRS. Housing allowance requests shall always be submitted and approved in advance of implementation.
- C. **Event and Ministry Function Expenses** – The elder council shall give consideration to the payment of expenses incurred by the lead pastor’s attendance at regional and national Open Bible Churches’ events and other church or ministry functions. The elder council shall pay, reimburse, or provide an offering to help defray such expenses according to the ability of the church.
- D. **Accountable Reimbursement Plan** – The elder council, with approval by the regional board, shall establish an accountable reimbursement plan for the payment of approved ministry expenses for pastors and staff personnel upon the presentation of receipts.
- E. **Severance Package** – The elder council shall, with the aid of the regional board, develop a reasonable severance package and appropriate farewell considerations for the departing lead pastor who has honored Open Bible’s ministerial covenant of ethics for departing pastors.

Section 7. Interim Pastor

In a case of emergency or when a church is without a pastor, the regional board shall have the power to appoint an interim pastor. The appointment shall not exceed two years. An individual who is

TITLE: Required

CONTENT A: First two sentences-Required

LAST SENTENCE: Recommended

The regional board acting as the governing board must approve all compensation for all employees.

CONTENT B: Required

If the lead pastor receives no compensation, no request will be submitted. However, if any portion of pastoral compensation will be housing allowance, this procedure is required by the IRS.

CONTENT C: Recommended

This aspect of financial support for your lead pastor’s ministry should be accepted by the elder council. The last sentence provides flexibility based on the finances of the church.

CONTENT D: Recommended

This provides protection so reimbursements are not considered personal income by the IRS.

CONTENT E: Required

Two-fold protection is provided. Elder councils are called to accountability for this consideration and lead pastors are called to accountability regarding ministerial ethics, particularly as they relate to leaving a church.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required



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interested in becoming pastor of the church shall not be eligible to serve as an interim pastor, unless otherwise determined by the regional board.

Section 8. Charges and Violations

- A. Charges** – A partner making a charge against the lead pastor must present it in writing to the elder council and regional board, signed by corroborating witnesses.
- B. Authority** – Charges will be initially investigated by the elder council. The council will determine if a charge involves a violation of the Open Bible Manual.
 - 1. A charge against the lead pastor, any staff pastor, or partner who is a credentialed Open Bible minister, entailing violations of the Open Bible Manual, requires the regional executive director be notified and assume authority over the pastor or partner under provisions of the Open Bible Manual.
 - 2. A charge against the lead pastor, any staff pastor, or partner who is a credentialed Open Bible minister not entailing violations of the Open Bible Manual shall be overseen by the elder council, with the assistance of the regional board, if requested.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required

These are matters we hope will never arise. However, should they occur, there must be uniform provisions for how they are handled. The elder council, upon receiving a charge against the lead pastor or any other Open Bible credentialed minister on the staff or in the church, must submit the charge and information to the authority of the regional executive director.

ARTICLE 9. STAFF PASTORS AND MINISTRY LEADERS

Section 1. Staff Pastors

- A. Eligibility** – They shall exemplify the characteristics of godly Christian lives and possess the qualities of spiritual leaders as stated in 1 Timothy 3:1-13. Individuals appointed to full-time ministry roles shall be credentialed ministers in good standing with Open Bible Churches.
- B. Appointment & Review** – Staff pastors shall be approved by the elder council upon recommendation by the lead pastor and appointed by the regional board. They shall serve congruent with the lead pastor’s tenure and should anticipate resigning upon the lead pastor’s departure. The lead pastor and elder council shall review staff pastors every two years. Copies of all reviews shall be sent to the regional board.
- C. Duties** – Staff pastors will function in a manner consistent with their job descriptions as determined by the lead pastor and elder council and approved by the regional board.

TITLE: Recommended

TITLE: Recommended

CONTENT: Recommended

Section 3. Ministry Leaders

Ministry leaders shall be appointed by the lead pastor, with approval by the elder council, and shall be responsible to the pastor.

TITLE: Recommended

CONTENT: Recommended

We recommend you make this provision for ministry leaders, which allows flexibility for changes.

ARTICLE 10. FINANCE

All funds given to or received by the church for operation, development, and maintenance shall be deposited in regional board-approved banks or other federally insured institutions under the

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required



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supervision of the treasurer. The church may accept gifts of real and/or personal property at the discretion of the regional board.

Section 1. General Fund

All undesignated contributions shall be part of the general fund.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Required

Section 2. Donor-Designated/Restricted Funds

All donor-designated contributions shall be held as restricted funds and expended only according to the designation of the donor.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Required

Section 3. Other Offerings and Fund Raising

Ministries of the church may receive offerings and raise funds as authorized by the elder council. Monies shall not be solicited or collected from partners by partners for any cause without the consent of the pastor and regional board.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Required

Section 4. Handling of Offerings and Receipts

- A. Offerings shall be counted by at least two authorized individuals, not related by blood or marriage, before the funds are removed from the church facility. An offering-receipts report shall be signed by those counting the offering and submitted to the treasurer.
- B. Written receipts shall be issued to donors for tithes, offerings, and other monetary contributions. IRS rules must be followed for acknowledgment of all cash and non-cash gifts.
- C. Funds shall be deposited within 24 hours of receipt or as soon as possible thereafter.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Required
This protects the integrity of people who handle money for the church. NEVER leave this responsibility to one person and do not have people who are related count offerings. The first motivation for this is to protect people, but it protects church funds as well.

Section 5. Disbursements

Disbursement of funds shall be under the supervision of the lead pastor and governing board. One approved signature on checks is acceptable only if individual disbursements, including electronic transfers, on all monthly bank account statements are each reviewed and initialed within 90 days of the statement date by a non-signer on the accounts and he or she provides a timely report of the review results to the governing board members, including the president. In the absence of this procedure, two approved signatures shall be required. Signatories shall include the lead pastor and treasurer. Other officers or members of the governing board can be made signatories if desired. Checks shall not be pre-signed nor affixed with a stamped signature.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Required
Due to potential signer limitations (ex. pandemic restrictions) and a move towards more electronic transactions, a more inclusive internal control is necessary. Open Bible's auditor has reviewed, the Executive Leadership Team has recommended, and the national board has approved one signature on checks with the caveat that all transactions be reviewed by a non-signer. This provides a review of all transactions, including electronic. Two signatures are required when this internal control is not in place. Pre-signed and stamped checks never provide an acceptable internal control.



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Importance

Section 6. Investments

The church shall not invest its funds in non-governmentally regulated investments or in a business in which a pastor, member of the elder council or regional boards, officer, or employee has a personal interest. The church may raise revenues through fund-raising activities and contributions consistent with the nonprofit laws of the state and Internal Revenue Code as it applies to 501(c)(3) corporations.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Required

Section 7. Contracts

The regional board may, by a majority vote and as documented in official minutes, authorize officers to enter into contracts or execute and deliver instruments in the name of and on behalf of the church. Such authority may be general or restricted to specific instances.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Required

Section 8. Fiscal Year

The church fiscal year shall be January 1 through December 31.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Strongly Advised

Section 9. Audit Review

The church shall have a biennial audit review conducted by an independent auditor.

TITLE: Strongly Advised
CONTENT: Strongly Advised

ARTICLE 11. PROPERTY

All property, real or chattel, shall be received, held, sold, transferred, or conveyed in the name of the church corporation. Real property owned by the church shall not be sold, leased, mortgaged, or the title otherwise encumbered except by action of the regional board.

TITLE: Required
CONTENT: Required

ARTICLE 12. RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES

Scripture instructs Christians to handle disputes among partners of the church within the church, not in civil courts. (1 Corinthians 6:1-8.) If a partner feels there is an offense or misunderstanding with another partner, the pastor, member of the governing board, staff pastor, or ministry leader, he or she shall go to the other individual promptly in love in order to resolve the difference.

TITLE: Strongly Advised
CONTENT: Strongly Advised

- A. **Unresolved** – If the offense cannot be resolved on an individual basis, the two parties shall meet together with an appropriate church leader to resolve the dispute.
- B. **Church Mediation** – In the event two or more partners of the church cannot resolve or agree about a dispute between them with the assistance of a church leader, they shall submit the dispute for mediation or judgment within the church through the pastor or elder council. They shall refrain from suing one another, the church, or the region in a court of law.
- C. **Open Bible Mediation** – In the event of a dispute between a partner and the pastor or elder council, the pastor or elder council shall request the regional board to provide a mediator to resolve the dispute.
- D. **Abiding by Mediation** – Partners shall agree to abide by the outcome of mediation. Failure to do so may be grounds for discipline.

CONTENT: Strongly Advised
It is wise to lay out a procedure for how disputes are handled in the church. Disputes happen. The culture of our nation has become quite litigious, and partners cannot be required to yield up their legal rights to sue. However, by including this procedure in your bylaws, which all regular partners are to receive in the partnership class. Partners should understand how disputes are to be addressed. It is important for this procedure to be established before disputes occur.



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Importance

ARTICLE 13. CESSATION

Section 1. Dissolution

Should the church become extinct or dissolved, all assets remaining after discharging the obligations and responsibilities of the corporation shall be turned over to (Name) Region of Open Bible Churches. In the event (Name) Region is nonexistent, the assets shall be turned over to Open Bible Churches, an Iowa corporation, or in the event it is nonexistent, to a religious, educational, or charitable organization or organizations whose objectives are in harmony with those of Open Bible Churches. Such recipient organization or organizations must also be exempt from federal income taxation under the provisions of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. In no event may any of the assets of the church, upon dissolution thereof, be paid to or inure to the benefit of any individual partner, member of the elder council, regional board, officer of the corporation, or any other private individual.

Section 2. Withdrawal

Withdrawal from affiliation with Open Bible Churches is under the authority of the regional board.

ARTICLE 14. APPEALS AND AMENDMENTS

Section 1. Appeals

Appeals must be presented in writing and signed, to be considered at the next meeting of the body to which the appeal is presented. Appeals of decisions by the lead pastor and elder council shall be submitted to the lead pastor and elder council. Appeals to Open Bible Churches shall be submitted in the following order: church elder council, regional board of directors, and national board of directors.

Section 2. Amendments

The lead pastor and elder council shall submit all proposed bylaw amendments to the regional board. The proposed amendments must be preapproved by the secretary of Open Bible Churches prior to adoption by the regional board. Upon approval by the regional board, the proposed amendments shall be filed with the regional executive director and the secretary of Open Bible Churches. Only amendments approved by and filed with Open Bible Churches shall be valid.

TITLE: Required

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required

Corporations must have a dissolution clause, the equivalent of a last will and testament. Wills typically direct the remaining assets first be left to family members. Affiliated churches are part of the Open Bible family and, when they debase, should leave remaining assets with their family, Open Bible Churches, in the order prescribed. In any event, the IRS requires all 501(c)(3) corporations to distribute its assets upon dissolution to another, like 501(c)(3) corporation and prohibits the distribution of funds to any individual.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required

TITLE: Required

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required

It is important an order for appeals of all council or board decisions be clear. This requires an appellant does not skip or bypass a level of authority. For example, an appeal of a church elder council decision must first be directed to elder council.

TITLE: Required

CONTENT: Required

This assures all amendments are consistent with provisions of the Open Bible Manual.



MODEL E Region-Pastor-Elder Council Governance Model Bylaws

Importance

ARTICLE 15. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, latest edition, shall be the parliamentary authority on all points not conflicting with the articles of incorporation or these bylaws.

TITLE: Strongly Advised

CONTENT: Strongly Advised