



**OPEN BIBLE**  
CHURCHES®

**MANUAL**

# Open Bible Manual

**A COMPENDIUM OF THE GOVERNING DOCUMENTS OF OPEN BIBLE CHURCHES**

The national board of directors may amend the contents of this manual, except for the Statement of Faith, Bylaws, and Official Statements, which may be amended at any regular or special meeting of the Association by a 2/3 vote of registered and seated membership present.



A downloadable copy of this manual is available at [www.openbible.org](http://www.openbible.org)

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## *from the President...*

Dear Open Bible Family,

Families have “rules of the road,” common understandings about relationships and conduct that reflect their values. Too many rules, and a family groans and chafes under their heaviness. Too few rules, and a family exists in name only while it disintegrates into disconnected pieces, each resolved to go its independent way. Healthy families find ways to identify what is most important and adhere to it without majoring on minor matters.

Hopefully, the Open Bible family of churches and ministers qualifies as healthy in terms of rules of the road. We have long believed in “A balance of affiliation and freedom, providing accountability without undue control,” and endeavor to live that way. It is an ongoing process. The Open Bible Manual contains our rules of the road. Here you will learn about our family roots, find what we believe, see how we define ourselves, and note how our conduct is guided through bylaws, policies, and procedures. This manual provides descriptions of ministries, covenants that declare how we preserve leadership integrity in relationships, and statements that delineate how the Open Bible family views and positions itself regarding issues of the day. It identifies family privileges and responsibilities; a healthy family enjoys both. And, the Open Bible Manual provides minimum guidelines for church bylaws that safeguard spiritual, legal, and relational boundaries for the purpose, structure, and leadership authority of every local church body. Accompanying those minimum bylaw guidelines are bylaw models that represent a range of governance philosophies within the safeguards.

Open Bible Churches’ mission is to globally make disciples, develop leaders, and plant churches. The Open Bible Manual outlines the framework through which we pursue fulfillment of our calling. Whatever your role in this Open Bible family, Jesus gave us one call and mandate: “You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name” John 15:16 (NLT). May the Lord help our family to be found faithful to His proclamation.

Joyfully in His Service,

President Randall A. Bach





# **History and Identity**





## HISTORY AND IDENTITY

### Our Distinctiveness

Open Bible Churches is an association of evangelical, Pentecostal/Charismatic churches called to be a vital organ in the Body of Christ. Jesus is blowing a fresh breeze of repentance, prayer, fasting, and evangelistic fervor into our movement. Our mandate includes the development of healthy, loving relationships that produce support and accountability among our ministers and churches. God is giving us ever-clearer vision, vibrant leadership, and comprehensive strategic planning that He might cause us to fulfill His purposes in this generation.

### Our Beginning

Open Bible Churches originated from two revival movements: Bible Standard Conference, founded in Eugene, Oregon, in 1919, and Open Bible Evangelistic Association, founded in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1932. Similar in doctrine and structure, the two groups amalgamated in 1935 as “Open Bible Standard Churches” with the national office located in Des Moines.

Roots of our parent groups reach back to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in 1906 at Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles and to the full gospel movement in the Midwest. Both were organized under the impetus of Pentecostal revival. Simple faith, emphasis on prayer, evangelism, international missions, and free fellowship with other groups were characteristics of the growing organization.

### Our Global Mission

*“To make disciples, develop leaders, and plant churches.”*

### Our Relationships

A unique Open Bible quality is relationships, as affirmed in our distinctive: *“A balance of affiliation and freedom, providing accountability without undue control.”* We exist to serve churches and pastors and to equip and empower them to fulfill their calling and purpose in the communities in which God has placed them. This relational commitment is finding growing

favor with Spirit-filled churches and ministers looking for a covering and a fellowship home.

### Our Governance

The Open Bible Manual is the highest governing document. The registered, seated members and affiliated-church delegates present at a duly called business meeting of the Association are the highest governing body. The Open Bible convention meets biennially and consists of credentialed ministers in good standing, appointed non-credentialed leaders of association ministries, at-large members of the national board, and duly appointed church delegates. Officially affiliated churches are entitled to one voting delegate per 100 members. A board of directors directs the ministries and business of the Association with advisory assistance, through the president, of an Executive Advisory Team.



# Statement of Faith



## STATEMENT OF FAITH

### THE BIBLE

We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God and the only infallible guide and rule of our faith and practice (Psalm 119:89; Matthew 24:35; 2 Timothy 2:15, 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21).

### GOD

We believe there is one God. In the unity of the Godhead, there are three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, equal in every divine perfection and attribute, fulfilling distinct, but complementary, roles in the great work of redemption (Genesis 1:26; Matthew 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Timothy 1:17).

#### 1. God the Father

We believe in God the Father, the co-Creator with the Son and the Holy Spirit, who is the eternal, all powerful, all knowing, everywhere present, and unchangeable Creator of all (Deuteronomy 32:6; Psalm 103:13; Isaiah 63:16; Matthew 6:9; John 5:19-23, 17:1-11; Acts 17:28; Romans 8:14-16; Ephesians 4:6; 1 John 3:1).

#### 2. God the Son

We believe in God the Son, co-Creator with the Father and Holy Spirit, who took upon Himself human form, being conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and given the name, Jesus. His death by crucifixion and His bodily resurrection provided the means for people to be reconciled to God. He ascended to heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us as the King of kings and Lord of lords (Isaiah 53:1-5; Matthew 1:21-23; John 1:1-3, 11:25-26; Ephesians 1:20-23; Philippians 2:1-6; 1 Timothy 2:5).

#### 3. God the Holy Spirit

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, co-Creator with the Father and Son, who is now sent by the Father through the Son to convict the world of sin, lead us into all truth, and empower and equip the Church to carry on Christ's work on earth (Genesis 1:2; John 14:26, 15:26, 16:8; Acts 1:8).

### THE FALL OF MANKIND

We believe the human race is fallen from its original, created goodness because of the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1:27, 3:1-6; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:10, 3:23, 5:12, 5:19).

### THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION

We believe Jesus Christ was the sacrifice God planned from the foundation of the world for the sin of the human race. By shedding His blood and dying on the cross, Jesus made provision for the salvation of all people (Isaiah 53:5; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 7:25; 1 Peter 1:19-20).

### SALVATION

We believe, because of our total inability to save ourselves, salvation is by God's grace alone. It is received by faith with repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ as personal Savior (John 3:3, 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:8-10; 1 Peter 2:24).

### WATER BAPTISM

We believe water baptism by immersion in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is an outward sign of an inward work and is commanded by God following conversion (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:4).

## COMMUNION

We believe in partaking of the bread and the cup of communion in remembrance of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. We celebrate an open communion for all believers regardless of church affiliation (Luke 22:7-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-28).

## BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in every believer at the moment of salvation. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is distinct from salvation, releasing the power of the Holy Spirit through faith. Consistent with biblical accounts, believers should anticipate Spirit-baptism to be accompanied by speaking in tongues and other biblical manifestations. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is given to endue the believer with power from God, to offer an inspired witness for Christ, to lead the believer in a life of holiness, and to equip for a Spirit-filled life of service (John 7:37-39, 14:16; Acts 1:8, 2:4, 2:38-39, 8:14-17, 10:44-46, 19:6; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16).

## SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

We believe every Christian should walk and abide in daily fellowship with the Holy Spirit and experience continual renewing of God's power to live a Spirit-filled life in attitudes, thoughts, speech, and conduct. In order to build up and equip both individual believers and the Church of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts that are to be earnestly desired and exercised in the spirit of love. The fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in the life of every believer is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (John 15:4-8, Acts 4:31; Romans 8:1-9, 12:1-2, 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 12:7-11, 12:31; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:11, 4:30-32, 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22; 1 Peter 1:15, 4:10-11; 1 John 2:6.)

## DIVINE HEALING

We believe the power of God to heal the sick and afflicted is provided for in Christ's death on the cross. God is willing to and does heal today (Isaiah 53:4-5; Matthew 8:16-17; Mark 16:18; Acts 3:16, 10:38; James 5:14-16; 1 Peter 2:24).

## RESURRECTION

We believe the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ assures the believer of bodily resurrection and eternal life (Matthew 28:1-7; Romans 6:1-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20-22; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18).

## SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

We believe the second coming of Christ will be personal, visible, and triumphant (Zechariah 14:4; Matthew 24:36-44; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, 2:8; Titus 2:12-13; Revelation 1:7).

## CHURCH RELATIONSHIP

We believe Christians should assemble regularly for edification, worship, fellowship, and proclamation of the gospel. All believers should do the work of the ministry according to their spiritual gifts and should tithe and otherwise contribute financially to their church (Psalm 111:1; Malachi 3:8-10; Acts 2:42-47, 16:5; Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7; Hebrews 10:24-25).

## CIVIL GOVERNMENT

We believe civil government is ordained of God, and all people should be subject to the laws of the land, except those contrary to Scripture. In times of war, the individual's participation in actual combat and taking of human life shall be governed by one's own conscience (Mark 12:17; Acts 5:29; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; Hebrews 12:14).

## **FINAL JUDGMENT AND HELL**

We believe there will be a final judgment for all unbelievers. Hell is an actual place of great suffering, bitter sorrow, and remorse reserved forever for the devil and his angels and all whose names are not written in Christ's book of life (Matthew 13:41-43, 25:41; Mark 9:43-44; Revelation 14:10-11, 20:10-15, 21:7-8).

## **HEAVEN**

We believe heaven is an actual place of happiness and security where believers will dwell forever with God and receive the reward of their deeds done while on earth (John 14:2; 1 Corinthians 2:9, 3:10-15; Revelation 7:15-17, 21:4, 22:5).

## **EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS**

We believe the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ commands us to carry the gospel message to the entire world – to every nation, ethnicity, culture, and language. The growth and strength of the Church depend on its wholehearted sacrifice and support for world evangelization (Psalm 2:8; Proverbs 11:30; Matthew 9:38; Mark 16:15; John 4:35-37; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 5:16; 2 Timothy 4:1-2; James 5:20; Revelation 5:9).



# **Bylaws of the Association**



## Explanation of the Relationship between “Bylaws of the Association” and “Policies and Procedures”

The Open Bible Manual contains a section called *Policies and Procedures*, where procedural, explanatory, defining, and policy-making information can be found. Content in *Policies and Procedures* corresponds with and parallels the format and numbering of *Bylaws of the Association*.

*Example: Bylaws of the Association*, Article 5, Section 3, Paragraph 1, provides for the election of the president of the Association without explaining the election process. In the corresponding *Policies and Procedures*, Article 5, Section 3, Paragraph 1 the process for conducting an election is prescribed.

*Example: Bylaws of the Association*, Article 3, Section 5, Paragraph 2(B), refers to ministers in good standing as those who cooperate spiritually, physically, and financially with all the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual. How are spiritual, physical, and financial cooperation defined? The answer is found in *Policies and Procedures*, Article 3, Section 5, Paragraph 2B.

Sections of *Bylaws of the Association* needing no additional procedures, explanations, policies, or definition do not have corresponding information in *Policies and Procedures*.

*Example: Bylaws of the Association*, Article 1, Section 1, regarding change of address, is self-explanatory. Accordingly, in *Policies and Procedures* there is only a heading for Article 1, Section 1.

All sections of the Open Bible Manual together provide a complete compendium of Open Bible’s purpose and mission and documents that declare how the Association functions. The elements that govern Open Bible Churches are in *Bylaws of the Association*. Definitions, policies, procedures, and explanations are in *Policies and Procedures*.



The Table of Contents for the Bylaws of the Association has been cross-referenced with the Policies and Procedures for your convenience.

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**BYLAWS OF THE ASSOCIATION****As adopted June 27, 2007, with amendments through June 18, 2025****ARTICLE 1. NAME AND OFFICE**

The name of the corporation is Open Bible Churches. Its principal office is in Des Moines, Iowa.

**Section 1. Change of Address**

The national board of directors may change the principal office from one location to another. Any such change shall be recorded in corporation minutes but shall not be processed as an amendment to these Bylaws.

**Section 2. Other Offices**

The national board of directors may establish offices at any place or places where the corporation is qualified to conduct its activities.

**ARTICLE 2. PURPOSE AND MISSION**

Open Bible Churches is a nonprofit, religious corporation organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, and educational purposes, ministering to spiritual, emotional, physical and social needs. Its purpose, to glorify God and bring people to Jesus Christ is achieved through local, regional, national, ethnic/language groups and international ministries using all methods and means to carry out its global mission to make disciples, develop leaders, and multiply churches.

**ARTICLE 3. ASSOCIATION****Section 1. Definition**

Open Bible Churches is a membership corporation of credentialed ministers and affiliated churches, hereafter referred to as the "Association," and its national board of directors as the "national board."

**Section 2. Governance Documents****Paragraph 1. Enumerated**

The governing documents of the Association consist of the Articles of Incorporation, Statement of Faith, Bylaws, Policies and Procedures in support of the Bylaws, Ministerial Covenant of Ethics, official minutes of the Association, national board, and administrative committee, and all provisions, procedures, and regulations printed in the Open Bible Manual. Policies embody the fundamental principles, structure, and rules of the Association. Procedures are the processes by which policies are implemented, administered, and function.

**Paragraph 2. Statement of Faith**

The Statement of Faith is the fundamental, biblical authority for faith, doctrine, and spiritual life of the Association. It is given precedence as the leading document in the Open Bible Manual. It conveys the historical and contemporary Pentecostal identity, unity of thought, direction, and decisions of the Association.

**Paragraph 3. The Open Bible Manual**

The Open Bible Manual shall be the governing document of the Association. Each credentialed minister and affiliated church shall receive a copy of the manual and updates.

**Section 3. Official Statements**

Official statements are expressions of conscience outside the parameters of these Bylaws, Statement of Faith, and Covenant of Ministerial Ethics. They shall be submitted by the national board and adopted at a duly called business meeting of the Association by a 2/3 vote of registered, seated members and affiliated-church delegates present.



## Section 4. Legal Instruments

### Paragraph 1. Signatories

Legal instruments shall be executed by one of the following corporate officers, hereafter referred to as "officers": president, vice president, secretary, or treasurer. Signatures of two officers shall be required for legal instruments affecting real estate or other instruments so designated by the national board.

### Paragraph 2. Corporate Seal

The Association may have a corporate seal that may be affixed to legal instruments as required.

## Section 5. Governing Body

The registered, seated members and affiliated-church delegates present at a duly called business meeting of the Association shall be the highest governing body.

### Paragraph 1. Business Meetings

#### A. Biennial Meeting

The Association shall meet biennially either in person or by electronic participation, at a date and, if in person, at place(s) designated by the national board.

#### B. Special Meetings

Special meetings of the Association shall be called by a 2/3 vote of the national board.

#### C. Notice of Meetings

Written notice of biennial or special meetings of the Association shall be mailed to the credentialed ministers and affiliated churches with procedure and forms for the selection of church delegates at least 30 days prior to the date of the meeting.

### Paragraph 2. Authorization to Vote

Credentialed ministers in good standing, appointed, non-credentialed leaders of association ministries, at-large members of the national board, and affiliated-church delegates are authorized to vote if they are registered and seated.

#### A. Registry and Seating of Voters

Voters shall register with and be seated by the secretary of the Association before being entitled to vote.

#### B. Ministers in Good Standing

A minister in good standing is one who cooperates spiritually, physically, and financially with all provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual and is not under disciplinary restriction.

#### C. Affiliated-Church Delegates

An affiliated church shall be entitled to one voting delegate per 100 active members of the church or fraction thereof.

### Paragraph 3. Quorum

One-half of the registered, seated voters at a duly called business meeting or session of the Association shall constitute a quorum.

### Paragraph 4. Reports

Officers, leaders of association ministries, and leaders of official, national institutions shall file written reports with the secretary of the Association prior to biennial meetings of the Association.

### Paragraph 5. Powers and Responsibilities



The governing body shall:

**A. Elect and Approve**

Elect by ballot the president of the Association, seat registered delegates, and approve the agenda, minutes, reports, and standing rules for business meetings.

**B. Process Amendments**

Process amendments to the Bylaws, Statement of Faith, and Official Statements, submitted by the national board.

**C. Approve Financial Programs**

Approve financial programs of the Association requiring participation by churches and ministers.

**D. Receive and Approve**

Receive the independent auditor's annual report and approve reports from officers, leaders of association ministries, official, national institutions, and other commissioned reports.

**E. Vote on Resolutions**

Vote on resolutions submitted by the national board.

**Section 6. Conflict of Laws**

In the event of a conflict with any provision in these Bylaws with the laws or regulations of any state, county, or city, only the provision in conflict shall be of no effect. The Association respects and honors the laws and regulations of federal, state, local, and other governmental jurisdictions. However, the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees the free exercise of religion. The Association reserves the constitutional right to the free exercise of religion should any law or regulation by federal, state, local, or other governmental jurisdiction or agency oppose biblical convictions (Acts 4:1-21) or impinge on the closely held religious beliefs of the Association, as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

**Section 7. Binding Arbitration**

The Association and its national board of directors shall waive civil litigation in all disputes, complaints, controversies, claims, or grievances of all natures not otherwise able to be resolved between it and any Open Bible region and any Open Bible affiliated church in favor of binding arbitration according to the procedures set forth in the Open Bible Manual.

**A. Arbitrator Selection**

**B. Arbitration Procedures**

**C. Award**

**D. Binding Decision**

**ARTICLE 4. MEMBERSHIP**

**Section 1. Composition**

The membership of the Association shall consist of credentialed ministers in good standing, leaders of Association ministries, non-credentialed members of the national board, and authorized, affiliated-church delegates.

**Section 2. Official Record**

The secretary of the Association shall have on record a file of the affiliated churches, their locations, and the names of credentialed ministers.



### **Section 3. Personal Liability**

The private property of directors and members of this Association shall be exempt from corporate debts and liabilities.

## **ARTICLE 5. OFFICERS**

### **Section 1. Enumerated**

Officers of the Association shall be president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.

### **Section 2. Eligibility**

Officers of the Association shall be ordained ministers in good standing. They shall demonstrate servant-leadership gifts and competencies, exemplary spiritual maturity, ability to work with others, and cooperate spiritually, physically, and financially with the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual.

### **Section 3. Election, Appointment, and Term of Office**

#### **Paragraph 1. Election**

The president of the Association shall be elected by ballot at a duly called business meeting of the Association. The nomination and election procedure shall be prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

#### **Paragraph 2. Appointment**

The president shall nominate, and the national board shall appoint the vice president from among members of the executive leadership team. The secretary and treasurer shall be appointed by the president and ratified by a 2/3 vote of the national board.

#### **Paragraph 3. Term of Office**

The president shall serve four years beginning the first day of September following election. Appointed officers shall serve four years beginning on a date determined by the national board. An officer may be elected or appointed for consecutive terms of office. An officer shall not be elected or appointed to a life position.

#### **Paragraph 4. Vacancy or Incapacity**

In the event of a presidential vacancy or incapacity during a term, the vice president shall serve on an interim basis or until the national board calls for a special election. In the event the vice president is unable to serve, the national board shall appoint one of the members of the executive leadership team to fulfill interim, presidential responsibilities. Any vacancy or incapacity during the term of other officers shall be filled by appointment as defined in this article.

#### **Paragraph 5. Accountability**

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

#### **Paragraph 6. Discipline, Restoration, and Removal**

The policy and procedure for discipline, restoration, and removal of an officer is prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

##### **A. Refusal to Appear**

##### **B. Final Determination**

##### **C. Disposition of Credential**

- 1. Unrepentant**
- 2. Not Eligible**
- 3. Repentant**



## Section 4. Duties of Officers

### Paragraph 1. President

The president is the spiritual leader and chief executive officer of the Association who implements the directives of the national board and shall:

#### A. Pursue Purpose and Mission

Cast vision, inspire, influence, and encourage and partner with the officers, the national board, leaders of association ministries, official, national institutions, regions, churches, and ministers to accomplish the purpose and mission of the Association.

#### B. Preside

Preside at all meetings of the Association, national board, and administrative committee. This responsibility may be delegated to another officer.

#### C. Expend Funds

Account to the national board for the expenditure of funds authorized by policy.

#### D. Fulfill Regional Duties

Fulfill the duties of a regional executive director or, in consultation with the regional board of directors, appoint an individual to fulfill the duties when there is a vacancy or incapacity of the regional executive director.

#### E. Serve Ex Officio

Serve as a member, ex officio, of all association bodies except the electoral nominating committee.

#### F. Perform Other Duties

Perform other duties as assigned by the national board.

### Paragraph 2. Vice President

The vice president shall perform duties assigned by the president. In the event of a presidential vacancy or incapacity, as determined by the national board, the vice president shall assume the duties of the president.

### Paragraph 3. Secretary

#### A. Custodian of Records

The secretary shall maintain accurate minutes of all association, national board, and administrative committee meetings and shall serve as the custodian of the corporate seal, records, books, documents, and communications. The secretary shall notify church-affiliation and credential applicants of their acceptance or denial and notify credentialed ministers of their status.

#### B. Other Duties

Perform other duties as prescribed by the national board.

### Paragraph 4. Treasurer

#### A. Records and Reports

The treasurer shall collect dues, receipt and deposit financial contributions and income into accounts at banks and financial institutions determined by national board policy, account for all funds and properties of the Association, keep accurate and proper records of all monies, make reports required by the national board, and administrate other legal and financial matters consistent with this office.

#### B. Audit

The treasurer shall work in coordination with the national board to secure the services of a certified public accountant to conduct an independent annual audit of the financial records of the Association.

**C. Combined Offices**

The offices of secretary and treasurer may be held by the same person.

**Section 5. Officer 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.

**ARTICLE 6. NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The national board represents and directs the mission and business of the Association. It is accountable to and shall report to the governing body for those responsibilities and powers delegated to it.

**Section 1. Composition**

The national board shall be comprised of the president and up to fifteen appointees, at least a majority of whom must be credentialed ministers in good standing. With the exception of the president, other officers, global and regional executive directors, national ministry leaders, and national office personnel shall not serve as members of the national board. A majority of the national board must be other than persons related to any officer of the Association or to the members of the national board by blood or marriage and must be of legal age according to the laws of the state of incorporation.

**Paragraph 1. Geographic Appointees**

A lead pastor from each region shall serve as a member of the national board.

**Paragraph 2. Collaborative Appointees**

One collaborative appointee from each region shall serve as a member of the national board.

**Paragraph 3. At-large Appointees**

Up to five at-large members shall serve as members of the national board.

**Section 2. Eligibility****Paragraph 1. Geographic Appointees**

Geographically appointed members of the national board, one from each region, shall be ordained lead pastors in good standing, have demonstrated fruitful pastoral leadership, and shall meet leadership eligibility requirements as prescribed in these Bylaws.

**Paragraph 2. Collaborative Appointees**

Collaboratively appointed members of the national board, one from each region, shall have Open Bible relationship and contribute to the gender, generational, or racial breadth of the national board, or contribute other desirable experience and perspective, and shall meet leadership eligibility requirements as prescribed in these Bylaws.

**Paragraph 3. At-large Appointees**

At-large members of the national board shall have Open Bible relationship with distinctive leadership background, expertise, skills, or depth-of-life experience.

**Section 3. Appointment and Term of Office****Paragraph 1. Geographic Appointees**

Regional boards shall, upon consultation by their regional executive director with the president, appoint a lead pastor from their region to serve as a member of the national board. Nominees shall require 2/3 approval by the national board to serve as members. They shall serve two-year terms, with a limit of four consecutive terms of service. The term of service shall begin on a day determined by the national board at the recommendation of the president. A geographic appointed member, after being out of the position two years, may serve again.

**Paragraph 2. Collaborative Appointees**

The president shall, in consultation with regional executive directors, appoint a member of the national board from each region. Nominees shall require 2/3 approval by the national board to serve as members. They shall serve two-year terms, with a limit of three consecutive terms of service. The term of service shall begin on a day determined by the national board at the recommendation of the president. A collaboratively appointed member, after being out of the position two years, may serve again.

**Paragraph 3. At-large Appointees**

The president shall nominate up to five at-large members to the national board, after consultation and research about the nominees. Nominees shall require 2/3 approval by the national board to be appointed as members. They shall serve two-year terms, with a limit of three consecutive terms of service. The term of service shall begin on a day determined by the national board at the recommendation of the president. At-large members, after being out of the position two years, may serve again.

**Section 4. Responsibilities of the National Board****Paragraph 1. Oversee Purpose and Mission**

Develop, oversee, and implement the purpose and mission of the Association in partnership with the president, other officers, leaders of association ministries, official, national institutions, regions, churches, and ministers.

**Paragraph 2. Establish Policies**

Establish policies, procedures, and regulations for the Association consistent with the laws of the state of incorporation and the Open Bible Manual, for the guidance of its officers, national board, leaders of association ministries, official, national institutions, regions, churches, and ministers.

**Paragraph 3. Exercise Fiduciary Oversight**

Review and approve the Association's annual budget, retirement plan policy, internal financial reports, investment policy, insurance issues, and audit.

**Paragraph 4. Configure and Oversee Regions**

Have sole power to define, geographically configure, create and discontinue regions. National Supervision of regions shall be instituted for the same causes and managed in accordance with the provisions of regional supervision of churches as prescribed in the Open Bible Bylaws and Policies and Procedures, Article 10, Section 7.

**Paragraph 5. Carry Out Monetary Transactions**

Have the right to buy, borrow or otherwise acquire, own, hold in trust, use, loan, sell, convey, mortgage, lease, invest, or otherwise dispose of funds and property, both real and chattel. The national board must approve the sale and purchase of real estate by a 2/3 vote.

**Paragraph 6. Call Special Meetings**

Call special meetings of the Association membership by a 2/3 vote of the national board.

**Paragraph 7. Ratify, Appoint, Approve, and Determine Compensation**

Ratify, appoint, or approve officers, regional executive directors, regionally appointed and at-large members of the national board, regional board members, leaders of association ministries, as prescribed in these Bylaws, and any other personnel or consultants retained by the national board, and determine compensation and benefits when appropriate.

**Paragraph 8. Appoint**

Appoint standing committees, special committees, and task forces to carry out the purposes of the Association.

**Paragraph 9. Serve as National Board of Credentials**



Serve as the national board of credentials to review credential recommendations from regions. Credentials may be approved, disapproved, dropped, revoked, filed, or referred back to the regions with recommendations.

**Paragraph 10. Review and Determine Church Affiliations**

Review church-affiliation recommendations from regions. Affiliations may be approved, disapproved, revoked, or referred back to regions with recommendations.

**Paragraph 11. Oversee Discipline, Restoration, and Removal**

Oversee the discipline, restoration, and removal policy for ministers as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

**Paragraph 12. Process Appeals**

Process appeals of church, regional, global missions, executive leadership team, and national board decisions in accordance with procedures in the Open Bible Manual. Decisions of the national board shall be final and binding.

**Section 5. Meetings**

Regular and special meetings shall be held at the places and times designated by the national board or president or as required by law. The president or secretary of the Association shall notify each member of the national board two weeks in advance.

**Section 6. Quorum**

Two-thirds of the members of the national board shall constitute a quorum.

**Section 7. Vacancy**

Any vacancy occurring during the term of a member of the national board shall be filled by the appointment process for that member.

**Section 8. Discipline, Restoration, and Removal**

The policy and procedure for the discipline, restoration, and removal of national board members is prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

**Section 9. Administrative Committee****Paragraph 1. Composition**

The administrative committee shall consist of the president, secretary, and a third member appointed by the national board.

**Paragraph 2. Duties**

The committee shall carry out those duties delegated by the national board and submit minutes of all meetings.

**Paragraph 3. Meetings**

The committee shall set and report its schedule of meetings to the national board.

**Paragraph 4. Term of Office and Vacancy**

The president and secretary serve by virtue of their offices. Vacancies shall be filled by the respective selection process for officers. The national board shall appoint, fill vacancies, and determine the term of office for the third member.

**Paragraph 5. Quorum**

A majority of the members of the administrative committee shall constitute a quorum.

**Paragraph 6. National Board of Credentials**



At the discretion of the national board, the administrative committee may serve as the national board of credentials to approve, disapprove, or refer the application back to the regional or national board with recommendations.

### **Section 10. 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.

## **ARTICLE 7. EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM**

The senior executive leaders of the Association shall serve the president in giving shape to Association vision, provide consultative assistance to the national board, and supervise areas of responsibility as provided in these bylaws and as delegated by the national board.

### **Section 1. Composition**

The executive leadership team shall be comprised of the president, officers, and global and regional executive directors.

### **Section 2. Eligibility**

Members of the executive leadership team shall meet eligibility requirements as prescribed in these bylaws.

### **Section 3. Appointment and Term of Office**

Members of the executive leadership team shall serve concurrent with their appointed duties.

### **Section 4. Responsibilities**

#### **Paragraph 1. Spiritual Leadership**

Serve in concert with the president in discerning and addressing matters of strategic spiritual importance to the Association.

#### **Paragraph 2. Visionary Collaboration**

Serve in concert with the president to assist in the development, refinement, clarification, application, and communication of Association vision.

#### **Paragraph 3. Advisory Counsel**

Serve in concert with the president to offer spiritual counsel and decision-making insight and perspective for matters of global and national importance. Members of the executive leadership team may also request spiritual counsel and decision-making insight and perspective for the ministries they lead.

#### **Paragraph 4. Association Standards**

Serve as the body required to review and make recommendations to the national board for the following:

- A. Statements of Faith
- B. Official Statements
- C. Ministerial Credentials Policies
- D. Other responsibilities as delegated by the national board

#### **Paragraph 5. Consultative Leadership**

Provide consultation and recommendations to the national board concerning:



- A. Association vision and direction, ministries, and other matters as requested by the national board.
- B. Decisions that would have direct bearing on the ministries represented by members of the executive leadership team.

## ARTICLE 8. ASSOCIATION MINISTRIES

### Section 1. Accomplish Purpose and Mission

The national board may create or discontinue association ministries and ratify the appointment of leaders of association ministries who support fulfillment of the purpose and mission of the Association, in communication with the president, other officers, leaders of association ministries, official, national institutions, regions, and affiliated churches.

### Section 2. Eligibility

#### Paragraph 1. Credentialed Leaders of Association Ministries

Credentialed leaders of association ministries shall be Open Bible ministers in good standing who demonstrate servant-leadership gifts and competencies, exemplary spiritual maturity, and ability to work with others. They shall be required to cooperate spiritually, physically, and financially with the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual.

#### Paragraph 2. Non-Credentialed Leaders of Association Ministries

Non-credentialed leaders of association ministries shall exhibit spiritual maturity, leadership skills, ability to work with others, and vocational success. They shall be required to cooperate spiritually, physically, and financially with the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual.

### Section 3. Appointment and Term of Office

The executive director of global missions shall be appointed by the president, in consultation with the board of global missions, and ratified by a 2/3 vote of the national board. The executive director shall serve four years beginning on a date determined by the national board. All other leaders of association ministries shall be appointed by the president and ratified by a 2/3 vote of the national board. Leaders of association ministries shall serve two years beginning on a date determined by the national board. Any vacancy or incapacity during the term of a leader of an association ministry shall be filled by the appointment process established in this section.

### Section 4. Accountability

Leaders of association ministries shall be accountable to the president for faithfulness and fulfillment of their duties and shall file financial and other reports as requested by the national board.

### Section 5. Descriptions and Guidelines

#### Paragraph 1. Global Missions

Global missions exists to serve, equip, and resource churches, missionaries, and leaders committed to global evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. Procedures for global missions are stated in its missionary policy.

##### A. Executive Director of Global Missions

The executive director of global missions shall direct the work of global missions, its board, missionaries, and other personnel. The executive director and board of global missions shall be accountable to the president and the national board.

##### B. Board of Global Missions

The board of global missions shall consist of at least six but not more than twelve members including the executive director. Each region shall have a representative nominated by the executive director of global missions, appointed by the regional executive director, approved by the regional board, and ratified by a 2/3 vote of the national board. Other members may be nominated by the executive director, appointed by the president, and ratified by a 2/3 vote of the national board. The term of office



shall be determined by the national board. A majority of the board must be other than employees/staff and/or persons related to the director of global missions or other members of the board of global missions by blood or marriage and must be of legal age according to the laws of the state of incorporation.

**Paragraph 2. Other Association Ministries**

Association ministries, descriptions, and guidelines are contained in the Open Bible Manual.

**Section 6. Discipline, Restoration, and Removal**

The president, with approval of the national board, may discipline, restore, and remove leaders of association ministries, as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

**ARTICLE 9. REGIONS**

Each region shall have bylaws, consistent with the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual, in common pursuit of the purpose and mission of the Association. Regions shall not have the right to withdraw from the Association.

**Section 1. Governance Documents****Paragraph 1. Articles of Incorporation**

Regions shall be incorporated and named “[Name] Region of Open Bible Churches.” The articles of incorporation shall state the region is subject to the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual. Regional articles of incorporation and amendments shall be consistent with the Association’s articles of incorporation, approved by the national board, and filed with the Association.

**Paragraph 2. Bylaws**

Each region shall operate according to its official bylaws. Regional bylaws and amendments shall be consistent with the purpose and mission of the Association and the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual. Regional bylaws and bylaw amendments shall be approved by a 2/3 vote of eligible voters, as defined by the region’s bylaws, at a regular or special meeting of the region. The bylaws and bylaw amendments of a region must be approved by a 2/3 vote of the national board and filed with the Association. A region without approved bylaws and/or amendments shall be under the supervision of the national board.

**Paragraph 3. Official Minutes**

Official minutes of duly called meetings of the region’s highest governing body, as defined in regional bylaws, and minutes of the regional board of directors shall be filed with the president of the Association.

**Section 2. Regional Executive Directors**

Regional executive directors shall represent their region as members of the executive leadership team. They shall carry out decisions and actions of their regional board of directors and shall direct regional ministries in cooperation with the policies, ministries, and financial programs of the Association.

**Paragraph 1. Eligibility**

Regional executive directors shall be ordained, Open Bible ministers in good standing. They shall demonstrate servant-leadership gifts and competencies, exemplary spiritual maturity, ability to work with others, and shall be required to cooperate spiritually, physically, and financially with the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual.

**Paragraph 2. Appointment and Term of Office**

Regional executive directors shall be appointed by the president, in consultation with the regional board of directors, approved by a 2/3 vote of the national board, and ratified by 2/3 of the votes received from the credentialed ministers residing in their region. Ratification by credentialed ministers shall be conducted by mail. If ratification is not received after the appointment of two candidates, the national



board, in consultation with the regional board, shall appoint a regional executive director. Terms of office for regional executive directors shall be four years, beginning on a date determined by the national board.

**A. Process to Appoint**

**B. Process to Reappoint**

**C. Process if the Appointment is Not Approved or Ratified**

**D. Process to Not Reappoint**

**E. Process if the Office is Vacated**

**Paragraph 3. Duties**

The regional executive director is the chief executive officer who implements the directives of the regional board of directors and shall:

**A. Pursue Purpose and Mission**

Cast vision, inspire, influence, and encourage and partner with the president, officers, national board, executive leadership team, leaders of association ministries, official, national institutions, leaders of regional ministries, churches, and ministers to accomplish the purpose and mission of the Association and region.

**B. Represent**

Serve as a member of the Association's executive leadership team and represent the region during the tenure of office.

**C. Preside**

Preside at all regional meetings. In the event of the inability of the regional executive director to conduct business, the president or person appointed by the president shall act.

**D. Account**

Account to his or her regional board of directors, the president, and the national board.

**E. Report on Finances**

Provide financial reports to the regional and national boards.

**Paragraph 4. Vacancy or Incapacity**

A vacancy or incapacity during the term of office of a regional executive director shall be filled by the appointment process as prescribed in Article 9, Section 2, Paragraph 2.

**Paragraph 5. Discipline, Restoration, and Removal**

The policy and procedure for discipline, restoration, and removal of a regional executive director is prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

**Section 3. Regional Board of Directors**

The regional board of directors, hereafter referred to as the "regional board," represents and directs the ministries and business of the region. It is accountable to the regional executive director, the region's highest governing body, as defined in the region's bylaws, and to the national board.

**Paragraph 1. Composition**

The regional board shall consist of the regional executive director, who shall serve as the chair, the regional secretary, and at least three other members. The number of regional board members shall be defined in the bylaws of the region and be consistent with the region's articles of incorporation. A majority of the board must be other than employees/staff and/or persons related to the regional executive director or other members of the regional board by blood or marriage and must be of legal age according to the laws of the state in which the region is incorporated.



## Paragraph 2. Eligibility

### A. Credentialed Members

Members of a regional board who are credentialed ministers with the Association shall be in good standing and be required to cooperate spiritually, physically, and financially with the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual.

### B. Non-Credentialed Members

A regional board may have non-credentialed members as prescribed in the bylaws of the region.

## Paragraph 3. Appointment and Term of Office

Members of a regional board shall be selected in accordance with the bylaws of the region and ratified by a 2/3 vote of the national board. The term of office shall be defined in the bylaws of the region. No regional board member may be appointed to a life term position.

## Paragraph 4. Responsibilities

The regional board, in partnership with the regional executive director, shall:

### A. Accomplish Purpose and Mission

Be empowered to develop ministries, policies, provisions, procedures, and regulations consistent with the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual that fulfill the purpose and mission of the Association.

### B. Supervise Pastoral Selection and Transition

Follow the procedures for the selection of lead pastors by election or re-election or appointment or reappointment as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

### C. Oversee Affiliation Process

Oversee the church affiliation process and make recommendations for affiliation to the national board.

### D. Process Credentials

Oversee the ministerial credential process, appoint a credential committee to research the eligibility of applicants, and make credential recommendations to the national board.

### E. Authorize Regional Supervision

Place churches under official, regional supervision, when necessary, as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

### F. Administer Discipline, Restoration, and Removal

Administer the Association's ministerial discipline, restoration, and removal policy.

### G. Appoint National Board Member

Appoint a member to the national board in accordance with Article 6, Section 3, Paragraph 1.

## Paragraph 5. Conduct Meetings and Establish Quorum

Regular and special meetings shall be held by regional boards in accordance with the region's bylaws and state requirements. A majority of the regional board shall constitute a quorum.

## Section 4. Binding Arbitration

All regions and their regional boards of directors shall waive civil litigation in all disputes, complaints, controversies, claims, or grievances of all natures not otherwise able to be resolved between it and the Association, any Open Bible region, and any Open Bible affiliated church in favor of binding arbitration according to the procedures set forth in the Open Bible Manual.



## ARTICLE 10. CHURCHES

### Section 1. Definitions

#### Paragraph 1. Affiliated Church

An affiliated church, hereafter referred to as the “church,” shall pursue purpose, mission, and vision consistent with the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual. The provisions in this article apply to all affiliated churches.

#### Paragraph 2. New Church Plant

A new church plant is an affiliated church when a certificate of affiliation has been approved by the national board. It shall be supervised as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

1. **Spiritual Dynamics**
2. **Recruitment**
3. **Assessment**
4. **Training**
5. **Coaching**
6. **Proposal**
7. **Funding**
8. **Mutual Support and Accountability**
9. **Churches Planting Churches**

### Section 2. Documents, Records, and Reports

#### Paragraph 1. Governance Documents

A church shall keep and maintain the following corporate documents:

- A. Articles of incorporation;
- B. Bylaws of the church and amendments;
- C. Minutes of the meetings of the governing board;
- D. Minutes of membership meetings; and
- E. Financial reports and records.

#### Paragraph 2. Records

A church shall maintain accurate membership records including name, address, and phone number for each member, as well as church financial records. All records shall at all times be open to the inspection of the church’s governing board, national and regional representatives, and to other parties as required by state law.

#### Paragraph 3. Reports

A church shall submit reports requested by authorized, national or regional representatives, giving a full and accurate report concerning spiritual activities, membership, attendance, property, and finances.

### Section 3. Financial Programs

#### Paragraph 1. Mission Venture Plan

The Mission Venture Plan (MVP) is the Association’s strategy to assist constituents to invest in national and international Great Commission ministries. A church shall contribute monthly to the MVP. At least 50% of undesignated contributions to the MVP shall be allocated to Global Missions. The allocation of the remainder of undesignated contributions shall be determined by the national board.

#### Paragraph 2. Five Percent Plan

A church shall send 5% of its tithes and undesignated offerings to the Association each month. All five-percent-plan giving is forwarded to the region in which the church is located. These funds are used for administrative expenses and outreach ministries of the region.



## Section 4. Affiliation

### Paragraph 1. Application Process

The application process is prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

#### A. Application

#### B. Approval

#### C. Certificate of Affiliation

### Paragraph 2. Church Affiliation Agreement

The pastor and governing board of the applicant church shall comply with provisions for affiliation as contained in the Open Bible Manual.

### Paragraph 3. Approval

A church may be granted a certificate of affiliation with the Association upon recommendation of the regional board and with approval of the national board.

### Paragraph 4. Name and Incorporation

To receive a certificate of affiliation from this Association a church shall first incorporate under the laws of the state where it is located and either include the words, "Open Bible," as part of its corporate name or the statement, "[Name of church] is affiliated with Open Bible Churches, an Iowa 501(c)(3) religious and educational corporation.," in its articles of incorporation. Articles of incorporation are the highest governing authority of a church corporation. All articles of incorporation shall contain a dissolution clause provided by the regional executive director of the region in which the church is located. The articles of incorporation of the church, and any other ministries of the church, even if separately incorporated, shall not conflict with the articles of incorporation of the Association, the bylaws of the church, or the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual. Articles of incorporation and amendments shall be approved by and copies filed with the Secretary of State in the state in which the church is located and with the secretary of the Association.

### Paragraph 5. Bylaws

#### A. Requirements

Each church has the privilege of making bylaws that contain rules and regulations for its administration. Church bylaws may not conflict with the spirit or provisions of the Association's articles of incorporation or the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual. Requirements for church bylaws are prescribed in the Open Bible Manual. All church bylaws shall contain a dissolution clause provided by the regional executive director in the region in which the church is located.

#### B. Models

Bylaw models for church governance are contained in the Open Bible Manual for churches to adopt or follow when drafting or amending their own bylaws.

#### C. Approved

Church bylaws must be submitted to the regional executive director and approved by the secretary of the Association prior to presentation to the membership of the church. A majority membership vote is required. A church with existing bylaws shall amend its bylaws to identify its relationship as an affiliated church with the Association and shall make them consistent with church bylaw requirements prescribed in the Open Bible Manual. Regional executive directors shall assist churches in writing or amending their bylaws.

**D. Filed**

Copies of approved, church bylaws must be filed with the regional and national offices. When a church does not have approved and filed bylaws the church shall be governed by a church-bylaw model as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual and determined by the regional board.

**E. Official Standing**

All references hereafter to church bylaws shall refer only to bylaws that have been approved and appropriately filed.

**F. Availability**

Copies of church bylaws shall be provided to the membership of the church.

**G. Amendments**

Amendments to church bylaws shall become effective upon approval and filing with the national and regional offices.

**Paragraph 6. Property**

The church shall assume all financial responsibility associated with ownership of property. Prior to making a decision or taking action to sell, lease, mortgage, or otherwise encumber the title of real estate the church shall obtain counsel from the regional executive director. All real estate transactions shall be conducted in a manner consistent with the church's bylaws and local and state laws.

**Paragraph 7. Procedure for Appeals**

A procedure for appeals of church-board and regional-board decisions is prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

**Paragraph 8. Conflict of Laws and Bylaws**

When there is a conflict between church bylaws and the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual, or 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 with any provisions in these bylaws or church bylaws with the laws or regulations of any state, county, or city, only the provision in conflict shall be of no effect.

**Paragraph 9. Cessation**

The causes, policy, and procedure for the cessation of affiliation by extinction, dissolution, revocation, or withdrawal are prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

**A. Written Request****B. Inquiry****C. Consultation****Paragraph 10. Binding Arbitration**

All affiliated Open Bible Churches and their governing boards shall waive civil litigation in all disputes, complaints, controversies, claims, or grievances of all natures not otherwise able to be resolved between them and the Association, any Open Bible region, and any other Open Bible affiliated church in favor of binding arbitration according to the procedures set forth in the Open Bible Manual.

**Section 5. Pastors****Paragraph 1. Definition**

A lead pastor of an affiliated church must be a credentialed, Open Bible minister in good standing with the Association and shall be accountable to the governing board of the church and to the regional executive director. Any affiliated church selecting or having a lead pastor not in good standing with the Association shall automatically be placed under regional supervision as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

**Paragraph 2. Selection and Transition**

A lead pastor shall be elected or appointed in accordance with church bylaws, under the guidance of the region, consistent with the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual. The procedures for regional oversight of pastoral selection and transition are prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

**Paragraph 3. Ministry Staff**

Any individual in a ministry staff or assistant role must become a credentialed minister to be eligible to become lead pastor of an affiliated church.

**Paragraph 4. Interim Pastor**

When a church is without a lead pastor or in a case of emergency, the regional board shall have the power to appoint an interim pastor. The appointment shall not exceed a period of two years. Any individual who is interested in becoming lead pastor of the church shall not be eligible to serve as an interim pastor.

**Paragraph 5. Resignations**

A lead pastor must give at least thirty-days written notice to the regional executive director and to the church's governing board in advance of resigning.

**Paragraph 6. Discipline, Restoration, and Removal**

A charge against a pastor for violation of Scripture or the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual must be initiated and processed according to the discipline, restoration, and removal policy of the Association as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual. Charges against a pastor should be initiated with the governing board of the church. However, in cases where the church board refuses to act, the person making the charge has reason to believe the church board will not act or might take retaliatory action against the person making the charge, or in other unusual circumstances, a charge against a pastor, signed and in writing, may be brought to the regional executive director and the regional board shall assume authority over the matter. If a pastor believes the church board has acted in error in a matter of discipline, the pastor may petition the regional executive director in writing to ask the regional board to assume authority over the matter.

**Section 6. Governing Board****Paragraph 1. Definition and Authority**

A church must have a governing board that serves as the corporate board. Whether a church has a board of directors or a board of elders as the governing board, only by the authority and action of the governing board can the church affiliate, buy, sell, lease, create employment positions, and set salaries. Not only does the governing board have authority, it also has responsibilities for the financial and legal activities of the church. A majority of the members of the governing board must be other than employees/staff and/or related to the pastor or to other members of the governing board by blood or marriage and must be of legal age according to the laws of the state in which the church is incorporated.

**Paragraph 2. Responsibilities**

The governing board shall meet and function as prescribed in the bylaws of the church. With the pastor, the board shall attend to the business and legal matters of the church, except those specifically designated to the membership or the pastor, as determined by the bylaws of the church, and establish and review compensation packages of paid personnel other than the pastor. The board alone shall adopt a written severance policy for the pastor and other paid personnel and establish and annually review the pastor's compensation package.

**Section 7. Regional Supervision**

The intent of regional supervision is to provide a service of counsel and supervision to a church needing or requesting help in the management of pastoral, internal, or legal affairs. It is a protective action to assist a church back to stability and health. The action may be authorized for any pastor or church not in order in relation to its authorized articles of incorporation, constitution, and bylaws, or where there is valid evidence the



pastor or church is moving in that direction. The causes for regional supervision, the roles and relationship between the region and a church under regional supervision, and the requirements for release from regional supervision are prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

**Implementation**

- A. Regional Board**
- B. Church Bylaws**
- C. Pastor**
- D. Church Board**
- E. Advisory Council**
- F. Interim Pastor**

**Release**

- A. Letter of Request**
- B. Verification List**
- C. Monthly Reports**
- D. Participation**
- E. Confirmation Visit**
- F. Regional Action**
- G. Church Plants**

**ARTICLE 11. CREDENTIALLED MINISTERS**

A credentialed minister is recognized as an individual called by God and engaged in active, Christian ministry, who evidences godly character, leadership gifts, and preparation. Upon commitment to cooperate with the provisions, procedures, and regulations of the Open Bible Manual, an approved applicant is conferred ministerial standing with the Association.

**Section 1. Eligibility**

Eligibility for ministerial credentials is prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

**Paragraph 1. Dual Credentials**

A minister shall not hold credentials with two organizations at the same time except when the national board determines it is in the strategic interest of the Association to do so, has approved a working agreement with the other organization, and the minister has committed in writing to abide by the provisions of the agreement.

**Paragraph 2. Former Spouse Living**

When an applicant or the applicant's spouse has a former spouse living and the circumstances occurred prior to salvation and/or had scriptural cause, eligibility will be based on the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual. The national board shall review the credentials of any minister whose marital status changes by reason of marriage, divorce, or dissolution of marriage.

**Paragraph 3. Disqualification**

An individual who engages in, approves of, professes, or advocates on behalf of beliefs, values, or behaviors that are contrary to Scripture or inconsistent with the Open Bible Official Statement on Human Sexuality shall not hold credentials with Open Bible Churches.



**Section 2. Types of Ministerial Credentials and Requirements**

Types of credentials and requirements for ministerial credentials are prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.  
**Ordination**

**A. Eligibility**

**B. Renewal**

**Certified Ministerial License**

**A. Eligibility**

**B. Transfer**

**C. Renewal**

**Ministerial License**

**A. Eligibility**

**B. Transfer**

**C. Renewal**

**Specialized Ministerial License  
Filed, Inactive, or Terminated Credentials  
Divorce and Remarriage**

**A. Former Spouse Living**

**B. Change of Marital Status**

**Paragraph 1. Credential Application**

The credential application policy and procedure of the Association is prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.  
**Credential Determination**

**A. Regional Credential Committees**

**B. Board of Credentials**

**Paragraph 2. Certificates and Credential Cards**

**A. Initial**

The secretary of the Association shall issue a certificate and credential card to each approved applicant.

**B. Renewal**

A credential shall be renewed annually upon fulfillment of ministerial requirements addressed in the renewal form supplied by the Association. The national board shall set a date for submission for the renewal form and fee and shall establish a late fee, which shall apply to all renewals submitted after the date of submission has passed.

**C. Retirement Income Only**

Though a credentialed minister is never retired from ministry, a minister whose sole sources of income are Social Security and/or any other pension or retirement source may renew credentials at a reduced fee established by the national board.

**D. Retirement Plan**

The retired policy and procedure for the Association's 403(b)(g) retirement plan is prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.



### Section 3. Good Standing

A minister in good standing is one who cooperates spiritually, physically, and financially with the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual and is not under disciplinary restriction.

### Section 4. Ministerial Tithe

#### Paragraph 1. Full Ministerial Income

A minister with full income from the ministry shall send full tithe to the Association.

#### Paragraph 2. Partial Ministerial Income

Ministers with partial income from the ministry shall tithe (10%) to the Association on all ministerial income and half (5%) of all secular income. Ministers who are not lead pastors may be eligible to tithe to the local church on all secular income if the minister meets the criteria and adheres to the process as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

#### Paragraph 3. Evangelists and Para-Church Ministries

An evangelist or minister working with specialized ministries in other organizations shall tithe to the Association on all Open Bible income and half of all income from other sources.

#### Paragraph 4. No Ministerial Income

A minister with no income from the ministry shall tithe to the Association on half of all secular income.

#### Paragraph 5. Retirement Income Only

Though a credentialed minister is never retired from ministry, a minister shall not be obligated to tithe to the Association or contribute to MVP on income received from Social Security or any other pension or retirement source. A minister who has reached eligibility for Social Security and still receives secular or ministry income shall continue to tithe and contribute to MVP according to policy on all ministry income.

#### Paragraph 6. Filed Credentials

A minister whose credential is filed as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual has no tithe obligation to the Association.

#### Paragraph 7. Secular Income Tithe (SIT) Waiver

#### Paragraph 8. Multi-Staff Tithe Rebate

### Section 5. Discipline and Restoration

#### Paragraph 1. 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 Association is committed to the healing and restoration of the fallen. Restoration of credential and ministry is a privilege and not a right and does not guarantee restoration of ministry position.

#### Paragraph 2. Cause

Violation of Scripture or the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual by a credentialed minister or spouse is cause for initiation of disciplinary action. Examples of violations are:

- A. Teaching false doctrine;
- B. Conduct unbecoming a minister;
- C. Immorality;
- D. Insubordination;
- E. Financial dishonesty;



- F. Breach of ministerial ethics; and
- G. Sexual Harassment.

**Paragraph 3. Policy and Procedure**

The discipline, restoration, and removal policy and procedure is prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.  
**Hearing**

- A. Refusal to Appear
- B. Final Determination
- C. Disposition of Credential
  - 1. Unrepentant
  - 2. Not Eligible
  - 3. Repentant

**Section 6. Procedure for Appeals**

A procedure for appeals of regional-and national-board decisions is prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

**ARTICLE 12. HIGHER EDUCATION**

There shall be a ministerial education and training council that shall function according to the policies approved by the national board.

**Section 1. Commission on Biblical Education and Ministerial Education Training**

**Paragraph 1. Eligibility**

**Paragraph 2. Appointment and Term of Office**

**ARTICLE 13. AMENDMENTS**

**Section 1. Order of Consideration**

All amendments and resolutions considered at a duly called business meeting of the Association must be submitted in writing to the national board. Consideration of amendments and resolutions shall begin with the regional board or the national board before being considered at a business meeting of the Association.

**Section 2. Procedure**

**Paragraph 1. Statement of Faith**

The Statement of Faith may be amended at any biennial or special meeting of the Association. Amendments to the Statement of Faith require a 2/3 vote of the registered, seated membership present and must be sent to all credentialed ministers and ratified by 2/3 of the votes received by mail.

**Paragraph 2. Bylaws and Official Statements**

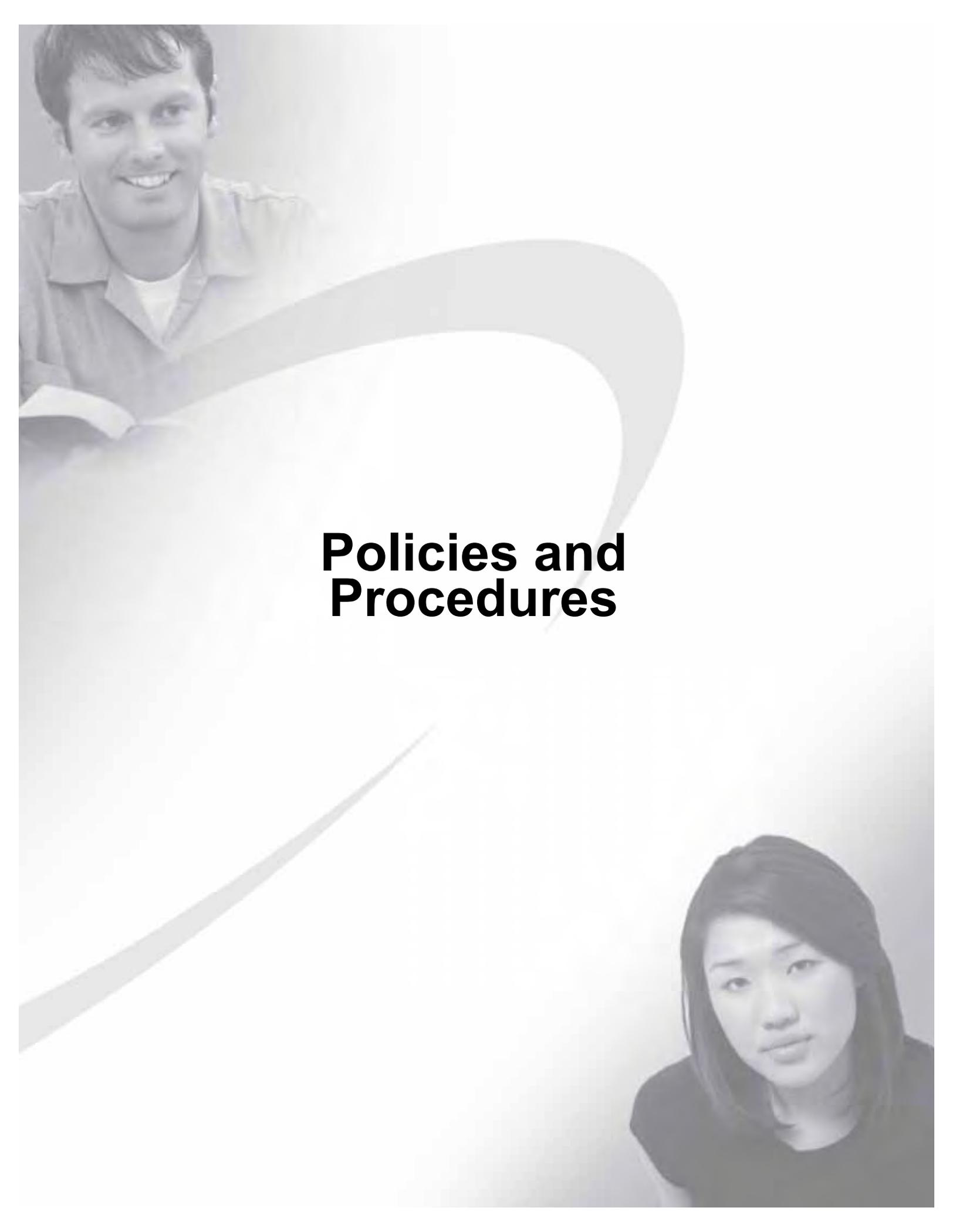
Amendments to these Bylaws and Official Statements require a majority vote of the registered, seated members present at any biennial or special meeting of the Association.

**Paragraph 3. Open Bible Manual**

The national board may amend the Open Bible Manual by a majority vote, except for the Bylaws, Statement of Faith, and Official Statements.

**ARTICLE 14. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY**

Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, latest edition, is the parliamentary authority on all points not conflicting with the articles of incorporation or the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual.



# **Policies and Procedures**



## Explanation of the Relationship between “Bylaws of the Association” and “Policies and Procedures”

The Open Bible Manual contains a section called ***Policies and Procedures***, where procedural, explanatory, defining, and policy-making information can be found. Content in ***Policies and Procedures*** corresponds with and parallels the format and numbering of ***Bylaws of the Association***.

*Example: ***Bylaws of the Association***, Article 5, Section 3, Paragraph 1, provides for the election of the president of the Association without explaining the election process. In the corresponding ***Policies and Procedures***, Article 5, Section 3, Paragraph 1 the process for conducting an election is prescribed.*

*Example: ***Bylaws of the Association***, Article 3, Section 5, Paragraph 2(B), refers to ministers in good standing as those who cooperate spiritually, physically, and financially with all the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual. How are spiritual, physical, and financial cooperation defined? The answer is found in ***Policies and Procedures***, Article 3, Section 5, Paragraph 2B.*

Sections of ***Bylaws of the Association*** needing no additional procedures, explanations, policies, or definition do not have corresponding information in ***Policies and Procedures***.

*Example: ***Bylaws of the Association***, Article 1, Section 1, regarding change of address, is self-explanatory. Accordingly, in ***Policies and Procedures*** there is only a heading for Article 1, Section 1.*

All sections of the Open Bible Manual together provide a complete compendium of Open Bible’s purpose and mission and documents that declare how the Association functions. The elements that govern Open Bible Churches are in ***Bylaws of the Association***. Definitions, policies, procedures, and explanations are in ***Policies and Procedures***.



The Table of Contents for the Policies and Procedures has been cross-referenced with the Bylaws of the Association for your convenience.

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## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### ARTICLE 1. NAME AND OFFICE

#### Section 1. Change of Address

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### ARTICLE 2. PURPOSE AND MISSION

### ARTICLE 3. ASSOCIATION

#### Section 1. Definition

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##### Paragraph 1. Enumerated

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##### Paragraph 1. Signatories

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#### Section 5. Governing Body

##### Paragraph 1. Business Meetings

###### A. Biennial Meeting

###### B. Special Meetings

###### C. Notice of Meetings

##### Paragraph 2. Authorization to Vote

For definition of good standing and spiritual, physical, and financial cooperation, please see Article 3, Section 5, Paragraph 2B of the Policies and Procedures.

###### A. Registry and Seating of Voters

###### B. Ministers in Good Standing

*"A minister in good standing is one who cooperates spiritually, physically, and financially with the provisions and regulations in the Open Bible Manual and who is not under disciplinary restriction."*

Cooperation is a "together" relationship. It is a spirit expressed through readiness to covenant together for the common good of all, honoring the will of the majority.

Spiritual cooperation means there is a heart link and bond with Open Bible. It leads to an alignment of passion with what God is saying and directing Open Bible to be and do and is rooted in an identity and agreement with the purpose, mission, Statement of Faith, and governance documents of the Association. Spiritual cooperation is evidence of and nurtures a "we" rather than a "they" connection with Open Bible. It is demonstrated by faithful prayer for the spiritual welfare of the Association, active pursuit of relationships within the Open Bible family, participation in Open Bible ministries, loyalty, and a willingness to seek counsel from mature leaders and those in positions of authority. Spiritual cooperation is a reflection of spiritual health.

Physical cooperation means the minister has an understanding of the value of personally participating in corporate Open Bible gatherings at all levels. It includes faithfully leading and encouraging the church to also participate in corporate Open Bible gatherings at all levels. Physical cooperation extends to acknowledging and participating in Association communication, such as filing reports, completing and submitting surveys, and responding to phone calls, e-mail, mail, and any other communication at all levels of the Association. Physical cooperation is an extension of spiritual cooperation.



Financial cooperation means the minister has embraced biblical principles of stewardship and is fulfilling the ministerial responsibility of faithful participation in the financial programs of the Association. On a personal level, this means the minister complies with ministerial-tithe requirements and financially contributes to the Mission Venture Plan and special opportunities that arise. On a pastoral-leadership level, this means leading the church in systematic adherence to the Five Percent Plan and contributing to the Mission Venture Plan and special opportunities that arise. Financial cooperation is where treasure and heart meet.

**C. Affiliated-Church Delegates****Paragraph 3. Quorum****Paragraph 4. Reports****Paragraph 5. Powers and Responsibilities**

- A. Elect and Approve**
- B. Process Amendments**
- C. Approve Financial Programs**
- D. Receive and Approve**
- E. Vote on Resolutions**

**Section 6. Conflict of Laws****Section 7. Binding Arbitration**

The national Association of Open Bible Churches, the regions of Open Bible Churches, and all affiliated Open Bible churches have agreed resolving disputes among Christians before Christians and not in a civil court of law is the appropriate method of resolving all disputes among these entities. Therefore, Open Bible Churches, all regions of Open Bible Churches, and all affiliated Open Bible churches agree civil litigation shall be waived in all disputes, complaints, controversies, claims, or grievances of all natures not otherwise able to be resolved among the Association, regions, and affiliated churches in favor of binding arbitration according to the following procedures:

**A. Arbitrator Selection**

The disputing parties agree to the appointment of a court-certified, Christian arbitrator agreeable to both parties. In the event the parties cannot agree to an arbitrator, the arbitrator will be appointed by Peacemaker Ministries. No arbitrator shall have any financial, professional, familial, or social relationship to any party to the dispute. No arbitrator shall be a member of an Open Bible church. The costs of the arbitrator shall be borne equally between or among the parties, including filing fees and arbitrator expenses. Each party shall be responsible for its own attorney's fees and costs, if any.

**B. Arbitration Procedures**

The procedures to be followed during arbitration shall be agreed upon by the parties to the action. In the event the parties cannot agree, the arbitrator will have the right to establish the procedures. Those procedures may include but shall not be limited to: reasonable discovery in the form of requests for documents, interrogatories, requests for admission, physical and/or mental examinations and depositions. Disputes regarding the nature or scope of discovery shall be resolved by the arbitrator at his or her discretion. The arbitrator's decisions shall be binding on all parties. No part of this agreement shall be construed to limit statutorily imposed remedies for any cause of action, such as punitive damages or the imposition of payment of attorney's fees. The substantive and remedial provisions of any applicable statute will be applied by the arbitrator in his or her decision so all parties will be able to vindicate their statutory cause of action through arbitration.

**C. Award**

The arbitrator shall issue a written award, setting forth the award and basis thereof. The arbitrator shall have the power to award any type of relief that would be available in a court of law or equity. In addition, the arbitrator shall have the authority to order any party found to have presented any claim or defense without substantial justification to pay the attorney's fees for the other party or parties to the action. All awards may be entered as a judgment in any court of competent jurisdiction. The arbitrator shall have the power and authority to make such decisions and awards as he or she deems appropriate, including granting damages, injunctive relief, attorney's fees, arbitration expenses, arbitration fees, as well as any other related costs to the appropriate party. The arbitrator shall further be empowered and authorized to



grant the issuance of mandatory directives, prohibitions, orders, or restraints to enforce the agreement as he or she may deem necessary or advisable. These may be directed to or against any of the parties to the action, including a directive requiring specific performance of any covenant, bylaw, or agreement.

#### **D. Binding Decision**

The decision of the arbitrator shall be binding on all parties to the action, and all parties shall submit themselves to the personal jurisdiction of any court of competent jurisdiction, both at the State or Federal levels, for the entry of the judgment confirming the arbitrator's decision. It is agreed the arbitrator's decision shall be the exclusive remedy for all parties absent a negotiated, written, out-of-court agreement between or among all parties. No parties shall institute any civil action, petition, motion, or other procedure in a court of law or equity other than for the sole purpose of enforcing the arbitrator's award herein. This Article shall be a bona fide defense in any action or proceeding contrary to the language herein. Any submission of a dispute to arbitration shall not be revoked by the death of any party to the dispute, and all awards will be binding upon such persons, their heirs, assigns, and successors.

### **ARTICLE 4. MEMBERSHIP**

#### **Section 1. Composition**

For definition of good standing and spiritual, physical, and financial cooperation, please see Article 3, Section 5, Paragraph 2B of the Policies and Procedures.

#### **Section 2. Official Record**

#### **Section 3. Personal Liability**

### **ARTICLE 5. OFFICERS**

#### **Section 1. Enumerated**

#### **Section 2. Eligibility**

For definition of good standing and spiritual, physical, and financial cooperation, please see Article 3, Section 5, Paragraph 2B of the Policies and Procedures.

#### **Section 3. Election, Appointment, and Term of Office**

##### **Paragraph 1. Election**

##### **Presidential Nomination Procedure**

If an incumbent president is not going to be available for reelection, he or she must give notice to the national board by November 1 of the year prior to the election. If a president intends to resign prior to the completion of a term, the president shall advise the national board. The national board will determine the actual date the president's service will conclude.

A nominating ballot, a Candidate Question Request form and a Call to Prayer form shall be mailed by the secretary of the Association on or before January 10 in an election year to every Association member in good standing to be received by the secretary of the Association no later than February 22 preceding the date of election. The ballot shall include the responsibilities of the president's office, the eligibility requirements for the office, and a place for writing in the name of a nominee. The Candidate Question Request form will provide opportunity to suggest questions that could be posed in candidates video interviews.

A nominating committee shall be appointed by the national board. This committee shall receive and tally the nominating ballots prior to March 5. All persons named on at least five percent of the nominating ballots timely received by the nominating committee shall be considered potential candidates. The eligibility of those potential candidates shall be checked by the secretary of the Association and reported to the nominating committee according to Article 5, Section 2 of the Policies and Procedures. All potential candidates whose eligibility requirements have been verified by the nominating committee shall be contacted by the secretary of the Association to determine if they would be willing to serve. Eligible nominees have until March 31 to determine their willingness to serve and submit a resume of their experience and qualifications and a one-page Philosophy-of-Ministry statement to the secretary of the Association. Any condition attached by a nominee to the nominee's candidacy must be submitted to the national board by the secretary of the Association and be approved by a 2/3 vote of the national board



prior to the nominee's name being made known to Association members. The names, resumes, and Philosophy-of-Ministry statements of eligible candidates willing to serve shall be mailed to all eligible voters by April 15 and published in alphabetical order for the convention ministers and delegates.

#### **Presidential Election Procedure**

A five-member candidate review committee, one person from each region, will be appointed. A geographic appointee of the national board will chair the committee and will also serve as the representative of his or her own region. The chair job description developed by the secretary and approved by the national board will include scope of leadership, confidentiality, impartiality, and commitment to integrity of the process. The chair will be appointed as follows:

- A.** Leading up to an election year, the secretary of the Association will review the term length for each geographic appointee on the national board to determine whose terms will span the election year.
- B.** Prior to December 15 preceding an election year, all geographic appointees whose term of office will span an election year will be informed by the secretary of the Association of the candidate review committee chair job description and asked if they are willing to serve as chair. Eligible and willing geographic appointees will be considered by the secretary of the Association who will appoint the candidate review committee chair. The secretary will present the appointee to the national board for a ratification vote by January 10 in the election year.

The other four regional boards will appoint a member to the candidate review committee and report to the secretary by February 15. If the region desires, the appointees could be those regions' geographic appointees. All appointees must be ministers in good standing for two years prior to their appointment as established by national board policy.

None of those serving on the candidate review committee can be candidates for president.

The candidate review committee reports to the secretary of the Association unless that person is one of the nominees, in which case the national board will appoint one of its members, not a candidate for the office of president, as the person to whom the committee reports.

Prior to March 7, the secretary of the Association will quantify all questions for candidates received from eligible voters and send the results to the candidate review committee.

Prior to March 31, the candidate review committee will meet, determine the most represented questions from those submitted, and write the five questions to be asked of each candidate in an interview. Those questions will be sent to all candidates and a chosen interviewer by March 31. The secretary of the Association will select an interviewer with requisite interview skills and impartiality.

The candidate review committee will review the Philosophy-of-Ministry statements and resumes of all potential candidates. If there is anything in the documents that raises a question, the candidate review committee will interview the candidate and present the issue to the national board for consideration of the candidacy, prior to April 10.

Between April 15 and April 30 online, unedited interviews will be individually recorded with all candidates using the same five questions prepared by the candidate review committee and with the same interviewer.

By April 30, the recorded interviews will be presented to the technology team for posting on the national convention website. All interviews will be available for viewing on the national convention website by May 15.

The presidential election shall be determined by secret ballot at a duly called business meeting of the Association. Absentee election ballots may be requested by eligible voters as prescribed in this Section and Paragraph. All requests for absentee ballots must be received in writing by the secretary of the Association no later than May 1. All absentee votes must be received by the secretary of the Association no later than June 1.

A convention election committee shall be appointed, consisting of one:

- A.** Minister chosen from each region, appointed by the region's executive director;



- B. Member appointed by the Secretary of the Association and ratified by the national board, who shall chair the committee.

This committee shall receive and tally the election ballots. Tally sheets shall be signed in ink by the chair of the committee and presented to the chair of the business meeting.

Any candidate who receives a majority of the votes cast on the first ballot shall be declared elected. If no candidate receives a majority of votes on the first ballot, a second ballot shall be distributed containing the names of the two candidates who received the highest number of votes on the first ballot. The candidate with the highest number of votes on the second ballot shall be declared elected. Absentee ballots will be counted only on the first ballot.

#### **Preservation of Ballots**

Unless otherwise directed at a business meeting of the Association or by the national board, the secretary of the Association is instructed to destroy the tally sheets and ballots after 60 days.

#### **Paragraph 2. Appointment**

#### **Paragraph 3. Term of Office**

#### **Paragraph 4. Vacancy or Incapacity**

If a majority of the vice president and regional executive directors believe the president is unable to discharge the duties and responsibilities of the office, as defined in this section, they shall transmit to the secretary/treasurer a written declaration of incapacity. The secretary/treasurer shall present the written declaration of incapacity to the national board of directors. The national board of directors shall have the right to and shall consult with the president's physician. Upon a two-thirds vote of the national board, meeting either in person or electronically, the president shall be notified in writing of the national board's decision. If by a two-thirds vote the president is found to be unable to discharge the duties and responsibilities of the office, the vice-president shall immediately assume the duties of the president. For all other officers of the Association, if the president believes another officer is unable to discharge the duties and responsibilities of that office, as defined in this section, he or she shall present a written declaration of incapacity to the national board of directors. The national board of directors shall have the right to and shall consult with the officer's physician. Upon a two-thirds vote of the national board, meeting either in person or electronically, the officer shall be notified in writing of the national board's decision. If by a two-thirds vote the officer is found to be incapacitated, the office shall be filled by utilizing the appointment process as set out in the Policies and Procedures.

#### **Paragraph 5. Accountability**

#### **Paragraph 6. Discipline, Restoration, and Removal**

##### **Initiation of Charge for Officers**

A charge may be initiated against an officer only by presenting the charge in writing, signed, and with corroborating evidence to a member of the national board.

##### **Preliminary Investigation**

Upon receipt of the written charge, the national board shall have the responsibility for investigation and discipline in a timely manner. It may appoint a committee or a representative to act on its behalf. As a part of the preliminary investigation, the accused officer has the right to hear the accusation and respond to the charges in writing. Upon notification of the charge, the officer may not drop his or her credential for any reason until the process has been fully completed.

##### **Admission of Guilt**

Admission of guilt by the accused officer at any point during the investigation will begin the discipline and restoration process according to policy. The national board shall, however, still complete the investigation.

##### **Preliminary Determination of Committee or Representative**

The committee or representative appointed shall make a preliminary determination of guilt or lack of guilt and present its determination to the national board for action.

##### **National Board Action**

If the national board determines the allegations are unwarranted, it shall notify the accuser and the accused officer in writing. If the national board determines there is reasonable cause to believe the charge is accurate, it shall temporarily suspend the accused officer's credential pending the outcome of a hearing.



The secretary of the Association shall send notice of the suspension to the accused officer by certified mail. While under suspension, no officer shall be permitted to continue with official duties. Credentials shall remain suspended until after a hearing and final determination is made.

### Hearing

If the accused officer denies the charges, the national board shall set a hearing date where evidence shall be taken in person from both the officer and the accuser and such other witnesses as either party shall choose to call. The date of the hearing shall be no later than the next scheduled meeting of the national board after the notice of the preliminary determination of guilt.

#### A. Refusal to Appear

The accused officer may be found guilty of charges and disciplined as a result of refusal to appear at the hearing or willful neglect to take advantage of reasonable rights and privileges. The accuser has the right to refuse to appear at the hearing. The national board has the right to take the accuser's refusal to appear into consideration in making its final determination.

#### B. Final Determination

The national board shall make the final determination. If guilt is not found, both the accused officer and the accuser shall be notified in writing by the secretary of the Association and the credential shall be officially restored. If there is a finding of guilt, affected parties shall be notified according to national board policy.

#### C. Disposition of Credential

##### 1. Unrepentant

If guilt is established and the officer is not repentant and cooperative, the credential of the officer shall be revoked and notice of the revocation shall be sent to the officer by the secretary of the Association. (Matthew 18:17; Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5.)

##### 2. Not Eligible

If guilt is established and the officer is repentant and cooperative, but the offense is one for which restoration of the credential is not possible or advisable as established by the national board, the credential shall be revoked and notice of the revocation shall be sent to the officer by the secretary of the Association. The restoration of the officer to God, self, and family shall still be a goal.

##### 3. Repentant

If guilt is established and the officer is repentant and cooperative, credentials shall be filed by the national board and shall remain filed until the completion of the discipline and restoration process. A written plan of restoration shall be prepared by a representative of the national board and signed by both a representative of the national board and the officer being restored, demonstrating acceptance of the plan by both parties. (Galatians 6:1; 1 Timothy 5:19-22.)

### Appeals

The accuser or the accused officer shall have the right to appeal to the national board. Appeals must be presented according to the procedure for appeals prescribed in Article 6, Section 4, Paragraph 12 of the Policies and Procedures. The determination of the national board is final and shall be sent to appropriate parties by certified mail.

### Notice of Action

Notification of all credential actions relating to officers shall be made to all credentialed ministers.

## Section 4. Duties of Officers

### Paragraph 1. President

- A. Pursue Purpose and Mission
- B. Preside
- C. Expend Funds
- D. Fulfill Regional Duties
- E. Serve Ex Officio



**F. Perform Other Duties**

**Paragraph 2. Vice President**

**Paragraph 3. Secretary**

**A. Custodian of Records**

**B. Other Duties**

**Paragraph 4. Treasurer**

**A. Records and Reports**

**B. Audit**

**C. Combined Offices**

**Section 5. Officer Indemnity**

**ARTICLE 6. NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Section 1. Composition**

**Paragraph 1. Geographic Appointees**

**Paragraph 2. Collaborative Appointees**

**Paragraph 3. At-large Appointees**

**Section 2. Eligibility**

Members of the national board shall be required to cooperate spiritually, physically, and financially with the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual.

**Paragraph 1. Geographic Appointees**

Geographic appointees shall be ordained lead pastors and required, for the two most current years prior to appointment, to have been in spiritual, physical, and financial cooperation with the provisions, regulations, and procedures of the Open Bible Manual, including Five Percent Plan, Mission Venture Plan, and ministerial tithes on both salary and housing allowance, and demonstrate currently fruitful pastoral leadership.

**Paragraph 2. Collaborative Appointees**

Collaborative appointees shall meet leadership eligibility requirements as prescribed in the Bylaws. Credentialed members shall be in good standing as defined in Article 3, Section 5, Paragraph 2B of the Policies and Procedures, including financial cooperation for the most recent 2 years. Non-clergy, collaboratively appointed members shall be members in good standing of an Open Bible church and shall exhibit spiritual maturity, leadership skills, ability to work well with others, vocational success, and cooperation with the ministries and programs of Open Bible Churches, and shall verify alignment with the Association's Statement of Faith and honor the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual.

**Paragraph 3. At-large Appointees**

At-large appointees shall have relationship with Open Bible and, if non credentialed, shall verify alignment with the Association's Statement of Faith and honor the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual.

**Section 3. Appointment and Term of Office**

**Paragraph 1. Geographic Appointees**

**Paragraph 2. Collaborative Appointees**

**Paragraph 3. At-large Appointees**

**Section 4. Responsibilities of the National Board**

**Paragraph 1. Oversee Purpose and Mission**

**Paragraph 2. Establish Policies**

**Paragraph 3. Exercise Fiduciary Oversight**

**Paragraph 4. Configure and Oversee Regions**

**Paragraph 5. Carry Out Monetary Transactions****Paragraph 6. Call Special Meetings****Paragraph 7. Ratify, Appoint, Approve, and Determine Compensation****Paragraph 8. Appoint****Paragraph 9. Serve as National Board of Credentials****Paragraph 10. Review and Determine Church Affiliations****Paragraph 11. Oversee Discipline, Restoration, and Removal**

For discipline, restoration, and removal policy and procedure, please see Article 5, Section 3, Paragraph 6; Article 8, Section 6; and Article 9, Section 2, Paragraph 5 of the Policies and Procedures.

**Paragraph 12. Process Appeals**

Appeals of regional or national board decisions shall be made in writing to the secretary of the Association. Each appeal must delineate what portion of a decision is being appealed, contain a statement of facts explaining the situation, include all background information supporting its position, and state what relief from the appealed decision the appellant requests to receive.

Upon receipt of an appeal, the secretary of the Association will send a copy of the appeal to the board whose decision is being appealed. That board will be given thirty days to send a written response to the appeal and copies of all physical evidence presented by both parties in the hearing to the secretary of the Association. The board's response must include its own statement of facts, include all background information supporting its decision, and explain why its decision should be upheld by the national board.

When the written response has been received, the secretary will send copies of the appeal and the response to the members of the national board. The national board may:

- A. Choose to act on the appeal; or
- B. Send the appeal back to the regional board for action.

If the national board chooses to act on the appeal, it shall do so at the next meeting of the board after receipt of both an appeal and response to the appeal.

All appeals will be decided solely on the following:

- A. Information contained in the written appeal;
- B. Information contained in the written response; and
- C. All physical evidence presented at the hearing.

New evidence shall not be received on appeal. The decision of the national board is final.

**Section 5. Meetings****Section 6. Quorum****Section 7. Vacancy****Section 8. Discipline, Restoration, and Removal**

A member of the national board may be removed by the President, with 2/3 approval by the national board, after the secretary/treasurer has provided opportunity for the member to respond in writing regarding the reason for removal. The member will not participate in the board's deliberation. Causes for removal include but are not limited to:

- A. Failure to align with the Association's Statement of Faith or to honor the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual;
- B. Conduct unbecoming a board member;
- C. Immorality;
- D. Insubordination;
- E. Financial dishonesty;
- F. Sexual harassment;
- G. Breach of board code of ethics;
- H. Failure to disclose conflicts of interest;
- I. Absenteeism from board meetings;
- J. If a credentialed minister, as part of Discipline and Restoration action by Open Bible Churches.

**Section 9. Administrative Committee****Paragraph 1. Composition**

The third member of the administrative committee shall serve 4-year terms.

**Paragraph 2. Duties****Paragraph 3. Meetings****Paragraph 4. Term of Office and Vacancy****Paragraph 5. Quorum****Paragraph 6. National Board of Credentials****Section 10. Director Indemnity****ARTICLE 7. EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM****Section 1. Composition****Section 2. Eligibility****Section 3. Appointment and Term of Office****Section 4. Responsibilities****Paragraph 1. Spiritual Leadership****Paragraph 2. Visionary Collaboration****Paragraph 3. Advisory Counsel****Paragraph 4. Association Standards****Paragraph 5. Consultative Leadership****ARTICLE 8. ASSOCIATION MINISTRIES****Section 1. Accomplish Purpose and Mission****Section 2. Eligibility****Paragraph 1. Credentialed Leaders of Association Ministries**

For definition of good standing and spiritual, physical, and financial cooperation, please see Article 3, Section 5, Paragraph 2B of the Policies and Procedures.

**Paragraph 2. Non-Credentialed Leaders of Association Ministries****Section 3. Appointment and Term of Office****Section 4. Accountability****Section 5. Descriptions and Guidelines****Paragraph 1. Global Missions****A. Executive Director of Global Missions****B. Board of Global Missions****Paragraph 2. Other Association Ministries****Section 6. Discipline, Restoration, and Removal**

The president shall have authority, with the approval of the national board, to discipline and remove leaders of association ministries for administrative infractions.

If a non-credentialed leader of an association ministry is accused of a violation of the provisions of the Open Bible Manual, the policies of the Employee Handbook of the national office of the Association shall apply.

If a credentialed leader is accused of any action in violation of the Open Bible Manual, the following procedure shall be followed:

**Initiation of Charge for Leaders of Association Ministries**



A charge may be initiated against a leader of an association ministry only by presenting the charge in writing, signed, and with corroborating evidence to the national board. For procedure, please see Article 5, Section 3, Paragraph 6.

**Notice of Action**

Notification of all credential actions shall be made to all credentialed ministers.

**ARTICLE 9. REGIONS****Section 1. Governance Documents****Paragraph 1. Articles of Incorporation**

Each region shall have the following dissolution clause as a part of its articles of incorporation to meet IRS requirements and be in compliance with the provisions, regulations, and procedures of the Open Bible Manual:

Upon the dissolution of this corporation, all assets remaining after discharging the obligations and responsibilities of the corporation shall be turned over to Open Bible Churches, an Iowa corporation, or in the event Open Bible Churches 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 region, upon dissolution thereof, be paid to or inure to the benefit of any individual member, director, or officer of the corporation, or any other private individual.

**Paragraph 2. Bylaws****Paragraph 3. Official Minutes****Section 2. Regional Executive Directors****Paragraph 1. Eligibility**

For definition of good standing and spiritual, physical, and financial cooperation, please see Article 3, Section 5, Paragraph 2B of the Policies and Procedures.

**Paragraph 2. Appointment and Term of Office**

Regional executive directors shall be appointed and reappointed by the president, in consultation with the regional board of directors, approved by a 2/3 vote of the national board, and ratified by 2/3 of the votes received from credentialed ministers who reside in the region.

- A. Process to Appoint** – Upon the confirmed vacancy or nearing vacancy of a regional executive director's responsibility:
1. The president will prepare a regional executive director profile and job description, consistent with the Open Bible Manual's qualifications and requirements, and as additionally refined in consultation with the regional board.
  2. Regional board members who have interest in the executive director responsibility must communicate their interest to the president and will be recused from participation in the appointment process.
  3. The president will distribute the profile and job description to regional ministers and invite them to recommend names to the president for consideration as candidates for the position of regional executive director. The names must be received by the president no later than two weeks after his invitation was communicated. The president may speak with any eligible, prospective candidates, including but not limited to prospects whose names have been recommended by the regional board and regional ministers, to discuss their interest and suitability for the responsibility.
  4. The president will distribute the profile and job description to all Open Bible ministers, along with an explanation of the appointment process, how to submit an application, resume, and any other materials requested by the president, and the timeline by which to do so.
  5. The president and secretary/treasurer will validate that applicants are in good standing and in full cooperation and, if so, certify their eligibility for appointment consideration. Applicants not in good standing and in full cooperation are not eligible for appointment.
  6. The president will consult with the regional board by no later than one week after the deadline for submission of resumes and application materials to discuss, arrange for applicant



interviews with the president and regional board, and obtain the counsel and recommendations of the regional board regarding the applicants.

7. If there is a clear consensus on a candidate among the regional board and with the president, the president shall make an appointment. If the regional board cannot come to a clear consensus among members and/or with the president, the president shall make an appointment based on the sum total of the information gathered and in consideration of the dialogue with the regional board.
  8. The president will inform the regional board about the identity of the appointee.
  9. The president will meet personally or electronically with the national board to present the appointment for approval.
  10. Upon approval by a 2/3 vote of the national board, and not later than one week after that approval, the secretary of the Association will prepare ratification ballots that will be distributed to and completed electronically by ministers who reside in that region, and by mail to ministers who reside in that region and for whom the national office does not have email addresses.
  11. Regional ministers will have two weeks from the date of the secretary's ratification communication to vote electronically or, if they received mailed ballots, by return mail that must be received by the secretary no less than two weeks after the secretary's ratification communication.
  12. The secretary will have one week from the final date for receipt of electronic and mailed ratification ballots to convene a meeting with two other individuals chosen by the secretary to confirm electronic balloting results and count ballots returned by mail.
  13. If the appointment is ratified by 2/3 of the ballots, the president will be notified.
  14. The president will inform the appointee, national board members, regional board members, all Open Bible ministers, and the Open Bible constituency at large, about the ratified appointment.
  15. If the national board fails to approve the appointment of a regional executive director by the president, the president will consult with the regional board and either present another appointee to the national board from among the candidates or restart the appointment process.
  16. If regional ministers fail to ratify an approved appointee, the president will consult with the regional board and either present another appointee to the national board from among the candidates or restart the appointment.
  17. If regional ministers fail to ratify two regional executive director appointees, the national board, in consultation with the regional board, shall appoint a regional executive director, no less than four weeks after the failure to ratify a second appointee. The national board will notify the appointee, regional board, regional ministers, and all other Open Bible ministers about the appointment.
  18. Unless otherwise directed by the national board, the secretary of the Association will destroy the ratification ballots 60 days after notification has been made to the regional ministers.
- B. Process to Reappoint** – The president will communicate with the regional executive director, no less than four months prior to the conclusion of the executive director's term of office, to determine willingness to continue for another term of service. Should the executive director not desire to be reappointed, the president will inform the regional board and regional ministers and initiate the appointment process for a successor executive director. Should the executive director desire to be reappointed:
1. The president will communicate with the members of the regional board of directors, advising them that the term of the region's executive director is coming to a close, and conduct an evaluative assessment of the regional executive director's leadership with regional board members. The president may elect to include regional ministry leaders and staff, and additional regional ministers in the evaluate leadership assessment of the regional executive director.
  2. The president will confer with the regional executive director to discuss and consider the findings of the evaluative assessment.
  3. After consultation with the regional board the president will make a reappointment decision and announce it to the regional board.



4. The president will present the reappointment for electronic approval by the national board of directors, which requires a 2/3 vote. Should any member of the national board request a meeting of the board to discuss the reappointment prior to voting, the president will accommodate that request, either by an in person or an electronic meeting and will then conduct an approval vote, which requires 2/3 approval.
5. Upon a 2/3 approval vote by the national board and, not later than one week after, the secretary of the Association will prepare ratification ballots that will be distributed electronically to ministers who reside in that region, and by mail to ministers who reside in that region and for whom the national office does not have email addresses.
6. Regional ministers will have two weeks from the date of the secretary's ratification communication to vote electronically or, if they received mailed ballots, by return mail that must be received by the secretary no less than two weeks after the secretary's ratification communication.
7. The secretary will have one week from the final date for receipt of ratification ballots to convene a meeting with two other individuals chosen by the secretary to count the ballots.
8. If the reappointment is ratified by 2/3 of the ballots, the president will be notified.
9. The president will inform the regional executive director, national and regional boards, regional and all other Open Bible ministers, and the Open Bible constituency, about the reappointment.
10. Unless otherwise directed by the national board, the secretary of the Association will destroy the ratification ballots 60 days after notification has been made to the regional ministers.

**C. Process if the Appointment is Not Approved or Ratified**

1. If the national board fails to approve the reappointment of a regional executive director by the president, the president will reinitiate the appointment process for a successor executive director.
2. If regional ministers fail to ratify the reappointment, the president will reinitiate the appointment process for a successor executive director.
3. If ratification by regional ministers is not received after the appointment of two candidates, the national board, in consultation with the regional board, shall appoint a regional executive director within four weeks of the second failure to ratify.

**D. Process to Not Reappoint**

1. The president will communicate with the members of the regional board of directors, advising them that the term of the region's executive director is coming to a close, and conduct an evaluative assessment of the regional executive director's leadership by regional board members. The president may elect to include regional ministry leaders and staff, and additional regional ministers in the evaluate leadership assessment of the regional executive director.
2. The president will confer with the regional executive director to discuss and consider the findings of the evaluative assessment.
3. Should the president determine to not reappoint a current regional executive director:
  - The president will advise and explain to the regional executive director the president's conclusion that a change of leadership is necessary.
  - If the president deems it appropriate, opportunity will be provided for the regional executive director to resign.
  - The president will present and explain to the national board in executive session, without the regional executive director's participation, the decision to not reappoint the regional executive director.
  - The president will ask the national board to vote in support of the decision. A 2/3 vote of the national board will be required to override the president's decision to not reappoint the regional executive director.
  - The president will notify the executive director, regional board, and regional ministers.
  - The president will initiate the appointment for a successor executive director.

- E. Process if the Office is Vacated** - Should the executive director's office be vacated by either the executive director's decease, unanticipated resignation, or removal from office (see Article 9. Section 2. Paragraphs 4 and 5) the president shall:



1. Temporarily assume the regional director's responsibility, or
2. Appoint an interim executive director, who will not be eligible for appointment, and
3. Initiate the appointment process for an executive director.

**Paragraph 3. Duties**

- A. Pursue Purpose and Mission
- B. Represent
- C. Preside
- D. Account
- E. Report on Finances

**Paragraph 4. Vacancy or Incapacity**

If the president and a majority of regional board of directors believe the regional executive director is unable to discharge the duties and responsibilities of the office, as defined in this section, the president shall transmit to the national board of directors a written declaration of incapacity. The national board of directors shall have the right to and shall consult with the regional executive director's physician. Upon a two-thirds vote of the national board, meeting either in person or electronically, the regional executive director shall be notified in writing of the national board's decision. If by a two-thirds vote of the national board the regional executive director is found to be unable to discharge the duties and responsibilities of the office, the office shall be filled by utilizing the appointment process as prescribed in Article 9, Section 2, Paragraph 2.

**Paragraph 5. Discipline, Restoration, and Removal****Initiation of Charge for Regional Executive Directors**

A charge may be initiated against a regional executive director only by presenting the charge in writing, signed, and with corroborating evidence to the national board.

**Preliminary Investigation**

Upon receipt of the written charge, the national board shall have the responsibility for investigation and discipline. The national board shall request input from the regional board and may appoint a representative or a committee to act on its behalf. As a part of the preliminary investigation, the accused, regional executive director has the right to hear the accusation and respond to the charges in writing. Upon notification of the charge, the regional executive director may not drop his or her credential for any reason until the process has been fully completed.

For procedure, please see Article 5, Section 3, Paragraph 6.

**Notice of Action**

Notification of all credential actions shall be made to all credentialed ministers in the region in which the regional executive director resides.

**Section 3. Regional Board of Directors****Paragraph 1. Composition****Paragraph 2. Eligibility**

Members of regional boards shall be required to cooperate spiritually, physically, and financially with the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual.

**A. Credentialed Members**

Credentialed members shall be in good standing as defined in Article 3, Section 5, Paragraph 2B of the Policies and Procedures, including financial cooperation for the most recent 2 years.

**B. Non-Credentialed Members**

Non-credentialed members shall comply with eligibility requirements of regional bylaws and have Open Bible relationship.

**Paragraph 3. Appointment and Term of Office****Paragraph 4. Responsibilities**

- A. Accomplish Purpose and Mission



**B. Supervise Pastoral Selection and Transition**

For process, please see Article 10, Section 5, Paragraph 2.

**C. Oversee Affiliation Process**

**D. Process Credentials**

**E. Authorize Regional Supervision**

For process, please see Article 10, Section 7.

**F. Administer Discipline, Restoration, and Removal**

For discipline, restoration, and removal policy and procedure please see Article 6, Section 8; Article 10, Section 5, Paragraph 6; and Article 11, Section 5, Paragraph 3 of the Policies and Procedures.

**G. Appoint National Board Member**

**Paragraph 5. Conduct Meetings and Establish Quorum**

**Section 4. Binding Arbitration**

For binding arbitration procedures, please see Article 3, Section 7.

**ARTICLE 10. CHURCHES**

**Section 1. Definitions**

**Paragraph 1. Affiliated Church**

For application process and procedure please see Article 10, Section 4, Paragraph 1.

**Paragraph 2. New Church Plant**

The continual addition and multiplication of disciples, leaders, and churches was a hallmark throughout the book of Acts. Church planting continues to be one of the most effective tools God uses to accomplish the Great Commission and build His church. The future of any church movement is directly tied to its vision and unbending commitment to reproduce disciples, leaders, and churches. Church planting is biblical with evangelism at its core. It develops new leaders, is efficient, and is a means of fulfilling Open Bible's mission.

Open Bible Churches must be a church multiplication movement. Each person in our churches and those we lead to Christ must be equipped to witness to others and train new believers to do the same. This principle must be pursued by our churches and embedded in the mission and vision of each new church plant. The goal is to plant missional churches that parent churches. Congregations that plant their first church within three to five years of their birth find it easier to plant subsequent churches.

Open Bible must be positive in its response and obedience to the Great Commission. This requires the casting of vision, fervent prayer, a passion to see people come to Christ, faith, sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading, wisdom, the involvement of our pastors, churches, officers, and following a strategic process.

There are specific church planting elements that are key to effectiveness that must be common to all church multiplication initiatives. How they are implemented in Open Bible will vary by region. Because Open Bible values church planters we will provide support through the provision of proven standards.

**Church Planting Standards**

Church planting essentials are spiritual dynamics, recruitment, assessment, training, coaching, proposal, funding, mutual support and accountability, and resourcing churches to plant churches. The following standards are established by the national board and executed by regions. Regions will report annually to the president of Open Bible Churches to verify standards are being met with a description and an assessment of how well their systems are working. More specific guidance is available from regional offices.

**1. Spiritual Dynamics**

Creating and sustaining a spiritual atmosphere for church multiplication is key. For example:

- A.** Fostering a healthy multiplication vision.
- B.** Promoting prayer for church multiplication at any level (national, regional, district, church, or



individual intercessors).

C. Developing disciples who multiply

**2. Recruitment**

The goals of recruitment are to attract potential candidates, expand the pool, increase the quantity and quality of potential candidates to be considered, and to identify those who should be given serious consideration.

**3. Assessment**

The aim of the assessment process is to objectively evaluate whether a potential candidate is a church planter. Assessment begins with pre-assessment (which could include an interview, self-assessment instruments, application, etc.) which determines if a formal assessment is prudent. The method of formal assessment is typically either a behavioral interview or an assessment center. When the potential candidate is married the spouse will be included in a formal assessment. The assessment then results in a review between the assessor and the regional church planting personnel, who decide whether church planting is the best placement for a prospective candidate.

The assessment is not designed as a pass-fail test or simply a screening. It is an investment of time to help candidates discover where they could be most effective in ministry and identify areas for personal growth and development.

**4. Training**

Those identified as church planters will be provided:

- A. Pre-plant training that will prepare church planters and their spouses for the realities of church planting; and help the church planter prepare a meaningful church plant proposal.
- B. Ongoing training to strengthen the church planter, develop healthy church systems and prepare them to multiply.

**5. Coaching**

A coach will be identified and authorized by the region to work closely with the planter. A coach will walk along-side a church planter for the minimum of a year to help provide perspective and help draw out of that planter what is needed in the mission of planting a church. Coaches will be trained and will be prepared to help a church planter to accomplish the approved proposal.

**6. Proposal**

Prior to receiving funding, in consultation with regional church multiplication leaders, the planter will prepare a proposal which will be reviewed periodically and revised as needed.

**7. Funding**

Each region will establish a funding strategy through which a church plant or a parent church can qualify to receive funds.

**8. Mutual Support and Accountability**

The region and the church planter will establish clear expectations for partnering together. The region will provide ongoing relational support and resources to the planter. The planter will regularly report their progress and needs to the region in a format established by the region.

**9. Churches Planting Churches**

A healthy multiplication movement results in churches planting churches. To this end, the region will champion multiplication and provide support and resources to help church plants and existing churches toward that goal.

## **Section 2. Documents, Records, and Reports**

### **Paragraph 1. Governance Documents**

- A. Articles of incorporation;
- B. Bylaws of the church and amendments;
- C. Minutes of the meetings of the governing board;
- D. Minutes of membership meetings; and
- E. Financial reports and records.

### **Paragraph 2. Records**

### **Paragraph 3. Reports**



**Section 3. Financial Programs**

**Paragraph 1. Mission Venture Plan**

**Paragraph 2. Five Percent Plan**

**Section 4. Affiliation**

**Paragraph 1. Application Process**

The process of affiliation shall be administered by the regional office in the region in which the church is located.

**A. Application**

Churches desiring affiliation with Open Bible Churches shall make application by submitting the Church Affiliation Agreement and Pastoral Covenant of Relationship (see Agreement and Covenant forms in Resources section of the Open Bible Manual) to the regional executive director in the region in which the church is located.

**B. Approval**

A church shall be granted a certificate of affiliation with the Association upon recommendation of the regional board and with approval of the national board.

**C. Certificate of Affiliation**

All affiliated churches shall receive a certificate of affiliation signed by the president and secretary of the Association and bearing the seal of the Association.

**Requirements**

A church shall:

- A.** Be incorporated under the laws of the state in which the church is located;
- B.** Adopt a name suitable to its congregation's members and the Association;
- C.** Adopt articles of incorporation clearly stating the church is affiliated with Open Bible Churches. The articles shall be filed with the Secretary of State of the state in which the church is located and submitted to the secretary of the Association along with proof of filing from the Secretary of State;
- D.** Obtain a federal identification number;
- E.** Submit the official, Affiliation Agreement provided by Open Bible Churches (see Agreement in Resources section of the Open Bible Manual);
- F.** Submit a signed Pastoral Covenant of Relationship (see Covenant in Resources section of the Open Bible Manual); and
- G.** Submit bylaws to the regional executive director, which must be approved by the secretary of the Association prior to affiliation.

**Paragraph 2. Church Affiliation Agreement**

**Paragraph 3. Approval**

**Paragraph 4. Name and Incorporation**

The church pastor and governing board shall submit all proposed articles of incorporation and amendments to the regional executive director. The amendments must be approved by the secretary of the Association prior to presentation to the membership of the church. Upon approval by the membership of the church, the amendments shall be filed with the Secretary of State in the state where the church is located, the regional executive director, and the secretary of the Association. Only amendments approved by and filed with the Association shall be valid.

**Paragraph 5. Bylaws**

- A. Requirements**
- B. Models**
- C. Approved**
- D. Filed**
- E. Official Standing**
- F. Availability**



### **G. Amendments**

The church pastor and governing board shall submit all proposed bylaw amendments to the regional executive director. The amendments must be approved by the secretary of the Association prior to presentation to the membership of the church. Upon approval by the membership of the church, the amendments shall be filed with the Secretary of State in which the church is located, where required, the regional executive director and the secretary of the Association. Only amendments approved by and filed with the Association shall be valid.

### **Paragraph 6. Property**

#### **Paragraph 7. Procedure for Appeals**

Appeals of church board decisions shall be made in writing to the regional executive director. Each appeal must delineate what portion of a decision is being appealed, contain a statement of facts explaining the situation and decision being appealed, and state what manner of relief from the appealed decision the appellants expect to receive.

Upon receipt of an appeal, the regional executive director will send a copy of the appeal to the church board whose decision is being appealed. The church board will be given thirty days to send a written response to the appeal. The church board's response must include its own statement of facts, include all background information supporting its decision, and explain why its decision should be upheld by the regional board.

When the written response has been received, the regional executive director will send copies of the appeal and the response to the members of the regional board. The regional board may:

- A. Choose to act on the appeal; or
- B. Send the appeal back to the church board for action.

If the regional board chooses to act on the appeal, it shall do so at the next meeting of the board after receipt of both an appeal and the response to the appeal.

All appeals will be decided solely on the following:

- A. Information contained in the written appeal;
- B. Information contained in the written response; and
- C. All physical evidence presented at the hearing.

New evidence shall not be received on appeal. The decision of the regional board is final.

### **Paragraph 8. Conflict of Laws and Bylaws**

### **Paragraph 9. Cessation**

#### **Extinction**

When a church ceases to conduct regular services for 60 days or is unable to meet corporate and financial obligations, the regional board will initiate an investigation and determine if it should be placed under regional supervision or declared inactive or extinct. An inactive status means the church incorporation remains in place under the governance of the regional board, but the church itself is closed. Extinction means the church incorporation is dissolved and the church is closed. A church may be declared inactive or extinct by the national board, upon recommendation by the regional board.

When a church has been declared extinct, the regional board shall take action to dissolve the incorporation of an extinct church and the regional executive director and treasurer of that region shall serve as trustees of the funds and property of the extinct church.

The trustees shall administrate the church funds and properties, satisfy all outstanding debts and claims against the properties, and convey any remaining funds or properties to the region in which the extinct church was located. The regional board is authorized to invest, manage, or dispose of the assets.

#### **Dissolution**

In the event the pastor or the church board desires to close the church and dissolve a church incorporation, written request shall be made to the regional executive director, providing reasons for the desired dissolution and inviting regional representatives to meet with the pastor and board. This must occur prior to initiating any announcement or action towards dissolution with the church membership.

Representatives of the region shall meet with the pastor and board to discuss reasons for the request and the process for dissolution. The representatives shall discuss with the pastor and board a plan and a



timetable for dissolution and report their consultation and recommend action to the regional board.

Upon review of the consultation report and recommendations, the regional board shall make a determination. Notification shall be made to the pastor, church board, and congregation. The regional executive director or representative shall explain the process of dissolution to the pastor or church board.

When the process of dissolution has been completed, the regional executive director shall request the secretary of the Association to declare the church extinct. The regional executive director and treasurer of that region shall serve as trustees of the funds and property of the extinct church.

The trustees shall administrate the church funds and properties, satisfy all outstanding debts and claims against the properties, and convey any remaining funds or properties to the region in which the extinct church was located. The regional board is authorized to invest, manage, or dispose of the assets.

#### **Distribution of Assets**

When a church is extinct or dissolved, all assets remaining after discharging the obligations and responsibilities of that corporation shall be transferred to the region in which the church was located. In the event that region is nonexistent, the assets shall be transferred 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 this Association. 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 member, director, or officer of the corporation or any private individual.

#### **Withdrawal**

Affiliation with the Association is a God-initiated, relational covenant involving a confirming witness between pastor, church board, church membership, and regional and national offices. It is entered into with solemn recognition God initiated the relationship. Severing this relationship should not be lightly undertaken.

A church not in full compliance with provisions of the Open Bible Manual, as determined by the regional board, shall be ineligible to withdraw from affiliation. Should a pastor or church board request to withdraw from affiliated relationship, the Association shall adhere to the following principles and procedures with the intent of inquiring about and verifying the basis for the request, ascertaining the level of support for withdrawal by the membership of the church, upholding all provisions of the Covenant of Affiliation, and pursuing reconciliation of relationship. The Association shall not attempt to bind a church to affiliation against the will of the pastor, board, and membership of the church. However, the Association is bound as a steward to honor God by upholding covenantal accountability of all parties to the provisions, procedures, and regulations of the Open Bible Manual in all actions, including withdrawal from affiliation.

##### **A. Written Request**

In the event the pastor or church board desires to withdraw from affiliation with the Association, the pastor, or a board member shall make written request to the regional executive director, provide reasons for the desired withdrawal, and invite regional representatives to meet with the pastor and board. This must occur prior to initiating any announcement or action concerning withdrawal with church membership.

##### **B. Inquiry**

Prior to a consultation, the region may request information for the previous three years including, but not limited to, membership lists with addresses and phone numbers, financial reports, lists of board members and minutes of board meetings and membership meetings.

##### **C. Consultation**

Representatives of the region shall meet with the pastor and board to discuss the request, pursue reconciliation, and explore and create potential solutions for agreement. Should agreement not be reached, the representatives shall discuss with the pastor and board a plan and a timetable for withdrawal and report the results of their consultation and recommend action to the regional board. Should violations of the affiliation agreement be discovered, the regional board shall be empowered to place the church under regional supervision.

#### **Action**



Upon review of the consultation report the regional board shall:

1. Have the right to request a meeting with the membership prior to any announcement or action concerning withdrawal;
2. Be allowed to make a written proposal for reconciliation to the church board prior to any announcement or action concerning withdrawal;
3. In the event a pastor or church board continues to desire to withdraw subsequent to the regional board acting under 1 or 2 above, the regional board may recommend to the national board the church's request for withdrawal of affiliation be approved or require the withdrawal to be decided in a duly called withdrawal meeting by a 2/3 vote of all active members, in attendance, eligible to vote, who have been members for more than 90 days prior to the meeting. A list of active members, including their date of membership acceptance, shall be provided to the Regional Executive Director 30 days prior to the special meeting. The vote shall be supervised, and ballots provided by the region. A regional representative shall be one of the tellers. The procedure for documentation and notification of the membership shall be:
  - a. **Written Notice to Membership**

Notice of a special membership meeting and its intent must be publicly announced from the pulpit and sent by first-class or electronic mail (in states where electronic mail may be used for legal notification) to the membership of the church. Each of these requirements must be fulfilled no later than 90 days prior to the date of the special meeting.
  - b. **Written Notice to Association**

Written notice of the special membership meeting must be sent by registered mail to the regional executive director and secretary of the Association no later than 90 days prior to this meeting. A representative shall be invited to present the heart and perspective of the Association.
  - c. **Privilege to Vote**

The privilege to vote in a withdrawal meeting shall be extended only to those who have been active members of the church for at least 90 days prior to the meeting.

#### **Repayment and Release**

If a church ceases to be affiliated with Open Bible Churches, all funds expended by any Open Bible office or church toward the establishing, building, maintenance, or financial assistance of the church shall be returned to the respective Open Bible office or church. This return of funds is separate and distinct from any funds given by the church for the ministries of the Association.

When the national or a regional office has co-signed as a guarantor for the church on a promissory note or mortgage, the church shall first satisfy the note or mortgage or obtain a written release from the creditor or mortgagee on behalf of the national or regional office prior to withdrawal from affiliation.

#### **Notification**

- A. Upon approval of withdrawal by the church, region, and national board, the secretary of the Association shall notify the pastor and board in writing.
- B. In consultation with the pastor and church board, the regional executive director shall prepare a mutually agreed upon statement of withdrawal to be presented by the pastor to the congregation.

#### **Revocation**

A church affiliation may be revoked by the national board when a church has been found guilty of failure or refusal to comply with the Open Bible Manual.

### **Paragraph 10. Binding Arbitration**

For binding arbitration procedures, please see Article 3, Section 7.

## **Section 5. Pastors**

### **Paragraph 1. Definition**

For definition of good standing and spiritual, physical, and financial cooperation, please see Article 3, Section 5, Paragraph 2B of the Policies and Procedures.

### **Paragraph 2. Selection and Transition**



The regional executive director or representative will work in consultation with a church's governing board and in coordination with the bylaws of the church to assist in a search for and selection of an eligible pastor. Guidelines consistent with the type of church governance adopted by the church shall be followed. Guidelines for each type of church governance can be found in the Resource section of the Open Bible Manual.

**Paragraph 3. Ministry Staff****Paragraph 4. Interim Pastor****Paragraph 5. Resignations****Paragraph 6. Discipline, Restoration, and Removal****Initiation of Charge for Pastors with Open Bible Credentials**

A charge may be initiated against a pastor with Open Bible credentials only by presenting the charge in writing, signed, and with corroborating evidence, to the regional executive director in the region in which the pastor resides.

**Preliminary Investigation**

Upon receipt of the written charge, the regional board shall have the responsibility for investigation and discipline. The regional board shall request input from the church board and may appoint a representative or a committee to act on its behalf. As a part of the preliminary investigation, the accused, credentialed pastor has the right to hear the accusation and respond to the charges in writing. Upon notification of the charge, the pastor may not drop his or her credential for any reason until the process has been fully completed.

For procedure, please see Article 11, Section 5, Paragraph 3.

**Notice of Action**

Notification of all credential actions shall be made to, but not limited to, all regional executive directors by the secretary of the Association according to the guidelines established by the national board.

**Section 6. Governing Board****Paragraph 1. Definition and Authority****Paragraph 2. Responsibilities****Section 7. Regional Supervision**

Open Bible Churches values healthy churches led by pastors and church-based leadership. However, there are occasions when churches need leadership assistance. Regional supervision can be implemented to protect the integrity of the church's stated purpose, policies, and procedures. Regional supervision, under which the regional board becomes the governing board of the church, is applied to provide supervisory counsel and direction.

**Purpose**

The purpose of regional supervision is to assist a church back to stability, remove the causes for supervision, and nurture health. It is restorative instead of punitive. The highest goal is for a church to bear fruit as it effectively functions under local leadership.

**Causes**

Causes for implementation of regional supervision shall include, but not be limited to:

- A.** An emergency threatening the health, integrity of purpose, and existence of the church because of leadership, authority, or legal issues;
- B.** A church beginning to operate or showing evidence it is moving in a direction to operate in a manner inconsistent with or contrary to its articles of incorporation, bylaws, or the Open Bible Manual. Regional supervision can be implemented by the regional board to protect the integrity of the church's stated purpose, policies, and procedures;
- C.** A church's inability to secure an eligible pastor;
- D.** The regional board having to change or appoint a pastor;
- E.** A church selecting a pastor or having a pastor who is not a credentialed minister in good standing with Open Bible Churches, which automatically places the church under regional supervision;
- F.** Unresolved internal conflict detrimental to the survival of the church;



- G. Conflict with the Statement of Faith;
- H. Conflicts of interest, questionable legal and financial practices, or a pattern of numerical, financial, or other decline;
- I. A church failing to follow the appeal procedures of the Association; and
- J. A new church plant, until at such time the regional board determines the church to be ready and qualified for release.

**Process**

- A. A pastor or church board member may request regional supervision.
- B. The regional board may empower the regional executive director to apply regional supervision subject to an investigatory meeting with the pastor and church board.
- C. In emergency situations, a regional executive director or representative may immediately apply regional supervision. To remain valid, this action must be ratified within ten days by the regional board.
- D. The regional board may, after investigation, apply regional supervision.
- E. A church cannot withdraw from the Association or be dissolved by its membership while being regionally supervised. When regional supervision is applied, the church shall be governed by the regional supervision bylaws prescribed in the Open Bible Manual. Its own bylaws shall be suspended during the period of regional supervision.

**Implementation****A. Regional Board**

When the church is regionally supervised, the regional board shall serve in the place of and exercise all powers as the governing board of the church.

**B. Church Bylaws**

Upon being placed under regional supervision, a church's bylaws will be automatically suspended, and the church will be governed by the regional supervision bylaws as contained in the Open Bible Manual until the church is formally released from regional supervision.

**C. Pastor**

A pastor may be retained or removed at the discretion of the regional board. When there is no pastor, the regional executive director shall serve as corporate president of the church.

**D. Church Board**

The church board may be retained or dissolved by the regional board. When retained, the board shall serve as an advisory council to the regional board.

**E. Advisory Council**

1. When there is no continuing church board, an advisory council may be appointed by the regional board, in consultation with the pastor.
2. When no pastor is present, the regional board may appoint an advisory council in consultation with members in good standing.
3. The advisory council shall take no official action without prior authorization of the regional board.

**F. Interim Pastor**

When the church is without a pastor, the regional board may appoint an interim pastor to work in coordination with the advisory council and the regional board. The appointment shall not exceed a period of two years.

**Church Indebtedness**

A regionally supervised church continues as a corporate body and retains its legal identity, responsibility for corporate debt, and operational expenses. The region is not responsible for the indebtedness of the church.

**Notification**

The church board and membership shall be notified by the region in writing of:

- A. Its implementation of regional supervision and the effective date; and
- B. The requirements to be satisfied prior to the church's release from regional supervision.

**Meetings**



Meetings of the advisory council, the church board acting as an advisory council, church membership, or a church congregation can only be called and conducted with authorization from the region. A regional representative shall be present at every meeting unless other arrangements have been made. Meetings that advance the ministry and day to day affairs of the church shall be continued. A monthly meeting of the advisory council or church board acting as an advisory council may be arranged with the approval of the regional executive director or representative.

**Business**

All routine business matters of the church shall be overseen by the advisory council, in consultation with the regional board. Private or commercial loans to satisfy accumulated debt or to consolidate debt are to be approved by the regional board. The regional board has sole authority to: purchase, sell, lease, or mortgage property of the church, encumber the title, effect real estate transactions, and place portable or permanent buildings on church property.

**Monthly Reports**

The regional board shall appoint an individual to monthly complete and return approved forms provided by the region. Any approved subsidy to the pastor or church will be sent upon receipt of these reports. Information requested will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- A. Health indicators, e.g., salvations, baptisms in Holy Spirit and water;
- B. Attendance at each service;
- C. Income and expenditures, detailing the purpose of the expenditures;
- D. Balances of all checking, savings, investments, and other accounts; and
- E. All accounts payable.

**Minutes**

Minutes of all meetings shall be kept according to the form prescribed by the region with copies promptly mailed to the region.

**Duration**

The supervisory period shall continue until all requirements for release from regional supervision are satisfied.

**Release**

The following shall be required for release from regional supervision:

**A. Letter of Request**

The pastor of the church shall submit a letter to the regional executive director requesting release from supervision. The letter shall verify stability of the church, show resolution of the causes for supervision, and describe progress made toward the achievement of church health.

**B. Verification List**

The regional executive director shall send the pastor the release-from-supervision verification list that must be completed and returned prior to the confirmation visit.

**C. Monthly Reports**

The church shall have demonstrated consistency in the monthly submission of approved report forms.

**D. Participation**

The pastor, church board acting as an advisory council or the advisory council, and membership shall have faithfully demonstrated spiritual, physical, and financial cooperation with church and Open Bible ministries, financial programs, and the Open Bible Manual.

**E. Confirmation Visit**

The pastor shall request in writing a confirmation visit from the regional executive director when requirements on the verification list have been completed. The regional executive director, or representative, with another official of the region, shall visit the church to meet with the pastor,



church board acting as an advisory council, or the advisory council to determine whether the church is ready for release.

**F. Regional Action**

The regional executive director shall submit a report of the confirmation visit along with recommendations to the regional board. The regional board shall either accept the request for release from regional supervision or advise the pastor in writing of tasks to be completed prior to release. If the request is accepted, a provisional board shall be appointed by the regional executive director. When the regional board determines the pastor, provisional board, and congregation function well together during a stipulated period of time, the church may be released from regional supervision. The church will then retain the provisional board or select a church board by election or appointment, according to its bylaws. A regional representative shall preside at this election or appointment of the church board. Written notification of the release shall be sent to the pastor and the membership of the church.

**G. Church Plants**

All incorporated and affiliated church plants shall be regionally supervised until they meet requirements of the regional board and are functioning in accordance with the Open Bible Manual.

**ARTICLE 11. CREDENTIALLED MINISTERS**

**Section 1. Eligibility**

See Section 2 of this Article.

**Paragraph 1. Dual Credentials**

**Paragraph 2. Former Spouse Living**

**Paragraph 3. Disqualification**

**Section 2. Types of Ministerial Credentials and Requirements**

Open Bible Churches' ministerial credentials provide validation that the holder has demonstrated a record of faithfulness in service to the Lord, has diligently paid the price of preparation to learn and continue to develop ministerial competencies, and has affirmed identification and accord with Open Bible's Statement of Faith, Official Statements, policies, and regulations. A ministerial credential affords eligibility to begin ministries and apply for ministry opportunities under Open Bible's covering that provide accountability without undue control. A ministerial credential is not a substitute for anointing and gifts from the Holy Spirit that correspond to specific ministry callings but a recognition of them.

**Ordination**

Ordination is the highest classification of ministerial credential. It is recognition and affirmation that a minister has demonstrated seasoned ministerial competency preparation, spiritual maturity, and leadership experience befitting a servant who faithfully presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God (Philippians 3:14). An ordained minister is eligible to assume any ministry responsibilities in Open Bible Churches, including holding national, regional, and district offices. Ordination is conferred at the discretion and initiative of the Board of Credentials.

**A. Eligibility**

An applicant must hold a Certified Ministerial License for at least three years and be in active, fruitful ministry. The applicant's life and ministry must evidence faithful relational, attitudinal, and leadership integrity with family, church, community, and Open Bible Churches.

1. Upon recommendation of the regional board of directors and approval by the Board of Credentials, ministers shall be ordained by either the laying on of hands at a ceremony prescribed by the regional board or alternate arrangement by the regional executive director, except in a transfer of credentials from another organization where hands have formerly been laid upon them.
2. An applicant who meets ordination eligibility requirements, except for holding a Certified Ministerial License for less than three years, and desires to enter a chaplaincy field for which ordination is required for application eligibility, may apply for a waiver of the three-year requirement.



3. An applicant holding ordination with a member denomination of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches of North America, and who identifies with Open Bible Churches' mission and policies, may transfer ordination at the discretion of the Board of Credentials, upon validation of doctrinal alignment via an examination. Upon receiving Open Bible credentials, other ministerial credentials must be discontinued.

#### B. Renewal

Annual renewal of Ordination shall be contingent upon participation and cooperation with Open Bible Churches, and faithful relational, attitudinal, and leadership integrity with family, church, community, and Open Bible Churches.

### Certified Ministerial License

A minister holding a Certified Ministerial License credential is qualified to assume and perform any ministry responsibilities in Open Bible Churches, except for serving as a corporate officer, executive director of Global Missions, or as a regional executive director.

#### A. Eligibility

An applicant is eligible to apply for a Certified Ministerial License who identifies with Open Bible Churches' mission and policies; has been engaged in active, approved leadership; whose doctrinal alignment with Open Bible Churches has been verified via an examination;

1. And has fulfilled ministry preparation competency requirements by completing studies at a college or school of ministry recommended by the Commission on Biblical Education and Ministerial Training and certified by the National Board of Directors.
2. Or completed competency training/coaching as prescribed by a regional credential committee and approved by the Board of Credentials;
3. Or completed a Board of Credentials recognized equivalent program of studies.

#### B. Transfer

An applicant holding an equivalent ministerial license with a member denomination of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches of America, who identifies with Open Bible Churches' mission and policies, may transfer a license at the discretion of the Board of Credentials, upon validation of doctrinal alignment via an examination. Upon receiving Open Bible credentials, other ministerial credentials must be discontinued.

#### C. Renewal

Annual renewal of a Certified Ministerial License shall be contingent upon participation and cooperation with Open Bible Churches, and faithful relational, attitudinal, and leadership integrity with family, church, community, and Open Bible Churches.

### Ministerial License

The Ministerial License is a transitional credential that provides a competency preparation track to achieve Certified Ministerial License eligibility. A minister holding a Ministerial License credential is qualified to assume any ministry responsibilities in Open Bible Churches, except hold national, regional, or district office. The individual shall have a regionally approved coaching relationship with a lead pastor or other approved coach.

#### A. Eligibility

A Ministerial License may be recommended for a qualified individual who has achieved some ministry competency preparation and experience but not sufficient to be eligible for a Certified Ministerial License.

An applicant is eligible to apply for a Ministerial License who identifies with Open Bible Churches' mission and policies, whose doctrinal alignment with Open Bible Churches has been verified via an examination and;

1. Is actively pursuing studies at an Open Bible-certified college or school of ministry, having completed more than half of the program or is actively pursuing studies through INSTE Global Bible College, having completed at least the Certificate in Spiritual Growth or Certificate in Practical Christian Living;
2. Or completed a Board of Credentials recognized equivalent program of studies.

**B. Transfer**

An applicant holding an equivalent ministerial license with a member denomination of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches of America, who identifies with Open Bible Churches' mission and policies, may transfer a license at the discretion of the Board of Credentials, upon validation of doctrinal alignment via an examination. Upon receiving Open Bible credentials, other ministerial credentials must be discontinued.

**C. Renewal**

Annual renewal of a Ministerial Credential shall be contingent upon ongoing and continuous progress in fulfillment of prescribed ministry competency preparation requirements, validation from the minister's coach of faithful participation in and response to the coaching process, participation and cooperation with Open Bible Churches, and the recommendation of the respective regional board.

**Specialized Ministerial License**

Under exceptional circumstances a Specialized Ministerial License may be granted to individuals who have been approved or assigned by the regional board to a specific ministry to meet defined objectives. A Specialized Ministerial License is restricted in scope, authority, geographic location or specific ministry and may be limited in duration. All such restrictions and rationale must be defined by a region when requesting approval of a Specialized Ministerial License from the Board of Credentials. There is no progression or transfer to another Open Bible ministerial credential without meeting the requirements of those credentials. When the restricted nature of the ministry associated with the credential is completed or ceases, a Specialized Ministerial License discontinues.

**Filed, Inactive, or Terminated Credentials**

A minister who is temporarily inactive from the ministry may request in writing to the regional office a credential be placed on file. Credentials may be filed without a fee or annual renewal for a maximum of three years. Benefit programs available to active ministers shall not be provided to those whose credentials are filed. Any filed credential not renewed to active status within three years will automatically be terminated. A credential may be reinstated from filed or terminated status upon written request to the regional director in the region where the person with the filed credential resides. The reinstatement must be approved by the regional and national boards. An individual wishing to reinstate a filed or terminated credential must complete a reinstatement form. When the credential has been filed for more than a year from the last renewal, the candidate must provide the regional director with the names of four current references who have known the candidate during the time the credential was filed.

**Divorce and Remarriage****A. Former Spouse Living**

When an applicant or the spouse of an applicant has a former spouse living and the circumstances occurred prior to salvation and/or had scriptural cause, the following procedures will apply:

1. An applicant shall first apply through and be recommended by the regional board serving the area. It shall be the responsibility of the regional board to make a thorough investigation with documentation, as far as possible, of all matters involved.
2. The regional board shall forward the application, supplemental questionnaire, and all related documents to the national board.
3. The national board shall consider the application on its merits, based upon submitted information, and may, at its discretion, require the applicant to appear before it.
4. An ordination credential may be granted only by the 2/3 vote of the members of the regional and national boards.
5. A license credential may be granted by a 2/3 vote of the members of the regional board and a unanimous vote of the administrative committee with all members present and voting. When there is not a unanimous vote of the administrative committee with all members present and voting, the license credential may be granted only by the 2/3 vote of the members of the regional and national boards.

**B. Change of Marital Status**

When a currently credentialed minister has a change of marital status by reason of divorce, dissolution of marriage, or remarriage, continuance of a credential shall be approved only by a



unanimous vote of the administrative committee with all members present and voting. When there is not a unanimous vote of the administrative committee with all members present and voting, the license credential may be granted only by the 2/3 vote of the members of the regional and national boards.

### **Paragraph 1. Credential Application Applications**

An applicant shall apply electronically by the use of online forms furnished by the regional executive director. All applications and other required documents shall be sent electronically to the executive director of the region in which the applicant resides. Completed reference forms shall be required.

When the applicant is transferring from another church organization, a completed reference form from that organization is required. The applicant shall provide the name of an officer of the other church organization authorized to attest the applicant is a minister in good standing and there are no charges against or investigations concerning the applicant.

An applicant shall appear before the regional credential committee or its authorized representatives for an interview before the applicant can be approved.

### **Examinations**

All applicants must take the Open Bible Doctrine Examination and complete the online New Ministers Orientation video course, both of which will be provided by the regional executive director, except where the applicant's language cannot be accommodated. All applicants for credentials must score at a satisfactory level on the Doctrine Examination, as established by national board policy.

### **Credential Determination**

#### **A. Regional Credential Committees**

The regional credential committee shall consist of the regional board or the regional executive director and at least two other ministers appointed by the regional board. The committee shall examine the qualifications of applicants according to the conditions and requirements set by the national board and in the Open Bible Manual. The credential committee shall recommend to the regional board approval or disapproval of applicants for credentials.

#### **B. Board of Credentials**

The board of credentials shall review the qualifications of applicants for credentials and the recommendation of the regional credential committee and approve, disapprove, or refer the applicants back to the region.

### **Paragraph 2. Certificates and Credential Cards**

#### **A. Initial**

#### **B. Renewal**

#### **C. Retirement Income Only**

#### **D. Retirement Plan**

### **Section 3. Good Standing**

For definition of good standing and spiritual, physical, and financial cooperation, please see Article 3, Section 5, Paragraph 2B of the Policies and Procedures.

### **Section 4. Ministerial Tithe**

#### **Paragraph 1. Full Ministerial Income**

Full ministerial income is defined as including both salary and ministerial housing allowance. Full tithe is defined as meaning a full tithe on the pre-tax amount of a minister's salary and housing allowance and 5% of the pre-tax amount of all secular income.

#### **Paragraph 2. Partial Ministerial Income**

#### **Paragraph 3. Evangelists and Para-Church Ministries**

#### **Paragraph 4. No Ministerial Income**

#### **Paragraph 5. Retirement Income Only**

**Paragraph 6. Filed Credentials****Paragraph 7. Secular Income Tithe (SIT) Waiver**

Open Bible Churches credentialed ministers who have been (a) in good standing (spiritual, physical, financial) for the previous two years or a new credential applicant, and who are (b) not lead pastors, and who (c) attend an officially affiliated OBC church that has been in full cooperation with the *Open Bible Manual* for the previous two years, may request a waiver permitting their full tithe of secular income (10%) to remain in the affiliated church. The application is subject to approval. The only time a person may apply for a Secular Income Tithe Waiver is when his or her credential is renewed or when a person first applies for a credential.

**Paragraph 8. Multi-Staff Tithe Rebate**

Churches with more than three paid, full-time, Open Bible ministers on staff may request a multi-staff tithe rebate. Multiple staff members will be eligible in the order in which they were employed, except the senior pastor always remains first on the list regardless of the date of hire. The church must be an affiliated Open Bible Church and the applicant a credentialed minister in good standing. All requests must first be recommended by the regional board of directors and approved by the administrative committee. The tithe return will be for twelve months, and continuation of the tithe return after twelve months must be requested according to policy. The national secretary-treasurer shall be notified if the full-time, paid credentialed staff positions are reduced to three or less, in which case the rebate will end. Multi-staff tithe rebates shall be reviewed every year.

**Section 5. Discipline and Restoration****Paragraph 1. Purpose****Paragraph 2. Cause**

- A. Teaching false doctrine;
- B. Conduct unbecoming a minister;
- C. Immorality;
- D. Insubordination;
- E. Financial dishonesty;
- F. Breach of ministerial ethics; and
- G. Sexual Harassment

**Paragraph 3. Policy and Procedure****Initiation of Charge for Ministers with Open Bible Credentials**

A charge may be initiated against a minister with Open Bible credentials preferably by presenting the charge in writing, signed, and with corroborating evidence, to the regional executive director in the region in which the minister resides.

**Anonymous Charges**

Ministers with Open Bible Credentials will not be judged purely on the basis of gossip or rumor. However, anonymous allegations will be taken seriously. Anonymous allegations will be explored appropriately, but consideration will be given to:

- The seriousness of the issue raised;
- The credibility of the concern; and
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

Anonymous allegations will be brought to the attention of the regional board. The regional board will document all information regarding the allegation. A determination for preliminary investigation will be made by the regional board based on the information available.

**Preliminary Investigation**

The regional board shall have the responsibility for investigation and discipline. It may appoint a representative or a committee to act on its behalf. As a part of the preliminary investigation, the accused credentialed minister has the right to hear the accusation and respond to the charges in writing. Upon notification of the charge, the minister may not drop his or her credential for any reason until the process has been fully completed.

**Admission of Guilt**

Admission of guilt by the accused credentialed minister at any point during the investigation will begin the discipline and restoration process according to policy. The regional board shall, however, still complete the investigation.

**Preliminary Determination of Committee or Representative**

The committee or representative appointed shall make a preliminary determination of guilt or lack of guilt and present its determination to the regional board for action.

**Regional Board Action**

If the regional board determines the allegations are unwarranted, it shall notify the accuser and the accused credentialed minister in writing. If the regional board determines there is reasonable cause to believe the charge is accurate, it shall request, in writing with corroborating evidence, to the secretary of the Association the temporary suspension of the accused minister's credential pending the outcome of a hearing. The secretary of the Association shall convene a meeting of the administrative committee to approve the region's request and send notice of the suspension to the accused minister by certified mail. While under suspension, no credentialed minister shall be permitted to continue with official duties. Credentials shall remain suspended until after a hearing and a final determination of lack of guilt or guilt is made.

**Hearing**

If the accused, credentialed minister denies the charges, the regional board shall set a hearing date where evidence shall be taken in person from both the minister and the accuser and such other witnesses as either party shall choose to call. The date of the hearing shall be no later than the next scheduled meeting of the regional board after the notice of the preliminary determination of guilt.

**A. Refusal to Appear**

The accused credentialed minister may be found guilty of charges and disciplined as a result of refusal to appear at the hearing or willful neglect to take advantage of reasonable rights and privileges. The accuser has the right to refuse to appear at the hearing. The regional board has the right to take the accuser's refusal to appear into consideration in making its final determination of lack of guilt or guilt.

**B. Final Determination**

The regional board shall make a determination of lack of guilt or guilt and notify the secretary of the Association in writing. If guilt is not found, both the accused credentialed minister and the accuser shall be notified in writing by the secretary of the Association and the credential shall be officially restored. If there is a finding of guilt, affected parties shall be notified in writing by the secretary of the Association according to national board policy.

**C. Disposition of Credential****1. Unrepentant**

If guilt is established and the credentialed minister is not repentant and cooperative, the regional executive director shall request in writing to the Secretary of the Association the revocation of the credential of the minister. The secretary of the Association shall convene a meeting of the administrative committee, which shall review the request. If the committee approves revocation, notice of the revocation shall be sent to the minister by the secretary of the Association. (Matthew 18:17; Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5.)

**2. Not Eligible**

If guilt is established and the credentialed minister is guilty, repentant, and cooperative, but the offense is one for which restoration of the credential is not possible or advisable, as established by the national board, the regional executive director shall request in writing of the secretary of the Association the revocation of the credential of the minister. The secretary shall convene a meeting of the administrative committee to review the request. If the request is approved, notice of the revocation shall be sent to the minister by the secretary of the Association. The restoration of the minister to God, self, and family shall still be a goal.

**3. Repentant**

If guilt is established and the credentialed minister is repentant and cooperative, the regional



executive director shall request in writing to the secretary of the Association to file the credentials of the repentant minister. The secretary shall convene a meeting of the administrative committee. If the request is approved, the credential shall be filed and shall remain filed until the completion of the discipline and restoration process. A written plan of restoration shall be prepared by a representative of the regional board and signed by both the regional executive director and the minister being restored, demonstrating acceptance of the plan by both parties. (Galatians 6:1; 1 Timothy 5:19-22.) When the credential has been filed for three years, the secretary of the Association may request a written recommendation from the regional board to restore, revoke, drop or continue filed status. The recommendation will be submitted to the administrative committee. If the administrative committee decides to continue filed status, the secretary may request a recommendation from the region annually, until the credential is revoked, dropped, or restored.

**Appeals**

The accuser or the accused credentialed minister shall have the right to appeal to the national board. Appeals must be presented according to the procedure for appeals prescribed in Article 6, Section 4, Paragraph 12 of the Policies and Procedures. The determination of the national board of the appeal is final and shall be sent to appropriate parties by certified mail.

**Notice of Action**

Notification of all credential actions shall be made to, but not limited to, all regional executive directors by the secretary of the Association according to the guidelines established by the national board.

**Section 6. Procedure for Appeals**

For policy and procedure for appeals, please see Article 6, Section 4, Paragraph 12.

**ARTICLE 12. HIGHER EDUCATION****Section 1. Commission on Biblical Education and Ministerial Education Training**

The Commission on Biblical Education and Ministerial Training shall consist of not less than three nor more than five members. The commission shall receive applications from post-secondary institutions for certification of endorsement from Open Bible Churches, ascertain if applicant institutions meet Open Bible certification standards, and make certification recommendations to the national board. The commission reports to and is accountable to the president.

**Paragraph 1. Eligibility**

A majority of the members of the commission shall have attained either a graduate or post-graduate degree or have obtained extensive educational leadership experience in directing a post-secondary institution.

**Paragraph 2. Appointment and Term of Office**

Commission members shall be appointed by the president and approved by the national board to four-year terms.

**ARTICLE 13. AMENDMENTS****Section 1. Order of Consideration****Section 2. Procedure****Paragraph 1. Statement of Faith****Paragraph 2. Bylaws and Official Statements****Paragraph 3. Open Bible Manual****ARTICLE 14. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY**

# **Association Ministries and Guidelines**



## ASSOCIATION MINISTRIES GUIDELINES

### PURPOSE AND MISSION

Association ministries shall: "...support fulfillment of the purpose and mission of the Association, in communication with the president, other officers, leaders of association ministries, official, national institutions, regions, and affiliated churches." Open Bible Bylaws, Article 8, Section 1. The continuance of each ministry shall be based on mission effectiveness determined by an annual assessment of the ministry's accomplishment of its stated goals and objectives.

**Ministry Structures, Policies, and Procedures:** Each ministry leader may develop ministry structures, policies, and operational procedures subject to approval by the national board.

**Strategic Planning:** Each ministry shall engage at least biennially in prayerful strategic planning to clarify its primary goals and objectives. A written strategic plan shall be submitted to the president that includes proposed outcomes and strategic initiatives, assigned responsibilities, budget, and timelines.

### ELIGIBILITY

Ministry leaders, staff, and volunteers shall conduct their ministry and personal lives in accordance with the provisions, procedures, and regulations as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual. Ministry leaders shall provide a written statement they have read the Open Bible Employee Handbook and agree to abide by all applicable procedures.

**Credentialed Leaders of Association Ministries:** Credentialed leaders of Association ministries shall be Open Bible ministers in good standing who demonstrate servant-leadership gifts and competencies, exemplary spiritual maturity, and ability to work with others. They shall be required to cooperate spiritually, physically, and financially with the provisions, procedures, and regulations of the Open Bible Manual.

**Non-credentialed Leaders of Association Ministries:** Non-credentialed leaders of Association ministries shall exhibit spiritual maturity, leadership skills, ability to work with others, and vocational success. They shall be required to cooperate spiritually, physically, and financially with the provisions, procedures and regulations in the Open Bible Manual.

### BUDGET

Ministry leaders are accountable to the president for the preparation and submission of and, upon approval, adherence to an annual budget that projects anticipated revenues and expenses. Ministry leaders shall regularly monitor revenue and expenses to provide responsible, fiscal management and accountability.

### FINANCE

**Internal Control:** Appropriate internal control procedures shall be prepared and implemented by the ministry leader in consultation with the Association treasurer. Ministry leaders shall make every effort to refrain from receiving and handling cash on behalf of the ministry.

**Purchasing:** Ministry leaders shall secure a minimum of three quotes from competitive vendors for purchases or service agreements in excess of \$500.00.

**Accountable Reimbursements:** All reimbursements are subject to the Association's accountable reimbursement plan. Receipts are required for all reimbursements, except expenditures such as gratuities and vending machines. Timely expense reports and receipts shall be submitted to the Association's office of accounting.

**Honorariums:** Ministry leaders shall, upon placement in their new position, develop a policy on the use of honorariums in consultation with the president.

## FUNDRAISING

Ministry leaders may solicit funds to accomplish mission, with approval from the president. Ministry leaders raising money for ministry purposes shall comply with the following ethical standards:

1. Communicate truthfully and fairly;
2. Honor donor intent;
3. Advise donors of the fair-market value of all premiums and incentives;
4. Abide by all IRS rules for tax deductibility of donations;
5. Receive no personal benefit for any product used for fundraising or promotional purposes;
6. Avoid acceptance of donations a ministry leader knows would place a financial hardship on a donor or put the donor's future well-being at risk; and
7. Research and abide by all fundraising statutes in every city and state in which donor funds are solicited.

## RECORD KEEPING AND REPORTS

**Record Retention:** Ministry leaders shall ensure protection of vital documents by maintaining current, systematic, record-retention procedures.

**Reports:** Ministry leaders shall file written reports with the secretary of the Association prior to biennial meetings of the Association and any other reports requested by the president or national board.

**National Archives:** Ministry leaders shall submit any printed literature, statistical reports, or other important items documenting the ministry's activities to the Open Bible Historical Archives, preferably quarterly, but not less than annually.

## COMMUNICATION

Ministry leaders shall strive for cost-effective excellence in every medium of communication representing their ministries. At least one and preferable two qualified individuals, in addition to the author, shall proof all final copy.

## CALENDAR EVENTS

Ministry leaders shall coordinate ministry events with the annual, national Open Bible calendar and regional offices.



# **Covenants of Ethics**



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## MINISTERIAL COVENANT OF ETHICS

Ethics define and protect our personal life, family, ministry, and relationships as ministers in Open Bible Churches. These ethics are rooted in the principles of Scripture. A breach of ministerial ethics could result in disciplinary action.

### PREAMBLE

As a minister of Jesus Christ, called by God to proclaim the gospel and credentialed by Open Bible Churches, I commit myself to this code of ethics. I make this commitment sincerely and wholeheartedly so my ministry will be acceptable to God, beneficial to my family and church, and a witness to the world.

### PERSONAL AND FAMILY

1. I will continue to develop my spiritual life through consistent prayer, Bible reading, and personal application of Scripture.
2. I will seek to maintain balance between family and ministry and will treat my family with love, attention, and respect.
3. I will pursue physical and emotional health through regular exercise, healthy eating habits, and adequate rest.
4. I will be a lifelong learner through the pursuit of educational opportunities and resources.
5. I will steward my personal finances with integrity by promptly paying bills, avoiding excessive debt, preparing for retirement, and by not diverting income to addictive or predatory financial practices such as gambling.
6. I will ensure that what I ingest will not impair my conduct or damage my abilities, relationships, godly influence with others, or testimony as an Open Bible minister.
7. I will abstain from pornography, intoxication, abuse of prescription medications, recreational use of drugs, and tobacco.

### CHURCH RELATIONSHIPS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. When preaching I will prepare and deliver biblically based messages and communicate with honesty, giving credit when using another's material.
2. In counseling I will keep strict confidentiality except to prevent physical harm, harm to the church body, or as required by law.
3. I will use discretion and wisdom with the opposite sex to prevent the appearance of evil, temptation, or sin.
4. I will make sure proper checks and balances are in place, so finances are managed with integrity and in accordance with state and federal laws.
5. I will not loan money to the church or receive a loan from the church or its members without the written consent of the church board and either the district or regional director. (Note: Some state laws forbid non-profits from lending money to corporate officers.)
6. I will inform potential staff members of the church's policy regarding their retention or release in the event of the resignation or release of the lead pastor.
7. I will minister without partiality and not allow a personal relationship to unduly influence the decisions and direction of the church.
8. I will join in marriage only individuals who fulfill biblical guidelines.
9. I will use caution and discretion before choosing to endorse products or agencies. In my capacity as a pastor, I will not endorse political parties or candidates running for public office.

### RESPONSIBILITIES TO COLLEAGUES AND OPEN BIBLE LEADERSHIP

1. I will treat all ministerial colleagues, including predecessors, with respect in word and actions.
2. I will work in cooperation with Open Bible leaders and ministers and will resolve conflicts in order to maintain a spirit of unity.
3. I will, upon becoming aware of the serious misconduct of an Open Bible minister, no matter how that knowledge is acquired, contact the regional executive director.
4. I will contact the lead pastor of a church prior to contacting one of his/her staff or members concerning ministry opportunities.



5. I will not start or locate a new church or relocate an existing church without first receiving written consent from the regional executive director.
6. I will not accept an independent pastorate in a city where an Open Bible church exists without first informing the regional executive director.
7. I will not approach or consider an offer from a church whose pastor has not officially resigned.
8. I will, upon leaving a church, cease attending, unless invited by the incoming lead pastor and church board.
9. I will not, upon leaving a church, provide ministry to persons in the church except with the consent of the lead pastor, and I will not exert influence or undermine the leadership of the church.
10. I will treat ministry guests with courtesy, providing adequately for their needs, and I will not invite persons to minister in the church who are under discipline, have questionable character, or have fundamental, doctrinal differences.
11. I will not attempt to unduly influence people to leave other churches.

## CHURCH GOVERNING BOARD COVENANT OF ETHICS

A church's governing board consists of spiritually mature and wise leaders called by God, affirmed by the pastor and people, and entrusted with authority to work with the pastor in directing the affairs of the church (1 Timothy 5:17). Serving as a member of a church governing board is a call by God, a responsibility to servant leadership. It is not a political position or a forum for the exercise of personal power. Instead Jesus said, "But among you it should be quite different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant" (Mark 10:43 NLT). Jesus also instructed, "...Much is required from those to whom much is given, and much more is required from those to whom much more is given" (Luke 12:48 NLT).

Ethics is defined as the moral framework for principles that guide relationships, conduct, and integrity of life and witness. Accordingly church governing boards must adhere to a God-glorifying covenant of ethics in order to faithfully and effectively serve Him. Open Bible Churches recommends governing boards of affiliated churches commit to abide by the following covenant of ethics.

### PREAMBLE

As a member of our church governing board, I recognize my call to serve and accountability for my service extends to God through my pastor, fellow board members, and church members. I commit myself to this covenant of ethics as more than a personal obligation but also as a matter of spiritual dedication and resolve. I dedicate unto the Lord who I am, what I do, and how I do it. May my service be acceptable to God, a blessing to my pastor and church, and a witness to the world.

Apart from my spiritual responsibility, I understand I have a responsibility to make sure the corporation operates according to the laws of the county, state, and federal government. From a legal perspective, this is my highest responsibility.

### PERSONAL AND FAMILY

1. I will seek to develop my spiritual life through consistent prayer, Bible reading, and personal application of Scripture.
2. I will care for my family's spiritual needs with love and maintain balance between family, church, and work responsibilities.
3. I will fulfill my obligations without compromise and with a willing spirit.
4. I will daily submit my actions and motivations to review by the Holy Spirit.
5. I will be faithful to doctrine as established in Open Bible's Statement of Faith.
6. I will yield and confess to the Lord unconfessed sin and unforgiven hurts with the determination not to give the enemy any footholds in my life.

### RELATIONSHIP WITH PASTOR

A God-honoring, leadership balance is in order when the pastor casts vision and leads with the support of the governing board. This relationship must be marked by mutual love and respect.

1. I will regularly pray for my pastor and pastor's family.
2. I will determine to bless and be accountable to my pastor.
3. I will confide in and request counsel from my pastor concerning any sins, habits, or activities detrimental to my ability to serve in a leadership capacity.
4. I will seek to maintain unity in the bond of peace.
5. I will support my pastor's leadership vision.
6. I will maintain an open and teachable spirit.
7. I will be available to participate in board meetings.
8. I will minister according to my call to serve.
9. I will refrain from criticism, complaint, or other negative attitudes or opinions without first discussing any concerns with my pastor.
10. If I have a problem with my pastor, I will go privately to my pastor first.

11. If someone comes to me with a problem concerning my pastor, I will encourage that person to go to the pastor. If the person is reluctant or unwilling, I will offer to go with him or her.

### **RELATIONSHIP WITH FELLOW BOARD MEMBERS**

1. I will regularly pray for my fellow board members and their families.
2. I will maintain confidentiality whenever expected, anticipated, or requested.
3. I will lovingly and clearly express myself in board meetings.
4. I will not manipulate or be manipulated but will maintain a spirit of openness while always listening and endeavoring to work in harmony with the pastor and board.
5. I will honor the procedures and decisions established by the board.
6. I will support compliance with all legal requirements of our church and uphold the highest level of financial integrity in decision-making and reporting.

### **RELATIONSHIP WITH CONGREGATION**

1. I will lead by example with my spirit, attitude, service, participation, and financial support for the church, leading a holy lifestyle free of addictive and harmful substances and other sinful habits.
2. I will encourage unity in the congregation.
3. I will serve as an ambassador on behalf of my pastor and fellow board members, helping to interpret and explain vision, plans, and decisions.
4. I will listen to the concerns and questions of people in the church and will faithfully share and represent those to my pastor and the board without becoming a lobbyist.

### **RELATIONSHIP WITH OPEN BIBLE CHURCHES**

1. I will faithfully adhere to the policies, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual.
2. I will serve as an ambassador of Open Bible Churches' mission and ministries.
3. I will assume responsibility to report violations of the Open Bible Manual to the region in accordance with the policies established by the Open Bible Manual.

# Official Statements





## OFFICIAL STATEMENTS

The position papers (Official Statements) adopted by Open Bible Churches are expressions of conscience outside the parameters of the Bylaws, Statement of Faith, and Covenants of Ethics.

### ABORTION

We affirm the Bible as the highest authority on the value of all human life. The Bible makes it clear that God is directly involved in creating life in the womb (Psalm 139:13; Job 31:15; 33:4). The Bible provides examples to show us that God knows us and has a plan for our lives even before we are born (Psalm 139:16; Jeremiah 1:5; Genesis 25:22-23; Luke 1:13-17). God's Word also tells us that children are a blessing from God (Psalm 127:3; Psalm 128:3). In light of these truths, we conclude that abortion is contrary to the will of God and neither the life of the unborn child nor that of the mother should be taken lightly.

Scientific advances in recent decades have helped us better understand what the Bible has taught us for centuries: the life growing inside a pregnant woman is distinct from her and individually unique. Science also tells us that the unborn are without question genetically human. Life begins at conception rather than at birth. Abortion, therefore, ends a human life. In the extreme case where the life of the unborn child threatens the life of the mother, the doctor has two patients and should try to save both lives if possible.

Abortion often traumatizes those who have undergone the procedure, leaving lifelong emotional scars and guilt. Though abortion is a sin, it is important to extend God's grace and compassion to those who have chosen to abort their unborn child or were involved in the decision-making process to abort that child and are now repentant and seek His forgiveness.

Adopted 1980; Amended 1984, 1985, 2023

### CREATIONISM

God is a timeless, uncreated, omnipotent, and moral being. It was through the Word of God that time, space, and all physical creation began to exist (John 1:1-3).

Both the Bible and the natural, observable order of our universe give evidence to the fact that life was started by God the Creator. We affirm that God made creation (Genesis 1:1), both miraculous in dimension and natural in order, comprehensible to humankind (Romans 1:20).

Scientific discoveries affirm the Bible's narrative about God's design of a finely tuned, life sustaining, and finite universe.

Humans are unique from the rest of creation in that we are the only beings created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Although we have a physical body that will one day die, we also have a non-physical soul that will live for eternity.

Adopted 1982; Amended 2023

### GAMBLING

Gambling in many forms is pervasive and its overall impact is dangerous. Gambling can have detrimental effects on an individual's self-control, wellbeing, and ability to make sound financial judgments. Even gambling that is viewed as recreational enjoyment can become addictive, which can lead to bankruptcy, family dissolution, deterioration of mental health, and a host of other adverse consequences. Communities that host gambling establishments are vulnerable to an increase in substance abuse, alcoholism, theft, violence, suicide, disregard for human life, fraud, and other social breakdowns and illicit activities.

The Bible encourages us to practice godly financial stewardship and self-control (Proverbs 21:5; 2 Peter 1:5-6); to beware of the love of money (1 Timothy 6:10), and to trust God, not games of chance, to meet our needs (Matthew 6:33; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; Philippians 4:19; Proverbs 28:19-20). The practice of gambling is not consistent with these biblical standards.



There is a risk factor in all forms of gambling. Because it is inconsistent with biblical principles of good stewardship and faith in God to meet our needs and because it can have such a negative impact on both individuals and society as a whole, we strongly discourage any form of gambling.

Adopted 1983; Amended 2023

## HUMAN SEXUALITY

God created human beings in His own image, distinctly crafted and biologically identifiable as male and female at birth (Genesis 1:27). Thus, sexuality has been essential to our identity from creation; complementary sexes by divine design. This physical distinction enabled God's plan for sexual relationship, which is foundational to gender identity. All attempts of whatever sexual nature to blur, confuse, or alter God's design for sexuality and sexual identity are sin.

Amended 2023

## Covenantal Relationship

Marriage incorporates more than a physical sexual union. It is intended to be a biblical, covenantal relationship committed to and blessed by God. When God declared, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18) He created woman. This initial model of God-ordained unions brought completeness to Adam and Eve on every plane, including sexual. New Testament covenantal relationship reflects the sacrificial nature of Christ's commitment to the Church (Ephesians 5:25-27), transcending tradition, culture, and governmental contractual definitions of marriage. Jesus gave definition to this covenant when He taught that sexual relationship is to be exclusively reserved for and fulfilled within the lifelong, faithful union between one man and one woman in holy matrimony (Matthew 19:4-6). Sexual relationships outside this one man one woman covenantal union before, during, or after holy matrimony, are sinful in the eyes of God (Hebrews 13:4).

Sexual desire, which leads to sexual intimacy, is a gift from God. He gives us sexual intimacy for the following reasons:<sup>1</sup>

1. God gives us sex as a one-flesh union that consummates a marriage.  
Genesis 2:24 states, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." This passage provides the essential model for marriage. The act of leaving one's father and mother connotes a change of status in the community; being united to one's spouse is a commitment that embodies that which the rest of Scripture calls a covenant. "One flesh" refers directly to the physical union that sets the couple's relationship apart from all other relationships. When people have sexual intercourse with someone other than their spouse, they have engaged in a life-uniting act without life-uniting intent. Although an actual marriage has not taken place, they have entered into an intimacy God intended only to consummate a marriage. This act violates not only the partner but also God's intention for sex.
2. God gives us sex for procreation.  
We read that after creating humans – male and female – in His image, "Then God blessed them and said, 'be fruitful and multiply'" (Genesis 1:28, NLT). God intended that humans come into the world through the most intimate, committed, loving union possible. Sex is by nature procreative, and children should be recognized as a blessing from the Lord (Psalm 127). This does not mean a couple must intend with every sexual act to have children. From the beginning, God established multiple purposes for sex and granted humans a stewardship role over His creation, so there is legitimacy in family planning that includes the use of contraceptives but not abortifacients. Sex is a responsible act only in a relationship in which the couple is willing to care for any children that can come from that union.
3. God gives us sex as a way to express love to our spouse in the covenant relationship of marriage.  
Sex is not the only way husbands and wives say, "I love you," but it is a primary vehicle for mutually expressing love. Sexual intercourse and other forms of physical intimacy communicate love and enable the couple's love to mature holistically. Self-knowledge and knowledge of the other is enhanced through maturing sexual intimacy. Sex as an expression of love in marriage is so essential to the covenant relationship that Scripture states, "The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs. The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife" (1 Corinthians 7:3-4, NLT).
4. God gives us sex for enjoyment and pleasure.  
God created us to experience not only eternal pleasures in the next world (see Psalm 16:11) but also physical and emotional pleasures as part of His created order in this world. Indeed, male and female bodies were created with parts specifically purposed to bring sexual delight.



God gave the good gift of sex for very specific purposes: consummation of marriage, procreation, love, and pleasure. A morally legitimate sexual act occurs in the context of these divinely given purposes, which can come together only in the covenant marriage of a man and a woman.

### **Celibacy of Singleness**

We acknowledge that there are many who are not and may never be married. For some this is by choice (1 Corinthians 7:32-37). For others physical limitations or other circumstances make it difficult or impossible for them to enter into a Christ-honoring, biblically defined marriage (Matthew 19:10-12). In order to be biblically faithful these individuals choose to be celibate. The Church should lovingly honor the decision of individuals who have chosen to honor Christ in the celibacy of singleness.

<sup>1</sup>Adapted from: The National Association of Evangelicals. (2012). *Theology of Sex*. Adopted 2015

### **Redemption Brings Wholeness**

People who are unaware of or have not embraced a redemptive relationship with Jesus Christ may commit sexual sins, confused and encouraged by our culture to do so. When Jesus saved a woman from being stoned because she had been caught in the act of sexual intercourse outside the union of marriage He asked her, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?’ ‘No, Lord,’ she said. And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I. Go and sin no more’” (John 8:10-11, NLT). This same sin-cleansing grace of Jesus is available to all people who have committed sexual sin; repent and commit to the purity of God’s biblical plan for sexuality. Jesus can deliver from guilt and heal emotional scars caused by sexual immorality and restore wholeness to the soul. The church should follow Jesus’ example and extend loving compassion to people ensnared in any aspect of sexual sin while inviting them to experience His cleansing and redemptive embrace.

Adopted 2015

### **LEADERSHIP AUTHORITY**

God, the Master Designer has created a world of order evident throughout all of creation (Genesis 1:26). By His design, He has installed leaders who bear responsibility for specific arenas of His creation, and He gives these leaders the authority to fulfill their responsibilities. We witness this structure in earthly relationships such as a husband and a wife, a parent and a child, an employer and employee, a governmental leader and the community, and a church leader and church.

We are subject to these God-given leaders whether in our families, our government, or the Church. In turn, these leaders are subject to those in authority over them. We are all subject to God’s final authority. This order is necessary to create functional relationships within organizational and governing structures. Without order nothing of value is accomplished (Romans 13:1-5; Ephesians 5:21-30).

Accountability to God-ordained authority “as unto the Lord” brings blessing (Deuteronomy 5:16; Colossians 3:18-25). Disrespect of it brings judgment (Leviticus 20:9; Numbers 12, 14, 16; 1 Samuel 15:23; Romans 13:2). Honoring God-ordained authority requires faith in God to both raise up and remove leadership. Such faith draws a person to desire accountability to God-sanctioned leadership. He or she will strive to help their leaders fulfill their responsibilities before God.

The Bible exhorts us to honor those in authority over us (Romans 13:7; 1Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 2:2; 1 Peter 2:17). Honoring those in authority over us is contrary to the worldly mindset that tempts us to put ourselves and our own interests before those of others; it requires humility. We should avoid the faulty mindset of James and John, Jesus’ disciples who were vying for anticipated roles of authority in heaven (Matthew 20:20-28). Jesus admonished them, saying, “Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, . . . the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.”

At times, when leadership is contradicting God’s directives or lacks leadership capacity to serve in that role, a person must exercise their conscience and conviction (Daniel 3, 6; Acts 5:29), but this direction should be based on discernment and evidence of wrongdoing or demonstrated lack of leadership capacity, not simply disagreement with leadership decisions and direction. We should not discount leaders because of imperfections; we all have imperfections.



We should pray for and honor leaders despite their imperfections as long as they are not contradicting God's directives. Submission to God-ordained leadership honors God. We should make every effort to help our leaders accomplish their work with joy (Hebrews 13:17). If we are humble enough to submit to them now, God will lift us up in His time (1 Peter 5:6).

Adopted 1995; Amended 2023

## **MARRIAGE AND FAMILY, DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE**

Marriage is God-given, sacred, and good. It is a holy union between one man and one woman in which they covenant with one another and with God to build a loving, faithful, and lifelong relationship. Marriage is designed by God for the purpose of companionship and to reflect the relationship between Christ and the Church, and it is the context God has given us for sexual intimacy which often results in children and multiplication of humanity (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18, 22-24; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9; Ephesians 5:21-33).

### **Biblical Foundation**

Christians should marry other Christians, modeling a spiritually unified, harmonious marriage to their children and to others (2 Corinthians 6:14). A healthy Christian marriage and family wherein biblical values can be passed down from generation to generation is foundational for a healthy society, and therefore should be nurtured and protected. Families rooted in God's life-giving Word present a living model of a loving God offering an invitation for salvation in Jesus Christ to all. We strive for these life-giving principles to permeate every arena of life (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:18-21; Proverbs 22:6; Isaiah 59:21; Luke 1:17; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; Titus 2:1-7).

### **Divorce**

Divorce breaks the God-ordained covenant between a man, woman, and God and taints the reflection of the image of Christ to the Church and to the world (Matthew 19:6; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11). Although Moses was allowed to grant and regulate divorce because of the hardness of people's hearts (Matthew 19:7-8), the biblical reality is God hates divorce (Malachi 2:13-16). Nonetheless, it should be clearly understood that God loves and values all people equally.

### **Reconciliation**

Key characteristics of the heart of God are grace, forgiveness and reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:16-21). Throughout His Word, when God's people violated His covenant with them, He extended forgiveness and reconciliation when they expressed true repentance. Accordingly, every effort should be made to bring reconciliation to a struggling marriage. These efforts may include spiritual counsel and professional counseling, and it will always require a heart of repentance, grace, and forgiveness.

### **When Divorce is Scripturally Permissible**

Despite God's clearly stated plan for marriage and His hatred of divorce, His Word speaks specifically to occasions when divorce is permissible.

- Fornication (sometimes translated "sexual immorality") by a spouse (Matthew 5:32)
- When an unbelieving spouse abandons a believing spouse (1 Corinthians 7:15)
- Divorce prior to salvation (2 Corinthians 5:17)

### **When Remarriage is Scripturally Permissible**

God planned for marriage to be a lifetime covenant. Since two become one in marriage, creating a unique, intimate relational bond, divorce without biblical grounds and remarriage is adultery and marriage to a person not having scriptural grounds for a divorce is adultery. The Church must promote and protect the sanctity of the oneness bond found only in marriage (Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2-3). However, we believe that remarriage after a previous marriage is permissible under the following circumstances:

- The death of one's spouse (Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:8-9, 39; 1 Timothy 5:14).
- Those whose spouse has been unfaithful (Matthew 5:31-32).
- Those whose unbelieving spouse has abandoned the marriage (1 Corinthians 7:15).
- Those who were divorced prior to salvation (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:1-8).



## Overarching Scriptural Principles

Overarching principles of Scripture such as protecting the oppressed and healing the wounds of the broken-hearted give hope to those whose marriages have been shattered (Psalm 9:9; 10:17-18; 34:18-19; 103:6; 147:3; Isaiah 1:17; Luke 4:18-19; 1 Timothy 5:8). While Scripture may not address every particular situation specifically, we believe that the entirety of Scripture gives foundation for consideration of other factors which may allow for divorce and remarriage.

- Those who are divorced due to being personally abused or due to the abuse of family members by their spouse (Psalm 10:17-18; 103:6; Jeremiah 22:3; Isaiah 1:17; Luke 4:18-19)
- Those who've made every effort to remain married, honor and respect the sanctity of marriage, but were deserted by their spouse, even if the deserting spouse professes to be a Christian (1 Timothy 5:8). The Lord loves, cares for, and heals the brokenhearted, as should the Church (Psalm 34:18; 147:3).
- Those who are sincerely repentant of past sin related to divorce and demonstrate, as in Ephesians 5:21-25 and 1 Peter 3:1-7, an evident and heartfelt honor and respect, for the sanctity of marriage (Matthew 12:31; Acts 3:19; Acts 13:22-23 (See the story of David in 2 Samuel 11-12 and his repentance in Psalm 51); 1 John 1:9).

Since Scripture gives no absolute statement about divorce and remarriage if physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse has entered the marriage or family relationship, issues of separation, divorce, and remarriage should be prayerfully considered with the aid of pastors, counselors, and local law officials.

God has revealed the power of covenant love to us through the relationship of Christ to His Church. With this as our standard and in the power of God's Spirit, our marriages should strive to reflect that same honor, beauty, intimacy, holiness, and grace in the world.

Adopted 2005; Amended 2023

## NON-TRINITARIANS

There is only one God, but He shows Himself to us as three persons united in one Godhead: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, the Trinity. Any requirement to jointly lead worship services with those who hold non-trinitarian beliefs is contrary to our Statement of Faith.

We strongly support any pastor or chaplain who chooses not to participate in the communal conduct of worship with non-trinitarian religious leaders. In areas of ministry apart from worship gatherings a pastor or chaplain is free, as his or her conscience directs, to cooperate with other leaders to enhance the wellbeing of the community.

Adopted 1993; Amended 2023

## EUTHANASIA

Euthanasia, sometimes referred to as assisted suicide or mercy killing, is a significant bioethical issue confronting America and the world. The debate regarding this matter often involves the idea of one's "right to die," revealing the ever-increasing level of moral relativism within our society. We oppose all forms of euthanasia, whether or not administered by a physician.

The Bible clearly states, "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13, NIV). The fact that a patient wishes to end his or her life does not nullify the commandment. These issues are even more profound as the matter of life and death involves not only our relationships with one another on the human level, but also the relationship between each of us and God. We believe life is a gift from God (Genesis 2:7) and that human life has absolute, not relative, value. While we firmly believe in mercy and compassion, that belief does not give license to intervene in God's role, determining life and death.

We know as Christians that "to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21), but we believe that it is wrong to impose our will over God's with respect to advancing that day. It is in His timing, and we must instead look to our Lord Jesus Christ to sustain us.

The Hippocratic Oath states that a physician's duty is *primum non nocere*, "first, do no harm." As Christ followers, we firmly oppose any attempts to justify euthanasia, with or without consent, and appeal to the medical profession to do all in its power to continue to find ways to assist patients without the use of euthanasia.



The debate surrounding euthanasia has expanded to allowing the procedure for mental health issues in addition to medical ones. The possibility of someone ending a life based on temporary or treatable issues is unconscionable. We support end of life care and hospice, including palliative care and mental health treatment. We resolutely oppose the hastening of death through euthanasia.

We extend deep empathy and compassion for anyone who is considering ending their life and for medical personnel who want to help these greatly hurting people, but euthanasia is not the answer. Hope and eternal life are found in the name of Jesus Christ, and we pray that all in need will find comfort and strength in and through Him.

Adopted 1997; Amended 2023

## **RACISM**

We reject all forms of racism and related forms of discrimination by which systems, policies, actions, and attitudes create unequal or unjust opportunities for people based on race or ethnicity. We strive for racial reconciliation and will consistently endeavor to strengthen the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

Because the Bible declares that we are all made in the image of God and our worth is found in Him alone, we respect, value, and include, as does God, all races and ethnicities without prejudice. We stand on the truth of the Word of God that ascribes the creation of all humankind to our Heavenly Father (Genesis 1:27).

We adhere to the biblical truth that states we are all one in Christ (Ephesians 2:13-14) and that God has called us all to love one another (John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:20). Because of this call, we will consistently demonstrate love, acceptance, and compassion for each human being regardless of race or ethnicity. We are committed to the message of reconciliation and as believers in Christ will show no partiality (James 2:1).

Racism in all its forms, personal and systemic, is a sin and to be resisted by the body of Christ; every member of the body of Christ must speak boldly, act resolutely, and stand firmly against racism.

Adopted 2005; Amended 2023

## **THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP**

The history of the Pentecostal movement and of Open Bible Churches is brimming with anointed women called to serve Christ and the Church. Many dynamic women, both single and married, have contributed significantly to the growth and development of Open Bible in the United States and abroad. This history testifies to the fact that God honors the public ministry and leadership of women.

The Old Testament consistently endorses the ministry and leadership of women. It tells the stories of Ruth and Esther as well as Abigail (1 Samuel 25) and Deborah (Judges 4 & 5). Also recorded is the ministry of women prophets such as Miriam (Exodus 15:20) and Huldah (2 Kings 22:14). The prophet Joel clearly indicates there is no distinction between male and female in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days (Joel 2:28-29).

The New Testament continues affirmation of the ministry and leadership of women. Dorcas and Lydia were models of women in ministry (Acts 9:36, 16:14). Philip's four daughters were prophets (Acts 21:8-9), Phoebe was a deacon (Romans 16:1), Junia was listed as "outstanding among the apostles" (Romans 16:7), and Euodia and Syntyche were leaders of house churches (Philippians 4:2-3). Women were noted to have prayed and prophesied publicly in 1 Corinthians 11:4-5.

The Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 demonstrated that God is no respecter of persons in regard to gender. Biblical interpretation reveals all seven ministry gifts of Romans 12:6-8 (prophecy, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, and showing mercy) are given to both males and females, and all the nine spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 (wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, and interpretation of tongues) are also given to men and women.

Two often-quoted passages in the New Testament seem to contain a prohibition against the leadership of women: 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:12. Since these must be viewed in context with Paul's other statements and practices and that of the New Testament Church as a whole, they could hardly be considered absolute, unequivocal prohibitions of the leadership of women. We adhere to the scholarly argument that these are teachings dealing with specific, local problems needing correction.



We celebrate the ministry and leadership of women at all levels. We do so after examining biblical passages that address the role of women in the first century Church in their cultural and historical contexts and by applying sound principles of Bible interpretation to contemporary practice in our churches. Since every believer's gifts and anointing should make way for his or her ministry, men and women alike must be diligent to study the Scriptures and embrace God's calling on their lives. We have been blessed by the ministry and leadership of women, and we are committed to honoring and championing these women.

Adopted 2003; Amended 2023

## **SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

Christ followers should be guided by the Bible in considering what we partake of and put into our bodies. The Bible describes our bodies as the temple of God; His Spirit lives in us (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). The apostle Paul repeats this description and adds that because God bought us for such a high price, His Son's death, we do not belong to ourselves but to Him, our Creator and Redeemer. For that reason, we must honor God with our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) as a reflection of His holiness (1 Peter 1:15-16).

We are addressing two primary kinds of substance abuse that can bring harm to our bodies. First, there are substances like tobacco and recreational drugs that have been medically proven to cause ill effects on our bodies. Second, there are substances sometimes not considered harmful such as food, alcohol, over-the-counter medications, and prescription drugs that if taken excessively can bring great harm to our bodies. The Bible is clear that intoxication and gluttony are sinful and harmful to our lives (Proverbs 23:2, 21; Romans 13:13; Ephesians 5:18; Philippians 3:19).

The following exhortations ought to be our guide in preventing substance abuse in our lives and its impact on those in our influence:

- We must realize that although a substance may be "permissible," it may not be "beneficial" and can actually lead to bondage (1 Corinthians 6:12). Christ offers us freedom in every area of life, not the bondage that results from indulgence.
- The fact that we will all stand before God one day ought to temper our daily decisions. Additionally, we are also to walk with a sensitivity to other Christ-followers who may hold to a different conviction than we do so that we do not offend or cause another person to stumble (Romans 14:12-23).

In light of the reality of substance abuse and the devastation it causes, the Church has a responsibility to recognize brokenness that comes as a result of our selfish and sinful choices and to be an instrument of education, deliverance, healing, and restoration for individuals and families in our communities. As Christ followers we need to understand the trap of addiction which makes overcoming substance abuse so difficult. We must be actively involved in the transformation of people impacted by substance abuse.

Adopted 2015; Amended 2023

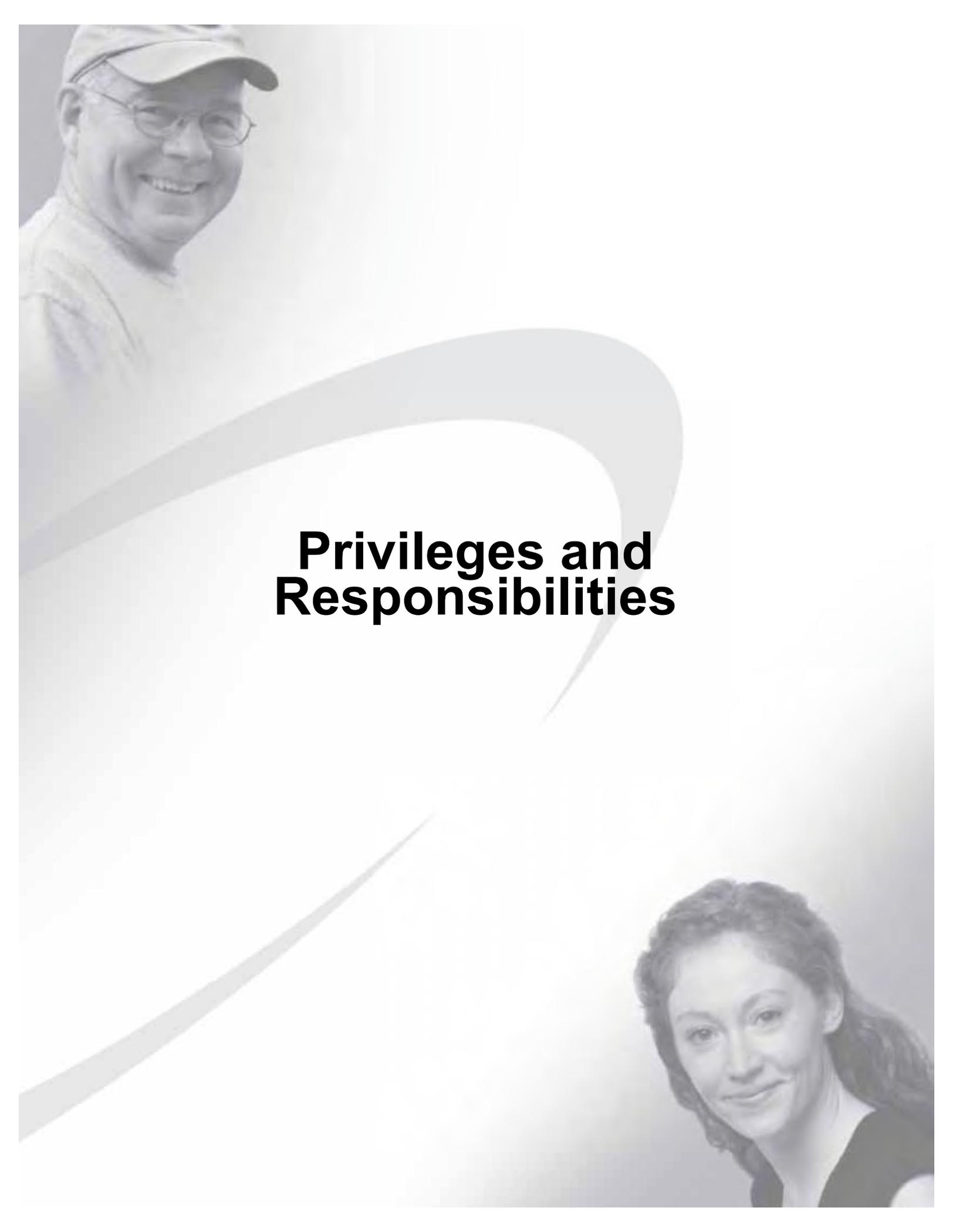
## **UNITY**

Jesus prayed for all believers to walk in unity, that all would be one, for He knew that this would testify to the world of the Father's love and of the life He gives (John 17:21-23). Unity is not sameness or likeness. Rather, unity in the body of Christ is founded in our mutual identity in Christ Jesus as children of God (Galatians 3:26-29), and rooted in a shared love for Jesus, His Word, and His mission.

The Church is built of individuals who vary in age, race, background, and cultures (Colossians 3:11-12). While we celebrate this breadth of God's creation, unity transcends our individual distinctions. It is imperative to make every effort to keep the "unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3), and to live in harmony with each other and avoid divisions in the Church (1 Corinthians 1:10). Commitment to unity is reflected through Christian love, genuine respect, and humility toward one another.

Jesus taught that unity between believers, as modeled by the unity of the Father and Son, provides a basis "that the world may believe that you sent me" (John 17:21). Thus, unity is a testimony of Christ's reality to the world. Unity also provides a foundation for blessing from God: "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! . . . For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life evermore" (Psalm 133:1, 3).

Adopted 1995; Amended 2023



# **Privileges and Responsibilities**

## PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Ministers and churches have chosen to link together with Open Bible Churches in a partnership dedicated to more effectively impacting the harvest than can be accomplished alone. The Association's purpose to glorify God and bring people to Jesus Christ, is achieved through local, regional, national, ethnic/language groups, and international ministries, using all methods and means to carry out its mission. Open Bible Churches exists to partner with credentialed ministers and affiliated churches to fulfill this common purpose.

This partnership arises from more than the decisions of people. God calls ministers and created the Church. He gave birth to this Association of ministers and churches as a distinctive movement prophetically declared a vital part of the Body of Christ. Credentialing and affiliation are God-breathed relationships fitting into His overall plan to redeem mankind. Open Bible ministers and churches, through the grace of the Lord, enjoy the following privileges and are committed to the following responsibilities.

### PRIVILEGES

#### 1. Clear Global Mission

Open Bible ministers and churches have the privilege of uniting around a clear and focused mission to make disciples, develop leaders, and plant churches.

#### 2. Supportive Relationships

Open Bible ministers and churches have the privilege of belonging to an Association that provides a relational network, assuring no minister or church need stand alone. National and regional leaders provide pastoral care to each minister and church. The Association values individual expression that complements commitment to God and one another. A distinctive Open Bible relational quality is, "A balance of affiliation and freedom, providing accountability without undue control."

#### 3. Caring Leadership Covering and Accountability

Open Bible ministers and churches have the privilege of being provided a leadership covering of prayer, vision, inspiration, resource, and accountability.

#### 4. Experienced Oversight

Open Bible ministers and churches have the privilege of receiving assistance in the transition and selection of pastors, evaluation and counsel for growth and ministry development, and advice and direction in times of decision-making or conflict, assuring no minister or church need act alone.

#### 5. Diverse Support and Training

Open Bible ministers and churches have the privilege of participating in conferences, seminars, workshops, retreats, and regional meetings and benefiting from instruction and resources. The Association provides accredited programs of ministerial and general leadership training through New Hope Christian College and INSTE, Open Bible's non-traditional training program. Non-accredited training programs offer additional resources.

#### 6. Varied Ministry Opportunities

Open Bible ministers and churches have the privilege of participating in and financially supporting Association-sponsored ministries and/or partnering in ministry with the Association to fulfill their individual expressions and commitments to mission. Together, Open Bible ministers and churches evangelize, disciple, educate, supervise, and plant churches in the United States and in more than forty-four countries worldwide. Our ministries enable us to do more together than we could apart.

#### 7. Meaningful Voice and Vote

Open Bible ministers and churches have the privilege of voice and vote in the governance of the Association.

#### 8. Accountable Financial Integrity

Open Bible ministers and churches have the privilege of giving with confidence, knowing their contributions are managed with integrity, under the auspices of the national board, and utilized for the purposes for which they were given to accomplish mission. Corporate assets are professionally invested according to a credible investment policy. Financial reports, audited yearly by independent auditors, are presented at biennial conventions and available to members upon request.

**9. Recognized Identity and Covering**

Open Bible ministers and churches have the privilege of belonging to an internationally recognized evangelical and Pentecostal association with a historical identity that spans more than seventy-five years. Our name is a testimony of faith and relationship to the Word of God. Open Bible's reputation in the Kingdom is one of openness and respect for the Body of Christ as a whole. Churches are under the covering of Open Bible Churches' recognition by the federal government as a 501(c)(3) corporation.

**10. Balanced Doctrine**

Open Bible is committed to honoring its evangelical and Pentecostal roots and respecting its history without being bound by tradition. The Association pursues freshness tempered by wisdom and balance and encourages a contemporary message while remaining rooted in the timeless truths of God's Word. Open Bible Churches believes in Holy Spirit leadership in the growth of the individual, the local church, and the entire Association. The Statement of Faith is the biblical authority for faith, doctrine, and spiritual life of the Association.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

Members of this Association shall demonstrate a maturity of understanding that membership involves more than receiving privileges. As we have freely received we must also freely give. The Association is one body composed of many members, each with distinct giftings, and operates to its maximum potential only when all members embrace the responsibility to submit their lives and activities through:

**1. Committed Prayer**

Open Bible ministers and churches have the responsibility of making prayer their highest priority. Committed prayer is both individual and corporate and includes praying for leaders in our nation, Open Bible ministers and churches, and national, international, and regional ministries.

**2. Doctrinal Faithfulness**

Open Bible ministers and churches have the responsibility to faithfully adhere to and teach doctrine consistent with Open Bible Churches' Statement of Faith.

**3. Loyal Identification**

Open Bible ministers and churches have the responsibility to identify with and demonstrate loyalty to the purpose, mission, vision, and leadership of Open Bible Churches.

**4. Cooperative Spirit**

Open Bible ministers and churches have the responsibility to maintain teachable and cooperative spirits and walk in harmony with their fellow Open Bible ministers and churches and Open Bible leadership, striving to speak about each other in life-giving ways.

**5. Healthy Relationships**

Open Bible ministers and churches have the responsibility to invest energy, time, and resources into the development and nurturing of healthy, affirming relationships with their fellow Open Bible ministers and churches.

**6. Conscientious Participation**

Open Bible ministers and churches have the responsibility to individually and corporately participate in the fulfillment of the purpose, mission, and vision of Open Bible Churches.

**7. Responsibly Govern**

Open Bible ministers and churches have the responsibility to become educated about and develop Open Bible-approved, church bylaws and to govern their churches according to these bylaws and the provisions, procedures, and regulations prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

**8. Consistent Giving**

Open Bible ministers and churches have the responsibility to cooperate financially with Ministerial Tithe, Five Percent Plan, Mission Venture Plan, and to prayerfully consider contributing finances to other Open Bible ministries and needs.

# **Church Bylaws**





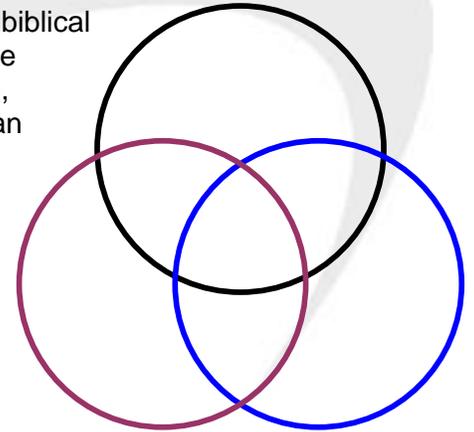
## The Church of Today and its Bylaws

10/22

### The Three “C’s” of Church Life<sup>1</sup>

The church exists in three environments. First, the church is a **community** with family-like relationships. The early church, in the book of Acts, set a standard for sharing and being intimately involved in each other’s life. *The core value of community is love*, which ties a church together like a family. This community or family of relationships provides security - a safe place for honesty where incomplete people can be loved, accepted, and nurtured as disciples of Jesus. You enter this family by adoption. In family community, the key person is the weakest, who is loved and cared for.

Second, the church functions as a **cause**. It is a spiritual army with a biblical mission. An army has a disciplined and organized leadership structure whose *core value is winning the war* for the souls of men and women, young people, and children. There are prisoners to be liberated and an enemy to be conquered. The key person in a cause is the one most committed, who sacrifices and pays a price. Members are soldiers in service for something bigger than and beyond themselves. The church has a biblical mission to range from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth to make disciples. It is the church’s cause.



The church is more than a community/family and a cause/army. The church is also a **corporation**. The core values of a corporation are effectiveness, efficiency, and frugality. A corporation has a business-like focus on vision, strategic plans and goals, objectives, and performance measures. A corporation thinks about resources and how to protect and maximize them. Leaders of a corporation must focus on strategic objectives for legal protections and procedures, guarding the assets of the corporation from raiders, leadership development and accountability, and fostering stability that enables the corporation to perform its mission. Leaders of corporations are always looking ahead and planning.

If a church functions as a **community** and a **corporation** but not as a cause, it will be a loving place where the bills are paid, programs run, and the facilities are in good order. However, without also being a cause, the church does not engage the enemy. There is no war. The church is content to take care of itself and bask in the comfort of a loving family.

If a church functions as a **cause** and a **corporation** but not as a community, it becomes a cold, hard-edged place filled with warriors who consider each other expendable. People only have a utilitarian value for what can be extracted from them. Warfare talk and self-sacrifice are considered badges of authenticity. Anything less than warrior-like demeanor is considered weakness, and there is no room for even acknowledgement of weakness.

Frequently the corporate side of the church is neglected or viewed as unspiritual. However, when a church functions as a **cause** and **community** but is slothful about its corporate function, leadership issues and conflicts can grow, ministry strategies are often fuzzy or nonexistent, there is a lack of established procedures and safeguards over policies, leadership selection and accountability are not clearly articulated in governing documents, and financial management is ignored or a low priority. Tragically when the corporate function of a church is neglected, pastors and leaders convince themselves the absence of governance problems today assures there will be no problems tomorrow. The church suffers when a new reality arrives tomorrow. *Bylaws are a first-line, corporate protection for the church, enabling the community and cause functions of the church to thrive both today and*

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*tomorrow.* Corporate responsibility helps safeguard the future legacy of today's dedicated leaders. Corporate leadership must be a new or renewed reality for all churches.

**Reality Check**

*...men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do....*

**1 Chronicles 12:32 (NIV)**

The spiritual, moral, and legal climate of our nation has changed since an earlier generation of church leaders. Historically Americans, whether Christian or not, held with esteem a commonly accepted set of standards for moral values, honesty, fairness, respect for others, self-discipline, and accountability. In today's culture an erosion of those values and respect for authority has contributed to moral relativism and a general loss of a sense of moral norms.

Due to this cultural shift in values, it is no longer possible to assume everyone subscribes to the same concepts of common sense, fairness, and respect for authority, even within the church. *It is important we understand the times in which we live and minister.* Churches have increasingly become the target of lawsuits because people have different expectations concerning how a church should conduct its affairs and treat its members. Today, instead of going to church leadership to seek common ground and understanding, people sometimes go to their attorneys. One lawsuit can financially devastate a church. We know this is not God's approach and runs counter to His Word; nevertheless, it is the reality of our time. Although we want to focus on ministry and not think and act like attorneys, churches cannot afford to ignore bylaws or consider bylaws unimportant. Bylaws can protect the mission and ministries of the church, safeguard the community, and strengthen the cause. Therefore, *bylaws are of spiritual significance.* Proverbs 22:3 warns, "A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it." (NIV) Pastors and church leaders must be prudent about the bylaws of the church. It is a significant part of their responsibility to the corporation.

**Why Bylaws?**

Bylaws are designed to help a church operate in a biblically faithful manner, defining membership, the roles and authority of the pastor, governing board and church leaders, leadership transitions, and use of and control over property. Bylaws provide a structure for responsible accountability for everyone within the body and procedures that aid the understanding of relationships and roles. The foundation of accountability is a uniform, governance standard to which everyone must conform. Rather than being an obstacle to effective ministry, bylaws protect, aid, and perpetuate the flow and unity of church leadership and ministry.

**Protections Church Bylaws Provide**

- They provide members and prospective members with an explanation of how the church governs itself, helping to prevent incorrect expectations or misassumptions.
- They reduce the likelihood of confusion and conflict in the church by providing clear definitions of authority and operational guidelines.
- They prevent leaders' abuse of authority by defining and limiting their powers and establishing procedures that protect both members and leaders.
- They declare the church's affiliation relationship with Open Bible Churches and commitment to operate according to the policies, procedures, and regulations of the Open Bible Manual.

**Standards, but with Diversity**

All Open Bible churches, the Association, regions, and Open Bible leaders are committed to the same purpose, to glorify God and bring people to Jesus Christ, through local, regional, national, ethnic/language groups, and international ministries, using all methods and means to carry out our mission to make and release disciples, plant churches, and send missionaries. How that purpose is



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achieved varies with each church's ministry vision. We are not a one-size-fits-all movement of churches. Our ministry approaches are diverse. Churches also have varied preferences for how they are structured and governed. Accordingly, the Association provides five, optional bylaw models with structural principles and safeguards to assist our churches. The models represent a range of governance options, which provide protection for bylaws as already described.

**Church Bylaw Models**

Open Bible serves affiliated churches with *corporate* oversight that safeguards the *community* and *cause* of affiliated churches. Affiliated churches must have sound bylaws with contemporary, legal protections and with components that comply with minimum requirements established by the Association. Five church-bylaw models in keeping with our times are now available for adoption or adaptation by affiliated churches. These models strengthen the corporate functions of affiliated churches.

Affiliated churches must run the race with endurance, with an eye on fruitfulness, and with a determination their community, cause, and corporate functions will thrive and complement each other with balance.

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<sup>1</sup> *The 3 "C's" of Church Life* has been adapted from a tape by Jim Dethmer and used with his permission.



## Minimum Requirements for Affiliated-Church Bylaws Checklist

The following components are required for inclusion in the bylaws of affiliated churches. In order to comply with legal or Association requirements specific content is also required in some cases. Suggested content has been offered in other cases. *Your church bylaws do not have to be limited to these components; they are minimum requirements.*

✓	Bylaw Components			
	<b>1. Name, Purpose, and Mission</b> (See Model A, Article 1)	✓		✓
	<b>2. Office and Location</b> (See Model A, Article 2)	✓		✓
	<b>3. Affiliation</b> (See Model A, Article 3, Section 1)	✓	✓	
	<b>4. Governance Documents, Records, and Reports</b> (For churches with a voting membership or partnership, see Model A, Article 3, Section 2; for churches with a nonvoting membership or partnership, see Model C, Article 3, Section 2)	✓	✓	
	<b>5. Governance Conflicts and Omissions</b> (See Model A, Article 3, Section 5)	✓	✓	
	<b>6. Membership/Partnership</b> (For churches with voting members or partners, see Model A, Article 4, Sections 1-10; for churches with nonvoting members or partners, see Model C, Article 4, Sections 1-6)	✓ Except Section 6, Personal Liability	Model A, Article 4, Section 8 required for churches with a voting membership; Model A, Section 3 C (sentence 2) required in all bylaws	All other content suggested
	<b>7. Corporate Officers</b> (See Model A, Article 5, Sections 1-8)	✓ Except Section 7, Combined Offices	Model A, Article 5, Sections 1,2,5,6,7,8	Section 3,4
	<b>8. Lead Pastor</b> (For churches with elected pastors, see Model A, Article 6, Sections 1-8; for churches with appointed pastors, see Model C, Article 6, Sections 1-8)	✓	Model A, Article 6, last two sentences of Section 2 required in all bylaws; For churches with pastoral elections, Section 4, Paragraph 1 is required except for subparagraph A; Section 5, subsection I is required in all	All other content suggested



			bylaws; Section 6, the first two sentences of subsection A and subsections B and E are required in all models; Sections 7 and 8 are required in all models	
✓	<b>Bylaw Components</b>			
	<b>9. Governing Board</b> (For churches with elected pastors, see Model A, Article 7, Sections 1-11; for churches with appointed pastors, see Model C, Article 7, Sections 1-12)	✓	Model A, Article 7, Section 2 required in all bylaws; Section 5 the last sentence required in all bylaws; Model A, Section 6, subsection A required in all bylaws; Model A, Sections 8, 9 and 11 are required in all bylaws	All other content suggested
	<b>10. Elders, Staff Pastors, and Ministry Leaders</b> (See Model A, Article 8, Sections 1-3)			✓
	<b>11. Finance</b> (See Model A, Article 9, Sections 1-10)	✓	Model A, Article 9, Sections 1-7 are required	
	<b>12. Property</b> (For churches with voting membership or partnership, see Model A, Article 10, Sections 1-2; for churches with nonvoting membership or partnership, see Model D, Article 11)	✓	Opening paragraph of Model A, Article 10 required in all bylaws	All other content suggested
	<b>13. Resolution of Disputes</b> (See Model A, Article 11)			✓
	<b>14. Cessation</b> (See Model A, Article 12)	✓	✓	
	<b>15. Appeals and Amendments</b> (See Model A, Article 13)	✓	✓	
	<b>16. Parliamentary Authority</b> (See Model A, Article 14)	✓		✓

# Church Bylaws

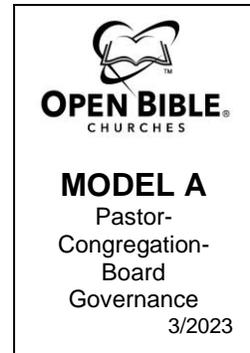
OPEN BIBLE CHURCHES

## MODEL A

**Pastor-Congregation-Board Governance**

*An electronic copy, as well as content explanation, is available at  
[www.openbible.org](http://www.openbible.org)*

**Name of Church**  
**Address, City, State, Zip**  
**Bylaws**



**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 governing board of the church may change the principal office from one location to another with majority approval from the members in good standing at any regular or specially called meeting of the corporation. Any such change shall be recorded in corporation minutes but shall not be processed as an amendment to these bylaws. The church governing board 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 of 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 membership record, with contact information;
- E. Minutes of meetings of the governing board;
- F. Minutes of membership meetings;
- G. Financial reports and records; and
- H. Open Bible Manual.

**Section 3. Availability of Records**

All records are the property of the corporation and shall be open at all times to the inspection of the lead pastor, the church's governing board, and national and regional representatives of Open Bible Churches. With proper notice, all records shall be open to active members in good standing and to all other parties as required by state law.

**Section 4. Reports**

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

**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).

### **Section 6. Personal Liability**

The private property of directors, officers, and members of this church shall be exempt from corporate debts and liabilities.

### **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.

## **ARTICLE 4. MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1. Definition**

Membership in the church is a covenant partnership with individuals who have accepted and professed their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Members shall be in accord with the purpose, statement of faith, bylaws, and the pastors and leaders of the church. Individuals who have met membership requirements, have been publicly accepted, and are in good standing as active members shall receive the privileges and responsibilities of membership.

### **Section 2. Eligibility**

Any individual desiring membership 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 members. (Malachi 3:10; Luke 6:38; John 13:1-17; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8, 9; Philippians 4:9.)
- D. Be 12 years of age, with voting privileges beginning at age 18.
- E. Subscribe to the statement of faith of the church.
- F. Abstain from all immorality condemned in Scripture. Immorality shall be considered grounds for refusing membership.

### **Section 3. Process for Acceptance**

- A. Individuals desiring to be active members of the church shall request to enroll in the membership 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 membership, and relationship with Open Bible Churches. Class participants shall receive a copy of the church bylaws.
- B. Upon completion of the membership class, applicants shall submit a signed application for membership to the lead pastor and affirm in writing they are in accord with the purpose, statement of faith, bylaws, and the pastors and leaders of the church. The lead pastor shall present applications with recommendations to the governing board of elders, who shall give final approval.
- C. Approved applicants shall be publicly received as members in a church service. Their names, addresses, types of membership, and the date they were officially accepted shall be included in the membership record of the church.

### **Section 4. Pastors**

The lead pastor and spouse shall be members of the church by virtue of their call to serve and shall exercise full membership privileges. Staff pastors, as well as the children of all pastors, may become members of the church through the regular process for acceptance. The membership of the lead pastor and spouse shall terminate at the time they cease to serve in such capacities.

## Section 5. Privileges

Privileges of membership include but are not limited to:

- 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 its pastors and governing board.
- J. **Election** – Have opportunity to elect the lead pastor and members of the church's governing board as prescribed in these bylaws.
- K. **Property and Indebtedness** – Have the opportunity to vote on all property sales, purchases, and encumbrances, and on all church indebtedness over (\$).

## Section 6. Responsibilities

The Apostle Paul admonishes us to be devoted to brotherly love, honoring one another above ourselves (Romans 12:10). Accordingly members of the church shall demonstrate a maturity of understanding that membership 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 members each with distinct giftings and functions, and therefore members 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, members 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.
- 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 7. Types

The lead pastor and governing board shall maintain an accessible membership record containing the names and contact information of all members.

- A. **Active** – Active members are those who have been accepted into membership, who adhere to the statement of faith of the church, are in good standing because of their faithfulness to the responsibilities of membership, and are not under disciplinary restriction. Privileges of membership shall only be extended to active members.
- B. **Inactive** – Members who have not been in attendance at the services of the church or who cease to contribute to the support of the church for three consecutive months without just cause, as determined by the lead pastor and governing board, may be placed on the inactive membership list.

Inactive members shall be notified by letter from the governing board. Members desiring to return to active membership may make application to the lead pastor and governing board and may be reinstated, should the lead pastor and governing board deem that advisable. Members with inactive status forfeit privileges of active membership and do not have the right of vote or participation in business meetings. After one year, inactive members may be removed from church membership by the lead pastor and governing board and shall be notified by letter.

- C. Homebound** – Members who by reason of age and/or health cannot attend regular services but who stay in fellowship by actively supporting the church according to ability, with prayer, finances, and other membership responsibilities can be classified as homebound members by the governing board. Homebound members shall be granted voting privileges by absentee ballot as prescribed in these bylaws.

## **Section 8. Meetings, Voting Privileges, and Quorum**

The time and place for all membership business meetings shall be determined by the lead pastor and governing board.

- A. Annual Business Meetings** – An annual business meeting shall be held not later than May 31.
- B. Special Business Meetings** – Special business meetings may be called by official written notice to the active church membership by the lead pastor or a majority of the governing board.
- C. Minutes** – Minutes shall be kept of all business meetings.
- D. Official Notification** – The official notice of annual or special business meetings of the church shall state the purpose, place, and time of the meetings. The notices shall be published not less than two weeks before the date of the proposed meeting. Official notices shall be given by announcement during the regularly scheduled services and by written, mailed notice distributed to active members, unless state law provides for other means of notification, such as electronic.
- E. Privilege to Vote and Quorum** – Voting privilege shall be accorded only to active members in good standing who are 18 years of age or older and who have been members for at least 30 days. Absentee ballots shall not be permitted except for homebound members. Active voting members in good standing in attendance shall constitute a quorum at all business meetings. Membership decisions shall be by majority vote unless otherwise stipulated herein.
- F. Membership Record** – The governing board shall review and update the membership record at least annually preceding the official notification of annual and special business meetings and notify by mail those members moved from active to inactive status.

## **Section 9. 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** – Members found guilty of conduct contrary to Scripture, teaching contrary to the statement of faith, causing conflict among the members, 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 governing board or elders. Members who refuse to repent and receive corrective discipline in the spirit of restoration may be dismissed from membership by the governing board or elders upon recommendation of the lead pastor. Members accused of wrong doing or under discipline forfeit the right to resign from membership. Resignations from membership are possible only by active members in good standing not accused of wrong doing and not under discipline. Members who are dismissed from membership shall be notified by mail by the secretary of the church.

## **Section 10. Transfer and Withdrawal**

- A. Transfer** – Individuals requesting to transfer membership from another church shall meet eligibility and acceptance requirements, request a letter of recommendation from the lead pastor of the former church, and obtain approval by the lead pastor and governing board or elders. Transferees shall be publicly presented to the membership. Active members in good standing may be given a signed letter of transfer to another church by the lead pastor and governing board or elders.
- B. Withdrawal** – Active, inactive, and homebound members not accused of wrong doing or under discipline may voluntarily withdraw from membership by submitting a signed letter of notification to the lead pastor and governing board or elders.

## **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 governing board, a vice president.

### **Section 1. Eligibility**

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

### **Section 2. Appointment and Term of Office**

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

### **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 governing board shall appoint a successor and determine the term of service.

### **Section 4. Resignation**

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

### **Section 5. Accountability**

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

### **Section 6. Duties**

- A. President** – The president is the chief executive officer of the church corporation, implements the directives of the governing board, is a member of the governing board, and shall act as chairman of all business meetings of the church and the governing board. 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 governing board, annual, and special business 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 governing 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 and governing board, an annual report to the membership, and upon request by the lead pastor and governing board, submit other reports to the membership of the church. With the approval of the governing 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, governing board, and national and regional representatives of Open Bible Churches. All records shall be open with proper notice to active members in good standing and to other parties as required by state law.

### **Section 7. Combined Offices**

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

### **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 governing board and the disciplinary procedures as prescribed in these bylaws.

## **ARTICLE 6. 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 governing board 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. Should the church select a lead pastor who is not a credentialed, Open

Bible minister the church shall automatically be under regional supervision as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

### **Section 3. Pastoral-Selection Process**

The pastoral-selection process shall be conducted as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual, under the leadership of the regional executive director or representative in accordance with the procedures established in the Open Bible Manual for a pastor-congregation-board bylaw model. The regional executive director or representative will work in consultation with the governing board to assist in a search for and selection of an eligible lead pastor.

### **Section 4. Pastoral Reelection**

After the initial call, the lead pastor shall be reelected every three to five years, as determined by the governing board. The election shall take place at an annual or specially called meeting of the church membership. Any pastor in good standing whose term expires shall be eligible for reelection; however, no pastor may be elected for a life term.

#### **Paragraph 1. Electoral Process**

- A.** At least four weeks prior to the expiration of the lead pastor's term, the governing board shall set a date for a membership meeting for the purpose of having a membership vote on the continuance of the lead pastor's term of office. This vote may be included as part of the annual business meeting, if the date of the annual business meeting coincides with the lead pastor's term. However, if a vote on the continuation of the lead pastor is to be included in the annual meeting, the notice of the meeting shall clearly specify such a vote will be taken at the annual meeting.
- B.** Notice of the meeting shall be sent to all active members in good standing and homebound members by regular mail, unless state law provides for other means of notification, such as electronic, and announced at a regularly scheduled worship service at least two weeks prior to the date of the meeting.
- C.** The governing board may request the regional executive director provide a chair for the meeting.
- D.** A two-thirds majority vote of active members in good standing present and seated at the meeting called for the purpose of pastoral reelection and of absentee ballots of homebound members is required for pastoral retention.
- E.** In the event the lead pastor is reelected, the secretary shall send immediate, written notice, preferably electronically, of the reelection to the regional executive director.
- F.** In the event the lead pastor is not reelected, the secretary shall send immediate, written notice, preferably electronically, of the failure to reelect to the regional executive director. The lead pastor's service will cease within 30 days. A failure to reelect will initiate the pastoral-selection process as prescribed herein and in the Open Bible Manual for churches with a pastor-congregation-board bylaw model.
- G.** In the event only a simple majority vote is received, the lead pastor, the governing board, or the congregation may request approval from the regional board to retain the lead pastor. If approval is granted, the lead pastor will be retained for one year. At the end of that year, another membership meeting shall be called for the purpose of voting on the lead pastor's retention.

#### **Paragraph 2. Ballots**

- A.** All pastoral-retention votes shall be determined by secret ballot.
- B.** Absentee ballots will only be accepted from homebound members.
- C.** Tellers shall be appointed by the governing board to count the ballots. No teller may be an employee of the church or related to the lead pastor by either blood or marriage.
- D.** Tally sheets will be signed in ink by the tellers prior to being handed to the secretary of the church.
- E.** The church secretary shall certify the results and convey the ballots and tally sheets to the regional office where they shall be destroyed after 60 days, unless the church board requests or the regional board determines otherwise.

### **Section 5. Duties**

The lead pastor shall:

- A.** Be the spiritual and corporate leader of the church. The lead pastor shall minister to the spiritual needs of and guard the membership against dissension and be devoted to the mission of the church.
- B.** Call and lead meetings of the governing board and business meetings of the membership.
- C.** Consistently work to strengthen Christian life among the membership 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, have general supervision over all ministries and auxiliary activities, and be an ex-officio member of all church bodies.
- E. Be responsible, with the treasurer and governing board of the church, for deposits and disbursements of all funds, records, and reporting of finances.
- F. Recommend nominees to be members of the governing board as prescribed in these bylaws.
- G. Recommend all pastoral and staff positions and personnel, both paid and unpaid, for approval or appointment by the governing board.
- H. Be responsible, in consultation with the governing board, for biennial reviews and evaluations of staff pastors, members of the governing board, administrative staff, and ministry leaders.
- I. Provide at least 30 days written notice to the governing board 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 governing board shall review the lead pastor's compensation and benefits package at least annually. The governing board shall submit the compensation and benefits package to the regional executive director who shall provide confidential assessment and counsel.
- B. **Housing Allowance** – The lead pastor may annually submit a signed request to the governing 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 governing board 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 governing board shall pay, reimburse, or provide an offering to help defray such expenses, according to the ability of the church.
- D. **Accountable Reimbursement Plan** – The governing board shall establish an accountable reimbursement plan for the payment of approved ministry expenses upon the presentation of receipts.
- E. **Severance Package** – The governing board shall, with the aid of the regional executive director or representative, 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, in consultation with the governing board, shall appoint an interim pastor. The appointment shall not exceed two years. An individual who is 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 member making a charge against the lead pastor must present it in writing to the governing board, signed by corroborating witnesses.
- B. **Authority** – Charges will be initially investigated by the governing board. The governing board will determine if a charge involves a violation of the Open Bible Manual.
  - 1. A charge against the lead pastor or any staff pastor or member of the congregation, who is a credentialed Open Bible minister, involving violations of the Open Bible Manual requires the regional executive director be notified and assume authority over the pastor or member under provisions of the Open Bible Manual.
  - 2. A charge against the lead pastor, any staff pastor, or member of the congregation who is a credentialed, Open Bible minister not entailing violations of the Open Bible Manual shall be overseen by the governing board as prescribed in these bylaws.

## **ARTICLE 7. GOVERNING BOARD**

### **Section 1. Eligibility**

Members of the governing board 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 an active member in good standing of the church for not less than 12 months.

## **Section 2. Composition**

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

## **Section 3. Elections**

No later than two months prior to a membership meeting, the pastor and governing board shall invite active members in good standing to nominate in writing, for a period of 30 days, individuals they believe eligible for consideration to serve as members of the governing board. Nominations will not be accepted other than by this process. The lead pastor shall take into consideration those names submitted when recommending nominees to the governing board. The lead pastor and governing board shall prepare and submit the list of nominees to the membership for election. The list of nominees shall be presented to the active members at least two weeks prior to election. The active members in good standing present at an annual or specially called membership meeting shall vote on the nominees. The nominee(s) who receive the most votes shall be elected to fill the open seat or seats on the governing board.

## **Section 4. Vacancy or Incapacity**

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

## **Section 5. Term of Appointment**

The term of appointment shall be one to three years. Terms of service shall commence from the date of election by the active members in good standing, or as separately provided by the governing board. Members of the governing board shall be eligible for reelection if nominated by the lead pastor and the governing board. No person may be elected to a life term on the governing board.

## **Section 6. Responsibilities of Governing Board**

The governing board shall:

- A. Serve as the board of directors of the corporation.
- B. Work in concert with the lead pastor to pursue the mission of the church.
- C. Approve the annual budget, with salaries for all paid personnel; manage the legal and financial affairs of the church, and provide for the appropriate care, maintenance, and insurance of properties owned by the church. Individual members of the governing board shall not independently make decisions in the name of the church.
- D. Sign legal papers such as deeds, mortgages, and leases that have been approved in accordance with these bylaws.
- E. Submit decisions affecting sale or purchase of real property or decisions to incur indebtedness exceeding (\$ amount) for ratification by a majority of active members in good standing present at an annual or specially called business meeting. Property of the church shall not be sold, leased, mortgaged or the title otherwise encumbered without first obtaining counsel from the regional executive director.
- F. Assure accurate, monthly records of the financial receipts and expenditures of the church are maintained and reported. Review all financial reports monthly. Copies shall be available to active members in good standing and the regional executive director.
- G. Appoint all staff pastors and other personnel, both paid and unpaid, upon recommendation of the lead pastor.
- H. Approve the development and discontinuance of church ministries or departments and committees, which shall be appointed by, accountable to, and their responsibilities and authority defined by the lead pastor and governing board.
- I. Communicate and coordinate with the regional executive director in the absence of the lead pastor, a transition between lead pastors, or other emergencies, as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

## **Section 7. Accountability**

The governing board shall be accountable to the membership and lead pastor.

## **Section 8. Discipline**

Members of the governing board shall be subject to discipline as prescribed in these bylaws for members.

### **Section 9. Dismissal**

Members of the governing board may be dismissed for the causes prescribed in these bylaws for members and by adhering to the process prescribed in these bylaws for members.

### **Section 10. Meetings and Quorum**

Regular meetings of the governing board shall be held at least quarterly at places and times determined by the lead pastor. Notice shall be provided at least 7 days in advance by publication in the church bulletin, newsletter, letter, or electronically. A majority of the governing board shall constitute a quorum.

### **Section 11. Minutes**

Minutes shall be kept of all meetings of the governing board and distributed to each board member.

## **ARTICLE 8. ELDERS, STAFF PASTORS, AND MINISTRY LEADERS**

### **Section 1. Elders**

Elders shall serve with the lead pastor as spiritual overseers of the church.

- A. Eligibility** – They shall exemplify the characteristics of a godly, Christian life as stated in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9. Although these attributes will never be fully perfected, elders must be clearly in pursuit of and committed to their development. Elders shall demonstrate they possess giftings and spiritual maturity necessary for shepherding people toward faithfulness to God and His Word. (Acts 20:28-30; 1 Corinthians 12:28-31; Ephesians 4:14-16; 1 Peter 5:1-4.) Faithful participation in the ministries of the church, spiritual accord with the lead pastor and elders, and financial support through tithing are among indicators of readiness to serve as an elder.
- B. Appointment** – Elders shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the lead pastor. There shall be no fewer than three nor more than five elders.
- C. Duties** – Elders shall serve in an advisory capacity to and as co-laborers with the pastor in all matters of the church's spiritual life and ministry.

### **Section 2. 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 appointed by the governing board upon recommendation by the lead pastor. They shall serve congruent with the lead pastor's tenure and should anticipate resigning upon the lead pastor's departure. The lead pastor and governing board shall review staff pastors every two years.
- C. Duties** – Staff pastors will function in a manner consistent with their job descriptions as determined by the lead pastor and governing board.

### **Section 3. Ministry Leaders**

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

## **ARTICLE 9. FINANCE**

All funds given to or received by the church for operation, development, and maintenance shall be deposited in governing board-approved banks or other federally insured institutions under the supervision of the treasurer. The church may accept gifts of real and/or personal property at the discretion of the governing board.

### **Section 1. General Fund**

All undesignated contributions shall be part of the general fund.

### **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.

### **Section 3. Other Offerings and Fund Raising**

Ministries of the church may receive offerings and raise funds as authorized by the governing board. Monies shall not be solicited or collected from members by a member of the church for any cause without the consent of the pastor or governing board.

#### **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.

#### **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.

#### **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 governing board, 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.

#### **Section 7. Contracts**

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

#### **Section 8. Indebtedness**

The lead pastor and governing board shall not incur indebtedness above (\$ amount) without approval by a majority of active members in good standing at a regular or special business meeting.

#### **Section 9. Fiscal Year**

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

#### **Section 10. Audit Review**

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

### **ARTICLE 10. 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 without first receiving counsel from the regional executive director.

#### **Section 1. Authorization to Purchase**

The purchase of real property must be approved by a two-thirds vote of active members in good standing present at an annual or special business meeting.

#### **Section 2. Authorization to Sell**

Approval to sell, mortgage, or transfer ownership of real property must be authorized by a two-thirds vote of active members in good standing present at an annual or special business meeting.

### **ARTICLE 11. RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES**

Scripture instructs Christians to handle disputes among members of the church within the church, not in civil courts. (1 Corinthians 6:1-8.) If a member feels there is an offense or misunderstanding with another member, 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.

- 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 members 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 governing board. They shall refrain from suing one another or the church in a court of law.

- C. Open Bible Mediation** – In the event of a dispute between a member and the pastor or governing board, the pastor or governing board may request the regional executive director to provide a mediator to resolve the dispute.
- D. Abiding by Mediation** – Members shall agree to abide by the outcome of mediation. Failure to do so may be grounds for discipline.

## **ARTICLE 12. 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 the (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 member, member of the governing board, officer of the corporation, or any other private individual.

### **Section 2. Withdrawal**

Should the church desire to withdraw from affiliation with Open Bible Churches the lead pastor and governing board shall consult with and adhere to provisions in the Open Bible Manual prior to initiating action or communicating with members about withdrawal.

## **ARTICLE 13. 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 governing board shall be submitted to the lead pastor and governing board. Appeals to Open Bible Churches shall be submitted in the following order: church governing board, regional board of directors, and national board of directors.

### **Section 2. Amendments**

- A.** The lead pastor and governing board shall submit all proposed, bylaw amendments to the regional executive director. The proposed amendments must be preapproved by the secretary of Open Bible Churches prior to presentation to active members in good standing. Upon approval by active members in good standing, 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.
- B.** Proposed bylaw amendments that have been preapproved by Open Bible Churches shall be sent by at least first-class mail to members, unless state law provides for other means of notification, such as electronic, two weeks in advance of a membership meeting called to consider proposed amendments. The communication shall include meeting date, time, and location. A copy of the communication shall also be sent to the regional executive director. Notification, stating the purpose, place, and time of the meeting, shall be published in church publications, and announced at regular meetings.
- C.** Proposed amendments to these bylaws may be presented at an annual or special meeting of the membership for which advance notification provisions have been met. Approval shall be by a 2/3 vote of active voting members in good standing present.

## **ARTICLE 14. 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.

(Name of Church) has officially adopted these bylaws by vote of the active members in good standing.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of action

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lead pastor's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary's signature

# Church Bylaws

OPEN BIBLE CHURCHES

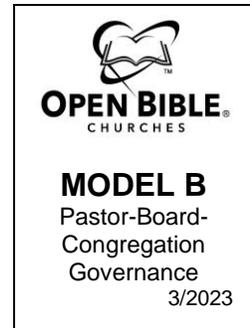
## MODEL B

**Pastor-Board-Congregation Governance**

*An electronic copy, as well as content explanation, is available at  
[www.openbible.org](http://www.openbible.org)*

MODEL B

**Name of Church**  
**Address, City, State, Zip**  
**Bylaws**



### **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 governing board of the church may change the principal office from one location to another. Any such change shall be recorded in corporation minutes, but shall not be processed as an amendment to these bylaws. The church governing board 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 membership record, with contact information;
- E. Minutes of meetings of the governing board;
- F. Minutes of membership meetings;
- G. Financial reports and records; and
- H. Open Bible Manual.

#### **Section 3. Availability of Records**

All records shall be open at all times to the inspection of the lead pastor, church's governing board, and national and regional representatives of Open Bible Churches. With proper notice, all records shall be open to active members in good standing and to all other parties as required by state law.

#### **Section 4. Reports**

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

#### **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).

### **Section 6. Personal Liability**

The private property of directors, officers, and members of this church shall be exempt from corporate debts and liabilities.

### **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.

## **ARTICLE 4. MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1. Definition**

Membership in the church is a covenant partnership with individuals who have accepted and professed their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Members shall be in accord with the purpose, statement of faith, bylaws, and the pastors and leaders of the church. Individuals who have met membership requirements, have been publicly accepted, and are in good standing as active members shall receive the privileges and responsibilities of membership.

### **Section 2. Eligibility**

Any individual desiring membership 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 members. (Malachi 3:10; Luke 6:38; John 13:1-17; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8, 9; Philippians 4:9.)
- D. Be 12 years of age, with voting privileges beginning at age 18.
- E. Subscribe to the statement of faith of the church.
- F. Abstain from all immorality condemned in Scripture. Immorality shall be considered grounds for refusing membership.

### **Section 3. Process for Acceptance**

- A. Individuals desiring to be active members of the church shall request to enroll in the membership 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 membership, and relationship with Open Bible Churches. Class participants shall receive a copy of the church bylaws.
- B. Upon completion of the membership class, applicants shall submit a signed application for membership to the lead pastor and affirm in writing they are in accord with the purpose, statement of faith, bylaws, and the pastors and leaders of the church. The lead pastor shall present applications with recommendations to the governing board of elders, who shall give final approval.
- C. Approved applicants shall be publicly received as members in a church service. Their names, addresses, types of membership, and the date they were officially accepted shall be included in the membership record of the church.

### **Section 4. Pastors**

The lead pastor and spouse shall be members of the church by virtue of their call to serve and shall exercise full membership privileges. Staff pastors, as well as the children of all pastors, may become members of the church through the regular process for acceptance. The membership of the lead pastor and spouse shall terminate at the time they cease to serve in such capacities.

### **Section 5. Privileges**

Privileges of members include but are not limited to:

- 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.
- J. Election** – Have opportunity to elect the lead pastor initially and the first election after the initial election as prescribed in these bylaws.
- K. Property and Indebtedness** – Have the opportunity to vote on all property sales, purchases, and encumbrances, and on all church indebtedness over (\$).

## **Section 6. Responsibilities**

The Apostle Paul admonishes us to be devoted to brotherly love, honoring one another above ourselves (Romans 12:10). Accordingly members of the church shall demonstrate a maturity of understanding that membership 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 members each with distinct giftings and functions, and therefore members 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, members 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.
- 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 7. Types**

The lead pastor and governing board shall maintain an accessible membership record containing the names and contact information of all members.

- A. Active** – Active members are those who have been accepted into membership, who adhere to the statement of faith of the church, are in good standing because of their faithfulness to the responsibilities of membership, and are not under disciplinary restriction. Privileges of membership shall only be extended to active members.
- B. Inactive** – Members who have not been in attendance at the services of the church or who cease to contribute to the support of the church for three consecutive months without just cause, as determined by the lead pastor and governing board, may be placed on the inactive membership list. Inactive members shall be notified by letter from the governing board. Members desiring to return to active membership may make application to the lead pastor and governing board and may be

reinstated, should the lead pastor and governing board deem that advisable. Members with inactive status forfeit privileges of active membership and do not have the right of vote or participation in business meetings. After one year, inactive members may be removed from church membership by the lead pastor and governing board and shall be notified by letter.

- C. **Homebound** – Members who by reason of age and/or health cannot attend regular services but who stay in fellowship by actively supporting the church, according to ability, with prayer, finances, and other membership responsibilities can be classified as homebound members by the governing board. Homebound members shall be granted voting privileges by absentee ballot as prescribed in these bylaws.

## **Section 8. Meetings, Voting Privileges, and Quorum**

The time and place for all membership business meetings shall be determined by the lead pastor and governing board.

- A. **Annual Business Meetings** – An annual business meeting shall be held not later than May 31.
- B. **Special Business Meetings** – Special business meetings may be called by official written notice to the active church membership by the lead pastor or a majority of the governing board.
- C. **Minutes** – Minutes shall be kept of all business meetings.
- D. **Official Notification** – The official notice of annual or special business meetings of the church shall state the purpose, place, and time of the meetings. The notices shall be published not less than two weeks before the date of the proposed meeting. Official notices shall be given by announcement during the regularly scheduled services and by written mailed notice distributed to active members unless state law provides for other means of notification, such as electronic.
- E. **Privilege to Vote and Quorum** – Voting privilege shall be accorded only to active members in good standing who are 18 years of age or older and who have been members for at least 30 days. Absentee ballots shall not be permitted except for homebound members. Active, voting members in attendance shall constitute a quorum at all business meetings. Membership decisions shall be by majority vote unless otherwise stipulated herein.
- F. **Membership Record** – The governing board shall review and update the membership record at least annually preceding the official notification of annual and special business meetings and notify by mail those members moved from active to inactive status.

## **Section 9. 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** – Members found guilty of conduct contrary to Scripture, teaching contrary to the statement of faith, causing conflict among the members, 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 governing board or elders. Members who refuse to repent and receive corrective discipline in the spirit of restoration may be dismissed from membership by the governing board or elders upon recommendation of the lead pastor. Members accused of wrong doing or under discipline forfeit the right to resign from membership. Resignations from membership are possible only by active members not accused of wrong doing and not under discipline. Members who are dismissed from membership shall be notified by mail by the secretary of the church.

## **Section 10. Transfer and Withdrawal**

- A. **Transfer** – Individuals requesting to transfer membership from another church shall meet eligibility and acceptance requirements, request a letter of recommendation from the lead pastor of the former church, and obtain approval by the lead pastor and governing board or elders. Transferees shall be publicly presented to the membership. Active members in good standing may be given a signed letter of transfer to another church by the lead pastor and governing board or elders.
- B. **Withdrawal** – Active, inactive, and homebound members not accused of wrongdoing or not under discipline may voluntarily withdraw from membership by submitting a signed letter of notification to the lead pastor and governing board or elders.



## 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 governing board, a vice president.

### Section 1. Eligibility

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

### Section 2. Appointment and Term of Office

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

### 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 governing board shall appoint a successor and determine the term of service.

### Section 4. Resignation

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

### Section 5. Accountability

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

### Section 6. Duties

- A. **President** – The president is the chief executive officer of the church corporation, implements the directives of the governing board, is a member of the governing board, and shall act as chairman of all business meetings of the church and the governing board. 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 governing board, annual, and special business 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 governing 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 and governing board, an annual report to the membership, and upon request by the lead pastor and governing board, submit other reports to the membership of the church. With the approval of the governing 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, governing board, and national and regional representatives of Open Bible Churches. All records shall be open, with proper notice, to active members in good standing and to other parties as required by state law.

### Section 7. Combined Offices

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

### 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 governing board and the disciplinary procedures as prescribed in these bylaws.

## ARTICLE 6. 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 governing board 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. Should the church select a lead pastor who is not a credentialed Open

Bible minister the church shall automatically be under regional supervision as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

### **Section 3. Pastoral-Selection Process**

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

### **Section 4. Pastoral Reelection**

The first reelection of the lead pastor shall be a membership election. The election shall take place at an annual or specially called meeting of the church membership. Any pastor in good standing whose initial term expires shall be eligible for reelection; however, no pastor may be elected for a life term.

#### **Paragraph 1. Electoral Process**

- A. At least four weeks prior to the expiration of the lead pastor's first term, the governing board shall set a date for a membership meeting for the purpose of having a membership vote on the continuance of the lead pastor's term of office. This vote may be included as part of the annual business meeting, if the date of the annual business meeting coincides with the lead pastor's term. However, if a vote on the continuation of the lead pastor is to be included in the annual meeting, the notice of the meeting shall clearly specify such a vote will be taken at the annual meeting.
- B. Notice of the meeting shall be sent to all active members in good standing and homebound members by regular mail, unless state law provides for other means of notification, such as electronic, and announced at a regularly scheduled worship service at least two weeks prior to the date of the meeting.
- C. The governing board may request the regional executive director provide a chair for the meeting.
- D. A two-thirds majority vote of active members in good standing present and seated at the meeting called for the purpose of pastoral reelection and of absentee ballots of homebound members is required for pastoral retention.
- E. In the event the lead pastor is reelected, the secretary shall send immediate written notice, preferably electronically, of the reelection to the regional executive director.
- F. In the event the lead pastor is not reelected, the secretary shall send immediate written notice, preferably electronically, of the failure to reelect to the regional executive director. The lead pastor's service will cease within 30 days. A failure to reelect will initiate the pastoral-selection process as prescribed herein and in the Open Bible Manual for churches with a pastor-board bylaw model.
- G. In the event only a simple majority vote is received, the lead pastor, the governing board, or the congregation may request approval from the regional board to retain the lead pastor. If approval is granted, the lead pastor will be retained for one year. At the end of that year, another membership meeting shall be called for the purpose of voting on the lead pastor's retention.

#### **Paragraph 2. Ballots**

- A. All pastoral-retention votes shall be determined by secret ballot.
- B. Absentee ballots will only be accepted from homebound members.
- C. Tellers shall be appointed by the governing board to count the ballots. No teller may be an employee of the church or related to the lead pastor by either blood or marriage.
- D. Tally sheets will be signed in ink by the tellers prior to being handed to the secretary of the church.
- E. The church secretary shall certify the results and convey the ballots and tally sheets to the regional office where they shall be destroyed after 60 days, unless the church board requests or the regional board determines otherwise.

### **Section 5. Pastoral Review**

After the initial reelection of the lead pastor, authority for pastoral retention shall be vested in the governing board. The governing board shall biennially review the lead pastor for purposes of providing positive feedback, suggesting areas needing attention or correction, and determining continuation of service.

### **Section 6. Duties**

The lead pastor shall:

- A. Be the spiritual and corporate leader of the church. The lead pastor shall minister to the spiritual needs of and guard the membership against dissension and be devoted to the mission of the church.
- B. Call and lead meetings of the governing board and business meetings of the membership.
- C. Consistently work to strengthen Christian life among the membership 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, have general supervision over all ministries and auxiliary activities, and be an ex-officio member of all church bodies.
- E. Be responsible, with the treasurer and governing board of the church, for deposits and disbursements of all funds, records, and reporting of finances.
- F. Appoint members of the governing board as prescribed in these bylaws.
- G. Recommend all pastoral and staff positions and personnel, both paid and unpaid, for approval or appointment by the governing board.
- H. Be responsible, in consultation with the governing board, for biennial reviews and evaluations of staff pastors, members of the governing board, administrative staff, and ministry leaders.
- I. Provide at least 30 days written notice to the governing board and regional executive director prior to resignation.

### **Section 7. Financial Support**

- A. **Compensation and Benefits** – The lead pastor shall be compensated for services by a compensation and benefits package. The governing board shall review the lead pastor's compensation and benefits package at least annually. The governing board shall submit the compensation and benefits package to the regional executive director who shall provide confidential assessment and counsel.
- B. **Housing Allowance** – The lead pastor may annually submit a signed request to the governing 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 governing board 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 governing board shall pay, reimburse, or provide an offering to help defray such expenses, according to the ability of the church.
- D. **Accountable Reimbursement Plan** – The governing board shall establish an accountable reimbursement plan for the payment of approved ministry expenses upon the presentation of receipts.
- E. **Severance Package** – The governing board shall, with the aid of the regional executive director or representative, 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 8. Interim Pastor**

In a case of emergency or when a church is without a pastor, the regional board in consultation with the governing board, shall appoint an interim pastor. The appointment shall not exceed two years. An individual who is interested in becoming pastor of the church shall not be eligible to serve as an interim pastor unless otherwise determined by the governing board and vote of a majority of the members.

### **Section 9. Charges and Violations**

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

## **ARTICLE 7. GOVERNING BOARD**

### **Section 1. Eligibility**

Members of the governing board shall be individuals whose character is consistent with the qualifications of a deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-12) and who demonstrate the gifting, ability, and maturity necessary to fulfill their

duties. (Romans 12:8; I Corinthians 12:28.) A qualified candidate shall be an active member of the church for not less than 12 months.

## **Section 2. Composition**

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

## **Section 3. Appointment and Ratification Process**

Two months prior to a membership meeting, active members may submit in writing to the lead pastor names of individuals they believe qualified to serve as members of the governing board. The lead pastor shall nominate, the governing board shall appoint, and a majority of the active members present at an annual or specially called membership meeting shall ratify appointments. Members of the governing board shall be eligible for reappointment by the governing board upon recommendation of the lead pastor with ratification by a majority of the active members present at an annual or specially called meeting.

## **Section 4. Vacancy or Incapacity**

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

## **Section 5. Term of Appointment**

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

## **Section 6. Responsibilities of Governing Board**

The governing board shall:

- A. Serve as the board of directors of the corporation.
- B. Work in concert with the lead pastor to pursue the mission of the church.
- C. Approve the annual budget, with salaries for all paid personnel; manage the legal and financial affairs of the church, and provide for the appropriate care, maintenance, and insurance of properties owned by the church. Individual members of the governing board shall not independently make decisions in the name of the church.
- D. Conduct a biennial review of the lead pastor as prescribed in these bylaws.
- E. Sign legal papers such as deeds, mortgages, and leases that have been approved in accordance with these bylaws.
- F. Submit decisions affecting sale or purchase of real property or decisions to incur indebtedness exceeding (\$ amount) for ratification by a majority of active members present at an annual or specially called meeting. Property of the church shall not be sold, leased, mortgaged or the title otherwise encumbered without first obtaining counsel from the regional executive director.
- G. Assure accurate, monthly records of the financial receipts and expenditures of the church are maintained and reported. Review all financial reports monthly. Copies shall be available to active members and the regional executive director.
- H. Appoint all staff pastors and other personnel, both paid and unpaid, upon recommendation of the lead pastor.
- I. Approve the development and discontinuance of church ministries or departments and committees, which shall be appointed by, accountable to, and their responsibilities defined by the lead pastor and governing board.
- J. Communicate and coordinate with the regional executive director in the absence of the lead pastor, a transition between lead pastors, or other emergencies, as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

## **Section 7. Biennial Review**

The governing board shall biennially review the lead pastor using tools provided by the regional executive director. Active members shall have opportunity to provide written, signed input during these reviews.

- A. **Satisfactory** – Upon completion of a satisfactory biennial review of the lead pastor, the governing board shall notify the regional executive director of the pastor's continued service.
- B. **Unsatisfactory** – Upon completion of an unsatisfactory biennial review the governing board may refuse to continue the service of the lead pastor. The lead pastor may appeal to the regional board to request the regional executive director or representative conduct a special business meeting of the membership for the purpose of obtaining a vote regarding the lead pastor's continued service. Should the regional executive director recommend, and the regional board of directors authorize an election,

majority approval of active members in attendance will confirm the lead pastor's continued service. If the regional board does not authorize an election or if majority approval is not obtained in an election, the lead pastor's service will cease within 30 days.

- C. Conflict** – Upon completion of a biennial review continuing the lead pastor's service but revealing conflict between the lead pastor and governing board or individual members of the governing board, the governing board or lead pastor may request assistance from the regional executive director in resolving the conflict.

### **Section 8. Accountability**

The governing board shall be accountable to the membership and lead pastor.

### **Section 9. Discipline**

Members of the governing board shall be subject to discipline as prescribed in these bylaws for members.

### **Section 10. Dismissal**

Members of the governing board may be dismissed for the causes prescribed in these bylaws for members and by adhering to the process prescribed in these bylaws for members.

### **Section 11. Meetings and Quorum**

Regular meetings of the governing board shall be held at least quarterly at places and times determined by the lead pastor. Notice shall be provided at least 7 days in advance by publication in the church bulletin, newsletter, letter, or electronically. A majority of the governing board shall constitute a quorum.

### **Section 12. Minutes**

Minutes shall be kept of all meetings of the governing board and distributed to each board member.

## **ARTICLE 8. ELDERS, STAFF PASTORS, AND MINISTRY LEADERS**

### **Section 1. Elders**

Elders shall serve with the lead pastor as spiritual overseers of the church.

- A. Eligibility** – They shall exemplify the characteristics of a godly Christian life as stated in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9. Although these attributes will never be fully perfected, elders must be clearly in pursuit of and committed to their development. Elders shall demonstrate they possess giftings and spiritual maturity necessary for shepherding people toward faithfulness to God and His Word. (Acts 20:28-30; 1 Corinthians 12:28-31; Ephesians 4:14-16; 1 Peter 5:1-4.) Faithful participation in the ministries of the church, spiritual accord with the lead pastor and elders, and financial support through tithing are among indicators of readiness to serve as an elder.
- B. Appointment** – Elders shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the lead pastor. There shall be no fewer than three nor more than five elders.
- C. Duties** – Elders shall serve in an advisory capacity to and as co-laborers with the pastor in all matters of the church's spiritual life and ministry.

### **Section 2. 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 fulltime ministry roles shall be credentialed ministers in good standing with Open Bible Churches.
- B. Appointment & Review** – Staff pastors shall be appointed by the governing board upon recommendation by the lead pastor. They shall serve congruent with the lead pastor's tenure and should anticipate resigning upon the lead pastor's departure. The lead pastor and governing board shall review staff pastors every two years.
- C. Duties** – Staff pastors will function in a manner consistent with their job descriptions as determined by the lead pastor and governing board.

### **Section 3. Ministry Leaders**

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

## **ARTICLE 9. FINANCE**

All funds given to or received by the church for operation, development, and maintenance shall be deposited in governing-board-approved banks or other federally insured institutions under the supervision of the treasurer. The church may accept gifts of real and/or personal property at the discretion of the governing board.

### **Section 1. General Fund**

All undesignated contributions shall be part of the general fund.

### **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.

### **Section 3. Other Offerings and Fund Raising**

Ministries of the church may receive offerings and raise funds as authorized by the governing board. Monies shall not be solicited or collected from members by a member of the church for any cause without the consent of the pastor or governing board.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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 governing board, 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 IRS code as it applies to 501(c)(3) corporations.

### **Section 7. Contracts**

The governing 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.

### **Section 8. Indebtedness**

The lead pastor and governing board shall not incur indebtedness above (\$ amount) without approval by a majority of active members at a regular or special business meeting.

### **Section 9. Fiscal Year**

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

### **Section 10. Audit Review**

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

## **ARTICLE 10. 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 without first receiving counsel from the regional executive director. A majority of active members present at a business meeting shall ratify actions regarding property.

## **ARTICLE 11. RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES**

Scripture instructs Christians to handle disputes among members of the church within the church, not in civil courts. (1 Corinthians 6:1-8.) If a member feels there is an offense or misunderstanding with another member, 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.

- 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 members 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 governing board. They shall refrain from suing one another or the church in a court of law.
- C. Open Bible Mediation** – In the event of a dispute between a member and the pastor or governing board, the pastor or governing board may request the regional executive director to provide a mediator to resolve the dispute.
- D. Abiding by Mediation** – Members shall agree to abide by the outcome of mediation. Failure to do so may be grounds for discipline.

## **ARTICLE 12. 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 the (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 member, member of the governing board, officer of the corporation, or any other private individual.

### **Section 2. Withdrawal**

Should the church desire to withdraw from affiliation with Open Bible Churches the lead pastor and governing board shall consult with and adhere to provisions in the Open Bible Manual prior to initiating action or communicating with members about withdrawal.

## **ARTICLE 13. 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 governing board shall be submitted to the lead pastor and governing board. Appeals to Open Bible Churches shall be submitted in the following order: church governing board, regional board of directors, and national board of directors.

### **Section 2. Amendments**

- A.** The lead pastor and governing board shall submit all proposed, bylaw amendments to the regional executive director. The proposed amendments must be preapproved by the secretary of Open Bible Churches prior to presentation to active members. Upon approval by active members, 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.
- B.** Proposed bylaw amendments that have been preapproved by Open Bible Churches shall be sent by at least first-class mail to members, unless state law provides for other means of notification, such as electronic, two weeks in advance of a membership meeting called to consider proposed amendments. The communication shall include meeting date, time, and location. A copy of the communication shall also be sent to the regional executive director. Notification, stating the purpose, place, and time of the meeting, shall be published in church publications, and announced at regular meetings.
- C.** Proposed amendments to these bylaws may be presented at an annual or special meeting of the membership for which advance notification provisions have been met. Approval shall be by a 2/3 vote of active voting members present.

## **ARTICLE 14. 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.

(Name of Church) has officially adopted these bylaws by vote of the active members in good standing.

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Date of action

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Lead pastor's signature

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Secretary's signature

# Church Bylaws

## OPEN BIBLE CHURCHES

# MODEL C

## Pastor-Board-Region Governance

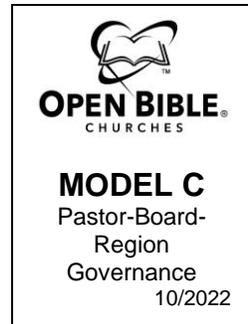
*An electronic copy, as well as content explanation, is available at  
[www.openbible.org](http://www.openbible.org)*

MODEL C

**Name of Church**

**Address, City, State, Zip**

**Bylaws**



## **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 governing board of the church may change the principal office from one location to another. Any such change shall be recorded in corporation minutes but shall not be processed as an amendment to these bylaws. The church governing board 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 membership record, with contact information;
- E. Minutes of meetings of the governing board;
- F. Minutes of meetings of governing board acting as membership;
- G. Financial reports and records; and
- H. Open Bible Manual.

### **Section 3. Availability of Records**

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

### **Section 4. Reports**

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

### **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).

### **Section 6. Personal Liability**

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

### **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.

## **ARTICLE 4. MEMBERSHIP AND PARTNERS**

### **Section 1. Definition**

- A. Membership** – Membership in the church is comprised of the lead pastor and the members of the governing board.
- B. Partners** – 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.

### **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 governing board shall inform class participants of their acceptance as partners.

### **Section 4. Privileges**

Privileges of partnership include but are not limited to:

- 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.
- 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** – Members or partners, other than the lead pastor, found guilty of conduct contrary to Scripture, teaching contrary to the statement of faith, causing conflict among the members or 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 governing board or regional board.
  - 1. Members** – The regional board may be asked to intervene by the lead pastor or governing board with member discipline. Members who refuse to repent or receive corrective discipline in the spirit of restoration may be dismissed from membership by the governing board upon recommendation of the lead pastor. Members accused of wrongdoing or under discipline forfeit the right to resign from membership. Resignations from membership are possible only by members not accused of wrongdoing and not under discipline. Members who are dismissed from membership shall be notified by mail by the secretary of the church.
  - 2. Partners** – Partners who refuse to repent and receive corrective discipline in the spirit of restoration may be released from partnership by the governing board. 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 governing board, a vice president.

**Section 1. Eligibility**

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

**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 governing board shall appoint, continue in office, or terminate the other officers of the corporation and determine terms of service.

**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 governing board shall appoint a successor and determine the term of service.

**Section 4. Resignation**

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

**Section 5. Accountability**

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

**Section 6. Duties**

- A. President** – The president is the chief executive officer of the church corporation, implements the directives of the governing board, is a member of the governing board, and shall act as chairman of all meetings of the governing board. 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 governing board 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 governing 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, annual, and other reports requested to the lead pastor. With the approval of the governing 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, governing board, national and regional representatives of Open Bible Churches, and to other parties as required by state law.

**Section 7. Combined Offices**

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

**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 governing board and the regional board of directors as prescribed in these bylaws.

**ARTICLE 6. 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 governing board of the church, and in partnership with Open Bible Churches, will provide vision and practical direction to the church.

**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. Should the church select a lead pastor who is not a credentialed Open Bible minister the church shall automatically be under regional supervision as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

**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 pastor-board-region governance model. The process will be under the guidance of the regional board.

### Section 4. Pastoral Review

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

### Section 5. Duties

The lead pastor shall:

- A. Be the spiritual and corporate leader of the church. The lead pastor shall minister to the spiritual needs of and guard the membership and partnership against dissension and be devoted to the mission of the church.
- B. Call and lead meetings of the governing board.
- C. Consistently work to strengthen Christian life among the members and 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, have general supervision over all ministries and auxiliary activities, and be an ex-officio member of all church bodies.
- E. Be responsible, with the treasurer and governing board of the church, for deposits and disbursements of all funds, records, and reporting of finances.
- F. Appoint members of the governing board as prescribed in these bylaws.
- G. Recommend all pastoral and staff positions and personnel, both paid and unpaid, for approval and appointment by the governing board.
- H. Be responsible, in consultation with the governing board, for biennial reviews and evaluations of staff pastors, members of the governing board, administrative staff, and ministry leaders.
- I. Provide at least 30 days written notice to the governing board 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 governing board shall review the lead pastor's compensation and benefits package at least annually. The governing board shall submit the compensation and benefits package to the regional board, which shall provide confidential assessment and counsel.
- B. **Housing Allowance** – The lead pastor may annually submit a signed request to the governing 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 governing board 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 governing board shall pay, reimburse, or provide an offering to help defray such expenses, according to the ability of the church.
- D. **Accountable Reimbursement Plan** – The governing 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 governing board 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 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 member or partner making a charge against the lead pastor, a staff pastor, a member, or a partner who is a credentialed Open Bible minister must present it in writing to the governing board, signed by corroborating witnesses.
- B. **Authority** – Charges will be initially investigated by the governing board. The board will determine if a charge involves a violation of the Open Bible Manual.

1. A charge against the lead pastor, any staff pastor, a member, 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, member, or partner under provisions of the Open Bible Manual.
2. A charge against the lead pastor, staff pastor, member, or partner who is a credentialed Open Bible minister not entailing violations of the Open Bible Manual shall be overseen by the governing board.

## **ARTICLE 7. GOVERNING BOARD**

### **Section 1. Eligibility**

Members of the governing board 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 an active partner in good standing of the church for not less than 12 months.

### **Section 2. Composition**

The governing board 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 pastor or other members of the governing board by blood or marriage. The lead pastor shall serve as chair.

### **Section 3. Appointment and Ratification Process**

Members of the governing board shall be appointed by the lead pastor and ratified by the regional board.

### **Section 4. Vacancy or Incapacity**

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

### **Section 5. Term of Appointment**

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

### **Section 6. Responsibilities of Governing Board**

The governing board shall:

- A. Serve as the board of directors of the corporation.
- B. Work in concert with the lead pastor to pursue the mission of the church.
- C. Approve the annual budget, with salaries for all paid personnel; manage the legal and financial affairs of the church, and provide for the appropriate care, maintenance, and insurance of properties owned by the church. Individual members of the governing board shall not independently make decisions in the name of the church.
- D. Appoint the lead pastor, subject to approval by the regional board.
- E. Conduct a biennial review of the lead pastor as prescribed in these bylaws.
- F. Sign legal papers such as deeds, mortgages, and leases that have been approved in accordance with these bylaws.
- G. Discipline partners as prescribed in these bylaws.
- H. Sell, lease, mortgage or otherwise encumber property of the church upon receiving counsel of the regional executive director.
- I. Assure accurate, monthly records of the financial receipts and expenditures of the church are maintained and reported. Review all financial reports monthly.
- J. Appoint all staff pastors and other personnel, both paid and unpaid, upon recommendation of the lead pastor.
- K. Approve the development and discontinuance of church ministries or departments and committees, which shall be appointed by, accountable to, and their responsibilities and authority defined by the lead pastor and governing board.
- L. Communicate and coordinate with the regional executive director in the absence of the lead pastor, a transition between lead pastors, or other emergencies, as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

### **Section 7. Biennial Review**

The governing board shall biennially review the lead pastor using tools provided by the regional executive director. Copies of all biennial reviews shall be submitted to the regional executive director.

- A. Satisfactory** – Upon completion of a satisfactory biennial review, the governing board shall recommend continuation of service to the regional board.
- B. Unsatisfactory** – Upon completion of an unsatisfactory biennial review the governing board may recommend discontinuation of service to the regional board. The lead pastor’s final day of service shall be no later than 30 days after notice has been given by the regional board. The lead pastor may appeal to the regional board. The regional board’s decision shall be final.
- C. Conflict** – Upon completion of a biennial review continuing the lead pastor’s service but revealing conflict between the lead pastor and governing board or individual members of the governing board, the governing board or lead pastor may request assistance from the regional board in resolving the conflict.

### **Section 8. Accountability**

The governing board shall be accountable to the regional board and lead pastor.

### **Section 9. Discipline**

Members of the governing board shall be subject to discipline as prescribed in these bylaws for members and partners.

### **Section 10. Dismissal**

Members of the governing board may be dismissed for the causes prescribed in these bylaws for members and partners and by adhering to the process prescribed in these bylaws for members and partners.

### **Section 11. Meetings and Quorum**

Meetings of the governing board 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 governing board shall constitute a quorum.

### **Section 12. Minutes**

Minutes shall be kept of all meetings of the governing board and distributed to each board member.

## **ARTICLE 8. REGIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **Section 1. Definition**

Isaiah 33:22 describes the functions of government residing in the Lord. God is the judge, lawgiver, and king. In the governance of the church no man should hold all three governmental functions. In the governance of [Name of church], the lead pastor acts in the executive role, the church board in the legislative role, and the regional board in the judicial role.

### **Section 2. Responsibilities**

- A.** Provide a spiritual covering of prayer, counsel, fellowship, instruction, accountability, correction, protection, comfort, and encouragement to the lead pastor and governing board.
- B.** Guide the church’s governing board in the pastoral-selection process and approve its lead pastor recommendation.
- C.** Serve as an investigative forum and decision-making body regarding complaints or accusations against the lead pastor and members of the governing board.
- D.** Serve as the initial court of appeals for all decisions of the governing board.
- E.** Review and ratify all appointments of members to the church’s governing board.
- F.** Arbitrate conflicts at the request of the lead pastor or governing board.

## **ARTICLE 9. ELDERS, STAFF PASTORS, AND MINISTRY LEADERS**

### **Section 1. Elders**

Elders shall serve with the lead pastor as spiritual overseers of the church.

- A. Eligibility** – They shall exemplify the characteristics of a godly Christian life as stated in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9. Although these attributes will never be fully perfected, elders must be clearly in pursuit of and committed to their development. Elders shall demonstrate they possess giftings and spiritual maturity necessary for shepherding people toward faithfulness to God and His Word. (Acts 20:28-30; 1 Corinthians 12:28-31; Ephesians 4:14-16; 1 Peter 5:1-4.) Faithful participation in the ministries of the church, spiritual accord with the lead pastor and elders, and financial support through tithing are among indicators of readiness to serve as an elder.
- B. Appointment** – Elders shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the lead pastor. There shall be no fewer than three nor more than five elders.

- C. **Duties** – Elders shall serve in an advisory capacity to and as co-laborers with the pastor in all matters of the church’s spiritual life and ministry.

### **Section 2. 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 3:1-7. 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 appointed by the governing board upon recommendation by the lead pastor. They shall serve congruent with the lead pastor’s tenure and should anticipate resigning upon the lead pastor’s departure. The lead pastor and governing board shall review staff pastors every two years.
- C. **Duties** – Staff pastors will function in a manner consistent with their job descriptions as determined by the lead pastor and governing board.

### **Section 3. Ministry Leaders**

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

## **ARTICLE 10. FINANCE**

All funds given to or received by the church for operation, development, and maintenance shall be deposited in governing board-approved banks or other federally insured institutions under the supervision of the treasurer. The church may accept gifts of real and/or personal property at the discretion of the governing board.

### **Section 1. General Fund**

All undesignated contributions shall be part of the general fund.

### **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.

### **Section 3. Other Offerings and Fund Raising**

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

### **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.

### **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.

### **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 governing board, 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 the Internal Revenue Code as it applies to 501(c)(3) corporations.

### **Section 7. Contracts**

The governing 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.

**Section 8. Fiscal Year**

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

**Section 9. Audit Review**

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

**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 without first receiving counsel from the regional executive director.

**ARTICLE 12. RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES**

Scripture instructs Christians to handle church disputes 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.

- 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 people 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 governing board. They shall refrain from suing one another or the church in a court of law.
- C. Regional Board Mediation** – In the event of a dispute between a member or a partner and the pastor or governing board, the pastor or governing board may request the regional board to mediate the dispute.
- D. Abiding by Mediation** – All individuals involved in the mediation shall agree to abide by the outcome of mediation. Failure to do so may be grounds for discipline.

**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 governing board, member of the regional board, officer of the corporation, or any other private individual.

**Section 2. Withdrawal**

Should the church desire to withdraw from affiliation with Open Bible Churches the lead pastor and governing board shall consult with and adhere to provisions in the Open Bible Manual prior to initiating action or communicating with partners about withdrawal.

**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 governing board shall be submitted to the lead pastor and governing board. Appeals to Open Bible Churches shall be submitted in the following order: church governing board, regional board of directors, and national board of directors.

**Section 2. Amendments**

The lead pastor and governing board shall submit all proposed, bylaw amendments to the regional board and regional executive director. The proposed amendments must be preapproved by the secretary of Open Bible Churches prior to adoption by the governing board. Upon approval by the governing 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.

**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.

(Name of Church) has officially adopted these bylaws by vote of the governing board.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of action

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lead pastor's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary's signature

# Church Bylaws

OPEN BIBLE CHURCHES

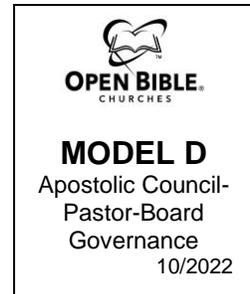
## MODEL D

**Apostolic Council-Pastor-Board Governance**

*An electronic copy, as well as content explanation, is available at  
[www.openbible.org](http://www.openbible.org)*

**MODEL D**

**Name of Church**  
**Address, City, State, Zip**  
**Bylaws**



### **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 governing board of the church may change the principal office from one location to another. Any such change shall be recorded in corporation minutes but shall not be processed as an amendment to these bylaws. The church governing board 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 membership record, with contact information;
- E. Minutes of meetings of the governing board;
- F. Minutes of meetings of governing board acting as membership;
- G. Financial reports and records; and
- H. Open Bible Manual.

#### **Section 3. Availability of Records**

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

#### **Section 4. Reports**

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

#### **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).

### **Section 6. Personal Liability**

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

### **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.

## **ARTICLE 4. MEMBERSHIP AND PARTNERS**

### **Section 1. Definition**

- A. Membership** – Membership in the church is comprised of the lead pastor and the members of the governing board.
- B. Partners** – 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.

### **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 governing board shall inform class participants of their acceptance as partners.

### **Section 4. Privileges**

Privileges of partnership include but are not limited to:

- 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.
- 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** – Members or partners, other than the lead pastor, found guilty of conduct contrary to Scripture, teaching contrary to the statement of faith, causing conflict among the members or partners, or failure to be in harmony or cooperation with the program of the church and the lead pastor and these bylaws, shall be confronted first by the lead pastor and, if necessary, by the governing board or apostolic council.
  - 1. Members** – The apostolic council may be asked to intervene by the lead pastor or governing board with member discipline. Members who refuse to repent or receive corrective discipline in the spirit of restoration may be dismissed from membership by the apostolic council, upon recommendation of the lead pastor. Members accused of wrong doing or under discipline forfeit the right to resign from membership. Resignations from membership are possible only by members not accused or wrong doing and not under discipline. Members who are dismissed from membership shall be notified by mail by the secretary of the church.
  - 2. Partners** – Partners who refuse to repent and receive corrective discipline in the spirit of restoration may be released from partnership by the governing board. 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 governing board, a vice president.

### Section 1. Eligibility

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

### 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 governing board shall appoint, continue in office, or terminate the other officers of the corporation and determine terms of service.

### 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 governing board shall appoint a successor and determine the term of service.

### Section 4. Resignation

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

### Section 5. Accountability

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

### Section 6. Duties

- A. **President** – The president is the chief executive officer of the church corporation, implements the directives of the governing board, is a member of the governing board, and shall act as chairman of all meetings of the governing board. 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 governing board 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 governing 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 and governing board, and an annual and other reports requested to the apostolic council. With the approval of the governing 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, governing board, apostolic council, national and regional representatives of Open Bible Churches, and to other parties as required by state law.

### Section 7. Combined Offices

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

### 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 governing board and the apostolic council as prescribed in these bylaws.

## ARTICLE 6. APOSTOLIC COUNCIL

### Section 1. Definition

The New Testament basis for an apostolic council is found in Acts Chapter 15. An apostolic council is a group of mature elders, proven in leadership, who provide oversight, accountability, and counsel to the leadership of churches in which authority is vested in the pastor and governing board and where there are no members other than the pastor and governing board.

### Section 2. Composition

The council shall be composed of not less than three nor more than five members. The regional executive director or representative shall chair the council.

### **Section 3. Appointment**

The members of the council shall be appointed by the regional board in consultation with the lead pastor and the church's governing board.

### **Section 4. Responsibilities**

- A.** Provide a spiritual covering of prayer, counsel, fellowship, instruction, accountability, correction, protection, comfort, and encouragement to the lead pastor and governing board.
- B.** Guide the church's governing board in the pastoral-selection process.
- C.** Appoint and install lead pastors.
- D.** Serve as an investigative forum and decision-making body regarding complaints or accusations, other than those involving violations of the Open Bible Manual, against the lead pastor and members of the governing board.
- E.** Refer oversight of investigation and decision making to the regional board if it is determined the lead pastor is guilty of violations of the Open Bible Manual.
- F.** Serve as the initial court of appeals for all decisions of the governing board.
- G.** Review and ratify all appointments of members to the church's governing board.
- H.** Arbitrate conflicts at the request of the lead pastor or governing board.

## **ARTICLE 7. 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 governing board of the church, and in partnership with Open Bible Churches, will provide vision and practical direction to the church.

### **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. Should the church select a lead pastor who is not a credentialed Open Bible minister the church shall automatically be under regional supervision, as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

### **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 apostolic council-pastor-board model. The process will be under the guidance of the apostolic council in consultation with the regional executive director or representative.

### **Section 4. Pastoral Review**

The governing board shall biennially review the lead pastor for purposes of providing positive feedback, suggesting areas needing attention or correction, and recommending continuation of service to the apostolic council.

### **Section 5. Duties**

The lead pastor shall:

- A.** Be the spiritual and corporate leader of the church. The lead pastor shall minister to the spiritual needs of and guard the membership and partnership against dissension and be devoted to the mission of the church.
- B.** Call and lead meetings of the governing board.
- C.** Consistently work to strengthen Christian life among the members and 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, have general supervision over all ministries and auxiliary activities, and be an ex-officio member of all church bodies.
- E.** Be responsible, with the treasurer and governing board of the church, for deposits and disbursements of all funds, records, and reporting of finances.
- F.** Appoint members of the governing board as prescribed in these bylaws.
- G.** Recommend all pastoral and staff positions and personnel, both paid and unpaid, for approval and appointment by the governing board.
- H.** Be responsible, in consultation with the governing board, for biennial reviews and evaluations of staff pastors, members of the governing board, administrative staff, and ministry leaders.

- I. Provide at least 30 days written notice to the governing board, apostolic 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 governing board shall review the lead pastor's compensation and benefits package at least annually. The governing board shall submit the compensation and benefits package to the apostolic council, which shall provide confidential assessment and counsel.
- B. **Housing Allowance** – The lead pastor may annually submit a signed request to the governing 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 governing board 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 governing board shall pay, reimburse, or provide an offering to help defray such expenses, according to the ability of the church.
- D. **Accountable Reimbursement Plan** – The governing 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 governing board shall, with the aid of the apostolic council, 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 apostolic council, in consultation with the regional board, shall have the power to appoint an interim pastor. The appointment shall not exceed two years. An individual who is interested in becoming pastor of the church shall not be eligible to serve as an interim pastor.

### **Section 8. Charges and Violations**

- A. **Charges** – A member or partner making a charge against the lead pastor, a staff pastor, member, or a partner who is a credentialed Open Bible minister must present it in writing to the governing board, signed by corroborating witnesses.
- B. **Authority** – Charges will be initially investigated by the apostolic 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, member, or partner who is a credentialed Open Bible minister, entailing violations of Open Bible policies or ministerial ethics requires the regional executive director be notified and assume authority over the pastor, member, or partner under provisions of the Open Bible Manual.
  2. A charge against the lead pastor, staff pastor, or member who is a credentialed Open Bible minister not entailing violations of the Open Bible Manual shall be overseen by the apostolic council. A charge against partners who are credentialed Open Bible ministers not entailing violations of the Open Bible Manual shall be overseen by the governing board.

## **ARTICLE 8. GOVERNING BOARD**

### **Section 1. Eligibility**

Members of the governing board 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 an active partner in good standing of the church for not less than 12 months.

### **Section 2. Composition**

The governing board 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 pastor or other members of the governing board by blood or marriage. The lead pastor shall serve as chair.

### **Section 3. Appointment and Ratification Process**

Members of the governing board shall be appointed by the lead pastor and ratified by the apostolic council.

#### **Section 4. Vacancy or Incapacity**

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

#### **Section 5. Term of Appointment**

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

#### **Section 6. Responsibilities of Governing Board**

The governing board shall:

- A.** Serve as the board of directors of the corporation.
- B.** Work in concert with the lead pastor to pursue the mission of the church.
- C.** Approve the annual budget, with salaries for all paid personnel; manage the legal and financial affairs of the church, and provide for the appropriate care, maintenance, and insurance of properties owned by the church. Individual members of the governing board shall not independently make decisions in the name of the church.
- D.** Recommend lead pastor appointments to the apostolic council.
- E.** Conduct a biennial review of the lead pastor as prescribed in these bylaws.
- F.** Sign legal papers such as deeds, mortgages, and leases that have been approved in accordance with these bylaws.
- G.** Discipline partners as prescribed in these bylaws.
- H.** Sell, lease, mortgage or otherwise encumber property of the church upon obtaining written consent of the regional executive director.
- I.** Assure accurate monthly records of the financial receipts and expenditures of the church are maintained and reported. Review all financial reports monthly.
- J.** Appoint all staff pastors and other personnel, both paid and unpaid, upon recommendation of the lead pastor.
- K.** Approve the development and discontinuance of church ministries or departments and committees, which shall be appointed by, accountable to, and their responsibilities and authority defined by the lead pastor and governing board.
- L.** Communicate and coordinate with the apostolic council in the absence of the lead pastor, a transition between lead pastors, or other emergencies, as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual.

#### **Section 7. Biennial Review**

The governing board shall biennially review the lead pastor using tools provided by the regional executive director. Copies of all biennial reviews shall be submitted to the chair of the apostolic council.

- A. Satisfactory** – Upon completion of a satisfactory biennial review, the governing board shall notify the apostolic council and regional executive director of the pastor's continued service.
- B. Unsatisfactory** – Upon completion of an unsatisfactory biennial review the governing board may recommend to the apostolic council the pastor's term of service cease. The lead pastor's final day of service shall be no later than 30 days after notice has been given. The lead pastor may appeal to the apostolic council.
- C. Conflict** – Upon completion of a biennial review continuing the lead pastor's service but revealing conflict between the lead pastor and governing board or individual members of the governing board, the governing board or lead pastor may request assistance from the apostolic council in resolving the conflict.

#### **Section 8. Accountability**

The governing board shall be accountable to the apostolic council and lead pastor.

#### **Section 9. Discipline**

Members of the governing board shall be subject to discipline as prescribed in these bylaws for members and partners.

#### **Section 10. Dismissal**

Members of the governing board may be dismissed for the causes prescribed in these bylaws for members and partners and by adhering to the process prescribed in these bylaws for members and partners.

### **Section 11. Meetings and Quorum**

Meetings of the governing board shall be held at least quarterly at places and times determined by the lead pastor. Notice shall be provided at least 7 days in advance by publication in the church bulletin, newsletter, letter, or electronically. A majority of the governing board shall constitute a quorum.

### **Section 12. Minutes**

Minutes shall be kept of all meetings of the governing board and distributed to each board member.

## **ARTICLE 9. ELDERS, STAFF PASTORS, AND MINISTRY LEADERS**

### **Section 1. Elders**

Elders shall serve with the lead pastor as spiritual overseers of the church.

- A. Eligibility** – They shall exemplify the characteristics of a godly Christian life as stated in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9. Although these attributes will never be fully perfected, elders must be clearly in pursuit of and committed to their development. Elders shall demonstrate they possess giftings and spiritual maturity necessary for shepherding people toward faithfulness to God and His Word. (Ephesians 4:14-16; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28-30; 1 Corinthians 12:28-31.) Faithful participation in the ministries of the church, spiritual accord with the lead pastor and elders, and financial support through tithing are among indicators of readiness to serve as an elder.
- B. Appointment** – Elders shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the lead pastor. There shall be no fewer than three nor more than five elders.
- C. Duties** – Elders shall serve in an advisory capacity to and as co-laborers with the pastor in all matters of the church's spiritual life and ministry.

### **Section 2. 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 3:1-7. 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 appointed by the governing board upon recommendation by the lead pastor. They shall serve congruent with the lead pastor's tenure and should anticipate resigning upon the lead pastor's departure. The lead pastor and governing board shall review staff pastors every two years.
- C. Duties** – Staff pastors will function in a manner consistent with their job descriptions as determined by the lead pastor and governing board.

### **Section 3. Ministry Leaders**

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

## **ARTICLE 10. FINANCE**

All funds given to or received by the church for operation, development, and maintenance shall be deposited in governing board-approved banks or other federally insured institutions under the supervision of the treasurer. The church may accept gifts of real and/or personal property at the discretion of the governing board.

### **Section 1. General Fund**

All undesignated contributions shall be part of the general fund.

### **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.

### **Section 3. Other Offerings and Fund Raising**

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

### **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.

### **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.

### **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 governing board, 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.

### **Section 7. Contracts**

The governing 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.

### **Section 8. Fiscal Year**

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

### **Section 9. Audit Review**

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

## **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 without first receiving counsel from the regional executive director.

## **ARTICLE 12. RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES**

Scripture instructs Christians to handle church disputes 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.

- 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 people 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 governing board. They shall refrain from suing one another or the church in a court of law.
- C. Apostolic Council Mediation** – In the event of a dispute between a member or partner and the pastor or governing board, the pastor or governing board may request the apostolic council to mediate the dispute.
- D. Abiding by Mediation** – All individuals involved in the mediation shall agree to abide by the outcome of mediation. Failure to do so may be grounds for discipline.

## **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 governing board, officer of the corporation, or any other private individual.

**Section 2. Withdrawal**

Should the church desire to withdraw from affiliation with Open Bible Churches the lead pastor and governing board shall consult with and adhere to provisions in the Open Bible Manual prior to initiating action or communicating with partners about withdrawal.

**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 governing board shall be submitted to the lead pastor and governing board. Appeals to Open Bible Churches shall be submitted in the following order: church governing board, apostolic council, regional board of directors, and national board of directors.

**Section 2. Amendments**

The lead pastor and governing board shall submit all proposed bylaw amendments to the apostolic council and regional executive director. The proposed amendments must be preapproved by the secretary of Open Bible Churches prior to adoption by the governing board. Upon approval by the governing 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.

**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.

(Name of Church) has officially adopted these bylaws by vote of the governing board.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of action

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lead pastor’s signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary’s signature

# Church Bylaws

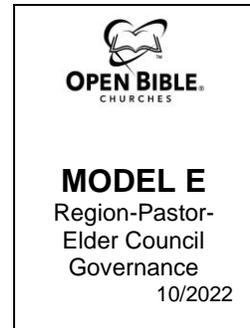
OPEN BIBLE CHURCHES

## MODEL E

**Region-Pastor-Elder Council Governance**

*An electronic copy, as well as content explanation, is available at  
[www.openbible.org](http://www.openbible.org)*

**Name of Church**  
**Address, City, State, Zip**  
**Bylaws**



### **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.

#### **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.

#### **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.

#### **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).

### **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.

### **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.

## **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:

- 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.
- 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 wrong doing or under discipline forfeit the right to resign from partnership. Resignations from partnership are possible only by partners not accused of wrong doing 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.

### 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.

### **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.

### **Section 4. Resignation**

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

### **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.

### **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.

### **Section 7. Combined Offices**

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

### **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.

## **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.

### **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.

### **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.

- 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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **Section 8. Accountability**

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

### **Section 9. Discipline**

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

### **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.

### **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.

### **Section 12. Minutes**

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

## **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.
- 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 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.

## **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.

### **Section 2. Ministry Leaders**

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

## **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 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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **Section 8. Fiscal Year**

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

### **Section 9. Audit Review**

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

## **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.

## **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.

- 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.

**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.

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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.

**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.

(Name of Church) has officially adopted these bylaws by vote of the elder council.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of action

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lead pastor’s signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary’s signature

Signatures of members of the elder council



# Resources



*The following resources are designed to be reproducible. You may download electronic copies of these resources from [www.openbible.org](http://www.openbible.org)*

10/2022

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## CHURCH AFFILIATION AGREEMENT INSTRUCTION CHECKLIST

Thank you for your desire to become an affiliated church with Open Bible Churches. We will work closely with you in this quest. Please follow these instructions as you complete and return the Church Affiliation Agreement.

Check as Completed

- A. Please complete the Church Affiliation Agreement, sign where indicated, and send it with requested documents to your regional executive director. The agreement must be approved by the regional and national boards.
- B. The church must be incorporated in the state in which it resides, except for West Virginia, according to the laws of that state. Although the words, "Open Bible," are preferred as part of the church's name, they are not required. However, if those words are not used, a statement is required in the church's Articles of Incorporation declaring affiliation with Open Bible Churches. Your Articles of Incorporation can be amended to include the sentence, "[Name of church] is affiliated with Open Bible Churches, an Iowa 501(c)(3) religious and educational corporation." All churches must have a dissolution clause in their articles of incorporation provided to them by the regional executive director.
- C. Enclose a copy of the church's Articles of Incorporation (either original or amended) and the Secretary of State's acknowledgement of the church's incorporation.
- D. All churches must have a Federal Employer Identification Number obtained prior to submitting this application. This number can be obtained online at [www.irs.org](http://www.irs.org) by downloading form SS4 and following the instructions for obtaining the number either by phone or fax. Upon approval for affiliation, your church will be included as a federal, tax-exempt organization and will receive a federal group exemption number from Open Bible Churches. Therefore, the church need not go through the process of becoming a 501(c)(3) corporation on its own.
- E. Church Bylaws 
  - 1. If the church making application to affiliate is a church plant or will be under regional supervision, the church plant or regional supervision bylaws template will be personalized and submitted with affiliation application.
  - 2. If the church making application to affiliate is an existing church and will not be under regional supervision, the region, church and Open Bible secretary-treasurer will work together in following these bylaws procedures.
    - a. The church will electronically submit (Word document) its bylaws to the secretary-treasurer, copied to the region.
    - b. The secretary-treasurer will either give approval for the church to present the document to its membership, give instructions for required changes and/or recommend changes/corrections.
      - 1. If changes are **required**, the church will make the changes and resubmit its bylaws to the secretary-treasurer (copied to the region) for approval.
      - 2. If changes are **recommended** the church may or may not choose to make the changes. If the church chooses to make the changes, it will resubmit its bylaws to the secretary-treasurer (copied to the region) for approval after making the modifications.
    - c. Upon approval for presentation to the church membership, the church will present bylaws to its membership with a motion stating the bylaws will take effect upon approval of affiliation by the Open Bible administrative committee. The membership-approved bylaws will be signed and submitted (both paper and an electronic Word document) with the affiliation application to the region.

## CHURCH AFFILIATION AGREEMENT INSTRUCTION CHECKLIST

- d. The region will submit a paper set of bylaws to the national office with the affiliation application and submit an electronic Word document to the secretary-treasurer's assistant.
- e. If the affiliation application is approved by the administrative committee, the national office will send the church a bylaws approval letter, certificate and a printed set of bylaws. The bylaws will be sent electronically to the region.
- F.** If you have adopted a Statement of Faith other than Open Bible Churches' Statement of Faith, enclose a copy for approval.
- G.** Enclose a completed and signed Pastoral Covenant of Relationship.
- H.** Enclose an application fee of \$50.00 payable to your region.

You are welcome to contact your regional executive director concerning any questions. It is our pleasure to work with you.



# CHURCH AFFILIATION AGREEMENT

## with OPEN BIBLE CHURCHES

*This affiliation agreement between individual churches and Open Bible Churches is a relational covenant. It is a bonding of hearts and an alignment of purpose and passion. The covenant is marked by a confirming witness from the Holy Spirit among pastor, church board, church membership, and regional and national leadership. It is entered into with the solemn recognition God birthed the relationship. For that reason, the relationship should be neither lightly undertaken nor lightly severed by the church or the Association. It is a partnership dedicated to more effectively impacting the harvest than can be accomplished alone.*

*This partnership is biblically illustrated in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NLT), "Two people can accomplish more than twice as much as one; they get a better return for their labor. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble. ...A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken."*

*We, the partners in covenant, confirm we have read and agree to abide by the provisions, procedures, and regulations in the Open Bible Manual. We affirm our individual contributions to this relationship with these commitments:*

### THE CHURCH AGREES TO:

- Make disciples in obedience to the Great Commission;
- Pray for Open Bible Churches and its ministries;
- Adopt and abide by bylaws and regulations consistent with the provisions, procedures, and regulations of the Open Bible Manual;
- Welcome representatives of Open Bible Churches to minister, share about ministries, and build relationship with members of the church;
- Require its pastors to enter into the pastoral covenant with Open Bible Churches prior to assuming leadership at the church;
- Participate in and support regional and national ministries and events; and
- Partner with the region in periodic, church-health assessments.

### OPEN BIBLE CHURCHES AGREES TO:

- Provide a spiritual covering for the church;
- Challenge the church to make disciples in obedience to the Great Commission;
- Lovingly hold the church accountable to abide by its bylaws and regulations and the Open Bible Manual;
- Pray for the church and the fulfillment of its mission;
- Establish standards for obtaining and maintaining ministerial credentials;
- Encourage, supervise, train, and provide fellowship for the pastors of the church;
- Provide opportunities for participation in Open Bible ministries; and
- Provide periodic, church-health assessments.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Church's Name \_\_\_\_\_
2. Church's Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_, State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
Church's Physical Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_, State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Website \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_
3. Federal Employer Identification Number \_\_\_\_\_
4. Church's status prior to this application:  
 Independent    Affiliated with \_\_\_\_\_    Church Plant

5. How long has the church been in existence? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Pastor's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Pastor's Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_, State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_
7. Pastor's Status -  Credentialed with Open Bible  Credentialed with \_\_\_\_\_
8. Does/Will the church have members? \_\_\_\_\_ Number of current members \_\_\_\_\_

**AFFIRMATIONS**

9. In order to fulfill church bylaw requirements for affiliated churches we choose to:  
 Adopt church-bylaw model \_\_\_\_\_ (as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual);  
 or  
 Adhering to provisions, procedures, and regulations prescribed in the Open Bible Manual, write and submit the enclosed church bylaws for approval.
10. The church chooses to:  
 Adopt the Statement of Faith of Open Bible Churches as its own.  
 or  
 Adopt its own Statement of Faith in harmony with and approved by the Association. If this choice is made a copy of the Statement of Faith must be submitted for approval.
11. Does the church teach any doctrine contrary to or in addition to the Statement of Faith of Open Bible Churches? If so, please explain on an accompanying sheet of paper.  Yes  No
12. Will the church agree to cooperate wholeheartedly with the provisions, procedures, and regulations prescribed in the Open Bible Manual, fellowship regularly with other Open Bible Churches, and financially support Open Bible ministries through giving to Mission Venture Plan (MVP) and the 5% plan?  Yes  No

**RESOLUTION**

After reading all sections of the Open Bible Manual, giving opportunity for discussion, and praying sincerely, we have voted to become affiliated with Open Bible Churches by adopting the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the \_\_\_\_\_  
 Located in \_\_\_\_\_, County \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_,  
 has, in a duly called meeting held this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_,  
 declared its intention to share in the privileges and embrace the responsibilities of affiliation with Open Bible Churches, and for the purpose of cooperating and fellowshiping with other Open Bible congregations in assuming the spiritual, physical, and financial responsibilities of such affiliation, the members whose names appear on the records as members in good standing do hereby make application to become an affiliated church of Open Bible Churches, and the \_\_\_\_\_  
 Region, \_\_\_\_\_ District in which this church is located. In the spirit of partnership for the harvest and in witness the Holy Spirit has bonded our hearts in relationship and aligned our purpose and passion, we affirm this Church Affiliation Agreement as our commitment to one another.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Lead Pastor Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of other Officer of the Church Date: \_\_\_\_\_

How many members were present at this meeting? \_\_\_\_\_ How many votes were cast for this resolution? \_\_\_\_\_ How many votes were cast against this resolution? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Secretary-Treasurer of Open Bible Churches Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# PASTORAL COVENANT OF RELATIONSHIP

## with OPEN BIBLE CHURCHES

The Pastoral Covenant of Relationship between pastors and Open Bible Churches is a partnership marked by a bonding of hearts and an alignment of purpose and passion – a God-initiated relationship. A covenant relationship means the pastor and Open Bible Churches are committed to advancing God’s Kingdom together in mutual and loving commitment – a partnership dedicated to more effectively impacting the harvest than can be accomplished alone. The Pastoral Covenant of Relationship flows from and confirms a witness from the Holy Spirit among pastor, church board, church membership, and regional and national leadership – a partnership entered into with the solemn recognition God initiated the relationship. For that reason, the relationship should be neither lightly undertaken nor lightly severed by the pastor, church, or Open Bible Churches. Application for, approval, and acceptance of an Open Bible ministerial credential are mutual statements of commitment to covenant relationship.

A model for covenant relationship is described in Philippians 2:1-6 (NLT).

*Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and sympathetic? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one heart and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing. Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God.*

In the spirit of partnership for the harvest, this Pastoral Covenant of Relationship is entered into by \_\_\_\_\_ Open Bible Churches, and \_\_\_\_\_, on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_: We, the partners in covenant, affirm our individual contributions to this relationship with these commitments:

### AS LEAD PASTOR AT AN OPEN BIBLE CHURCH I WILL:

- Abide by and support the Church Affiliation Agreement between the church and Open Bible Churches;
- Abide by the Open Bible Manual;
- Teach doctrine consistent with the Open Bible Statement of Faith;
- Participate spiritually, physically, and financially with all ministries of Open Bible as defined in the Open Bible Manual
- Pray for fulfillment of the mission of Open Bible Churches and for its leadership;
- Welcome representatives of Open Bible Churches to minister, share about ministries, and build relationship with members of the church;
- Complete an annual, church tracking report; and
- Partner with the region in periodic, church health assessments.

*(Continued on page 2)*



**OPEN BIBLE CHURCHES WILL:**

- Provide a spiritual covering for the pastor;
- Pray for the pastor, family, and pastoral effectiveness;
- Encourage, supervise, and train the pastor;
- Challenge the pastor to make disciples in obedience to the Great Commission;
- Lovingly hold the pastor accountable to abide by the church's bylaws and regulations and the Open Bible Manual;
- Establish standards for obtaining and maintaining ministerial credentials;
- Provide opportunities for ministerial fellowship; and
- Partner with pastors in performing periodic, church health assessments.

\_\_\_\_\_

Lead Pastor

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Regional Executive Director

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## ACCOUNTABLE REIMBURSEMENT PLAN

The following resolution was adopted by the board of directors of \_\_\_\_\_ church at a regularly scheduled meeting on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_.

Be it resolved the following accountable, business-expense-reimbursement plan shall be followed for all employees and volunteers of the church:

1. Only reasonable, ordinary, necessary, and legitimate business expenses shall be reimbursed under this plan.
2. Only approved employees and volunteers shall be reimbursed under the terms of this plan.
3. Because the reimbursement of an unqualified expense will cause the plan to become non-accountable and all payments made under the plan to be taxable income, only expenses with adequate substantiation, as defined below, shall be reimbursed under the terms of this plan.
  - A. The expenses must be reasonable in amount;
  - B. The expenses must be documented by amount, date, place, and business purpose with the same kind of documentary evidence required to support a deduction of an expense on a federal income tax return;
  - C. Expenses shall be presented for payment no less frequently than monthly, and no expenses over sixty days old shall be reimbursed under the terms of this plan;
  - D. All receipts and any other documentation necessary for reimbursement shall be retained by the church.
4. All employees shall be given a written, specific limit for reimbursable expenses. No employee shall be reimbursed for any expense exceeding the employee's limit
5. Any expense reimbursed in error because the expense exceeds the amounts deemed reasonable, exceeds the employee's specific limits, or is not adequately accounted for by proper substantiation shall be returned to the church within 120 days of payment. No such funds shall be kept by the employee.
6. If all the above terms are met by the employee or volunteer the church shall not include the reimbursements made on the employee's W-2 form and the employee need not claim the value of the reimbursements on his or her income tax forms.

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary of the Board of Directors





# PASTORAL SELECTION AND TRANSITION GUIDELINES



## PROCEDURES

The regional executive director or representative will work in consultation with a church governing board to assist in a search for and selection of an eligible pastor. A lead pastor of an affiliated church must be a credentialed Open Bible minister in good standing with the Association. The following procedures shall be followed, unless church bylaws approved by the secretary of the Association and filed with the national office provide otherwise. However, Section B, Pastoral Search, may be modified by the regional executive director or representative in consultation with the governing board of the church:

### **A. Pastoral Departure**

1. Prior to any announcement or release of information to the congregation, a lead pastor must give simultaneous written notice at least thirty days in advance of resigning to the regional executive director and to the church's governing board.
2. A lead pastor shall honor the Ministerial Covenant of Ethics for departing pastors and the Pastoral Covenant of Relationship.
3. The church's governing board shall, with the aid of the regional executive director or representative, develop a reasonable severance package and appropriate farewell considerations for the departing pastor.

### **B. Pastoral Search**

1. The regional executive director or representative along with the church's governing board/pastoral search committee shall comprise the pastoral search team. One person from the pastoral search committee will be selected as the contact person with the regional executive director or representative.
2. The pastoral search team shall confirm the search and selection procedure to be followed in accordance with the bylaws of the church.
3. The pastoral search team shall identify the church's values, analyze the church's mission and vision, and consider community identity and culture as it develops a profile of a desired pastor.
4. The church governing board shall determine or confirm the compensation package, including benefits, to be offered to a pastor. This shall be understood as a commitment to a pastor who is invited and accepts a call to serve.
5. The pastoral search team shall write a descriptive profile of church, community, and desired pastoral characteristics. The regional executive director or representative shall publish and distribute this profile, along with a timetable for submission of applications, resumes, and other requested information.
6. All applications and inquiries about the church shall be submitted to the regional executive director or representative. Applicants shall not make direct contact with the church's governing board, members, or former/outgoing pastor, or seek to cause influence through relationship or ministry.
7. Upon receipt of applications and accompanying information, the regional executive director or representative shall screen applicants to verify eligibility and shall present the applications and accompanying materials of eligible applicants to the pastoral search team.
8. The pastoral search team shall prayerfully evaluate applicants and may choose to request additional information or interviews or utilize additional evaluative criteria to select an applicant to candidate as pastor of the church. Only one candidate may be selected for presentation to the congregation.
9. Upon selection of a candidate, the pastoral search team shall make arrangements for the candidate and family to visit the church to establish fellowship, minister, respond to questions, and be available for election by the members. The church shall underwrite travel and hosting expenditures for the candidate.
10. Prior to assuming leadership at the church, the church's governing board shall require the pastor-elect to enter into the Pastoral Covenant of Relationship with Open Bible Churches.

## **C. Pastoral Election**

### **1. Term of Office**

A pastor shall initially be elected to the church for a term of one year, and may be reelected for a term of one to five years, or according to the bylaws of the church. A pastor in good standing shall be eligible for reelection upon completion of a term of service. Although a pastor may be elected for unlimited successive terms, no pastor may be elected for an indefinite or life term.

### **2. Election Committee**

Tellers, who are not affected by the vote or related by blood or marriage to the pastor, shall be chosen from the membership by the church's governing board.

### **3. Initial Call**

Elections shall be determined by secret ballot. Absentee ballots shall not be permitted unless specifically provided for in the bylaws of the church. Tally sheets shall be signed in ink by the tellers. A candidate who receives 2/3 of the votes cast shall be considered elected and called. If a 2/3 vote is not received another candidate shall be presented. The church secretary shall certify the results and convey the ballots and tally sheets to the regional office, where they shall be destroyed after 60 days, unless the church's governing board requests or the regional board determines otherwise.

## **D. Pastoral Reelection**

The membership of the church shall be given opportunity to vote on continuance of its pastor's service not less than 30 days in advance of the expiration of the pastor's term. The church's governing board may request the regional executive director, or representative, to chair the meeting.

## **E. Pastoral Appointment**

If under any of the following conditions the regional board appoints a pastor, the appointment shall not exceed a period of two years.

1. If a 2/3 vote is not received after the appearance of three candidates or, if six months has elapsed from the time of the departure of the previous pastor, the regional board shall be empowered to appoint a pastor. A church's governing board may request the regional board grant additional time to secure a pastor.
2. If the church has fewer than twenty members eligible to vote, the regional board shall be empowered, at its discretion, to appoint a pastor.
3. In the event a pastor receives a simple majority, reelection vote, but not 2/3, the pastor or church's governing board may request the regional board to appoint the pastor to a one-year term of service, and shall provide cause and information in support of the request. The regional board shall investigate and evaluate the circumstances and information provided in making its appointment determination. A pastoral election will be conducted by the regional executive director, or representative, 30 days in advance of the expiration of the pastor's appointment.
4. If a church has been placed under regional supervision the regional board shall be empowered, at its discretion, to appoint a pastor.

# PASTORAL SELECTION AND TRANSITION GUIDELINES



## CHURCH BYLAWS MODEL C *Pastoral Appointment by Governing Board with Regional Ratification*

10/2022

### PROCEDURES

The regional executive director or representative will work in consultation with a church governing board to assist in a search for and selection of an eligible pastor. A lead pastor of an affiliated church must be a credentialed Open Bible minister in good standing with the Association. The following procedures shall be followed, unless church bylaws approved by the secretary of the Association and filed with the national office provide otherwise. However, Section B, Pastoral Search, may be modified by the regional executive director or representative in consultation with the governing board of the church:

#### **A. Pastoral Departure**

1. Prior to any announcement or release of information to the congregation, a lead pastor must give simultaneous written notice at least thirty days in advance of resigning to the regional executive director and to the church's governing board.
2. A lead pastor shall honor the Ministerial Covenant of Ethics for departing pastors and the Pastoral Covenant of Relationship.
3. The church's governing board shall, with the aid of the regional executive director or representative, develop a reasonable severance package and appropriate farewell considerations for the departing pastor.

#### **B. Pastoral Search Process**

1. The regional executive director or representative along with the church's governing board/pastoral search committee shall comprise the pastoral search team. One person from the pastoral search committee will be selected as the contact person with the regional executive director or representative.
2. The pastoral search team shall confirm the search and selection procedure to be followed in accordance with the bylaws of the church.
3. The pastoral search team shall identify the church's values, analyze the church's mission and vision, and consider community identity and culture as it develops a profile of a desired pastor.
4. The church's governing board shall determine or confirm the compensation package, including benefits, to be offered to a pastor. This shall be understood as a commitment to a pastor who is invited and accepts a call to serve.
5. The pastoral search team shall write a descriptive profile of church, community, and desired pastoral characteristics. The regional executive director or representative shall publish and distribute this profile, along with a timetable for submission of applications, resumes, and other requested information.
6. All applications and inquiries about the church shall be submitted to the regional executive director or representative. Applicants shall not make direct contact with the church's governing board, members, or former/outgoing pastor, or seek to cause influence through relationship or ministry.
7. Upon receipt of applications and accompanying information, the regional executive director or representative shall screen applicants to verify eligibility and shall present the applications and accompanying materials of eligible applicants to the pastoral search team.
8. The pastoral search team shall prayerfully evaluate applicants and may choose to request additional information or interviews or utilize additional evaluative criteria to select an applicant to recommend to the church's governing board for appointment as pastor of the church.

# PASTORAL SELECTION AND TRANSITION GUIDELINES

9. Upon selection of a candidate for appointment as pastor, prior to presentation to the congregation, the candidate for appointment shall be recommended to the regional board for approval. No candidate may be presented to the congregation as pastor unless approval has been received in writing from the regional board.
10. Prior to assuming leadership at the church, the church's governing board shall require the pastor-designee to enter into the Pastoral Covenant of Relationship with Open Bible Churches.

## C. Pastoral Appointment

### 1. Term of Office

A pastor shall be initially appointed to a term of two years. A pastor in good standing shall be eligible for reappointment upon completion of a successful biennial review by the church's governing board and with regional board approval. Although a pastor may be appointed for unlimited successive terms, no pastor may be appointed for an indefinite or life term.

## D. Exceptional Situations

If under any of the following conditions the regional board appoints a pastor, the appointment shall not exceed a period of two years.

1. If a 2/3 vote of the governing board is not received after the presentation of candidates and six months has elapsed from the time of the departure of the previous pastor, the regional board shall be empowered to appoint a pastor. A church's governing board may request the regional board grant additional time to secure a pastor.
2. In the event a pastor receives a simple majority of the church's governing board after a biennial review and a lead pastor appeals to the regional board, the pastor or church's governing board may request the regional board to appoint the pastor to a one-year term of service, and shall provide cause and information in support of the request. The regional board shall investigate and evaluate the circumstances and information provided in making its appointment determination. Should the regional board choose to appoint the pastor, the appointment shall not exceed a period of one year. The church's governing board shall conduct a biennial review 30 days in advance of the expiration of the pastor's appointment to determine if the pastor will continue in service.
3. If a church has been placed under regional supervision the regional board shall be empowered, at its discretion, to appoint a pastor.

# PASTORAL SELECTION AND TRANSITION GUIDELINES



**CHURCH BYLAWS  
MODEL D  
*Pastoral Appointment  
by Apostolic Council***  
10/2022

## PROCEDURES

The regional executive director or representative will work in consultation with a church governing board to assist in a search for and selection of an eligible pastor. A lead pastor of an affiliated church must be a credentialed Open Bible minister in good standing with the Association. The following procedures shall be followed, unless church bylaws approved by the secretary of the Association and filed with the national office provide otherwise. However, Section B, Pastoral Search, may be modified by the regional executive director or representative in consultation with the governing board of the church:

### **A. Pastoral Departure**

1. Prior to any announcement or release of information to the congregation, a lead pastor must give simultaneous written notice at least thirty days in advance of resigning to the church's governing board, the apostolic council, and the regional executive director.
2. A lead pastor shall honor the Ministerial Covenant of Ethics for departing pastors and the Pastoral Covenant of Relationship.
3. The church's governing board shall, with the aid of the regional executive director or representative, develop a reasonable severance package and appropriate farewell considerations for the departing pastor.

### **B. Pastoral Search**

1. The regional executive director or representative along with the church's governing board/pastoral search committee and a representative from the apostolic council shall comprise the pastoral search team. One person from the pastoral search committee will be selected as the contact person with the regional executive director or representative.
2. The pastoral search team shall confirm the search and selection procedure to be followed in accordance with the bylaws of the church.
3. The pastoral search team shall identify the church's values, analyze the church's mission and vision, and consider community identity and culture as it develops a profile of a desired pastor.
4. The governing board shall determine or confirm the compensation package, including benefits, to be offered to a pastor. This shall be understood as a commitment to a pastor who is invited and accepts a call to serve.
5. The pastoral search team shall write a descriptive profile of church, community, and desired pastoral characteristics. The regional executive director or representative shall publish and distribute this profile, along with a timetable for submission of applications, resumes, and other requested information.
6. All applications and inquiries about the church shall be submitted to the regional executive director or representative. Applicants shall not make direct contact with the governing board, members, or former/outgoing pastor, or seek to cause influence through relationship or ministry.
7. Upon receipt of applications and accompanying information, the regional executive director or representative shall screen applicants to verify eligibility and shall present the applications and accompanying materials of eligible applicants to the pastoral search team.
8. The pastoral search team shall prayerfully evaluate applicants and may choose to request additional information or interviews or utilize additional evaluative criteria to select an applicant to recommend to the apostolic council for appointment as pastor of the church.
9. No candidate may be presented to the congregation as pastor unless appointed and installed by the apostolic council.
10. Prior to assuming leadership at the church, the church's governing board shall require the pastor-elect to enter into the Pastoral Covenant of Relationship with Open Bible Churches.

### **C. Pastoral Appointment**

# PASTORAL SELECTION AND TRANSITION GUIDELINES

A pastor shall be initially appointed to a term of two years. A pastor in good standing shall be eligible for reappointment upon completion of a successful biennial review by the governing board. Although a pastor may be appointed for unlimited successive terms, no pastor may be appointed for an indefinite or life term.

## **D. Exceptional Circumstances**

If under any of the following conditions the regional board appoints a pastor, the appointment shall not exceed a period of two years.

1. If a 2/3 vote of the apostolic council is not received after the presentation of candidates and six months has elapsed from the time of the departure of the previous pastor, the regional board shall be empowered to appoint a pastor. A church's governing board or apostolic council may request the regional board grant additional time to secure a pastor.
2. In the event a pastor receives a simple majority vote of the church's governing board after a biennial review and a lead pastor appeals to the apostolic council, the pastor, apostolic council, or governing board may request the regional board to appoint the pastor to a one-year term of service, and shall provide cause and information in support of the request. The regional board shall investigate and evaluate the circumstances and information provided in making its appointment determination. Should the regional board choose to appoint the pastor, the appointment shall not exceed a period of one year. The church's governing board shall conduct a biennial review 30 days in advance of the expiration of the pastor's appointment to determine if the pastor will continue in service.
3. If a church has been placed under regional supervision the regional board shall be empowered, at its discretion, to appoint a pastor.

# PASTORAL SELECTION AND TRANSITION GUIDELINES



## CHURCH BYLAWS MODEL E *Pastoral Appointment by Regional Board* 10/2022

### PROCEDURES

The regional executive director or representative will work in consultation with a church governing board to assist in a search for and selection of an eligible pastor. A lead pastor of an affiliated church must be a credentialed Open Bible minister in good standing with the Association. The following procedures shall be followed, unless church bylaws approved by the secretary of the Association and filed with the national office provide otherwise. However, Section B, Pastoral Search, may be modified by the regional executive director or representative in consultation with the governing board of the church:

#### **A. Pastor Departure**

1. Prior to any announcement or release of information to the congregation, a lead pastor must give simultaneous written notice at least thirty days in advance of resigning to the elder council and regional executive director.
2. A lead pastor shall honor the Ministerial Covenant of Ethics for departing pastors and the Pastoral Covenant of Relationship.
3. The regional board shall, in consultation with the elder council, develop a reasonable severance package and appropriate farewell considerations for the departing pastor.

#### **B. Pastor Search Process**

1. The regional executive director or representative along with the elder council /pastoral search committee shall comprise the pastoral search team. One person from the pastoral search committee will be selected as the contact person with the regional executive director or representative.
2. The pastoral search team shall confirm the search and selection procedure to be followed in accordance with the bylaws of the church.
3. The pastoral search team shall identify the church's values, analyze the church's mission and vision, and consider community identity and culture as it develops a profile of a desired pastor.
4. The regional board shall determine or confirm the compensation package, including benefits, to be offered to a pastor. This shall be understood as a commitment to a pastor who is invited and accepts a call to serve.
5. The pastoral search team shall write a descriptive profile of church, community, and desired pastoral characteristics. The regional executive director or representative shall publish and distribute this profile, along with a timetable for submission of applications, resumes, and other requested information.
6. All applications and inquiries about the church shall be submitted to the regional executive director or representative. Applicants shall not make direct contact with the elder council, members, or former/outgoing pastor, or seek to cause influence through relationship or ministry.
7. Upon receipt of applications and accompanying information, the regional executive director or representative shall screen applicants to verify eligibility and shall present the applications and accompanying materials of eligible applicants to the pastoral search team.
8. The pastoral search team shall prayerfully evaluate applicants and may choose to request additional information or interviews or utilize additional evaluative criteria to select an applicant to recommend to the regional board for appointment as pastor of the church.
9. The regional board shall take the recommendation of the pastoral search team into consideration in making its pastoral appointment. The regional board shall appoint a pastor to a two-year term. No candidate may be presented to the congregation as pastor unless appointed by the regional board.
10. Prior to assuming leadership at the church, the regional board shall require the pastor-designee to enter into the Pastoral Covenant of Relationship with Open Bible Churches.

#### **C. Pastoral Appointment**

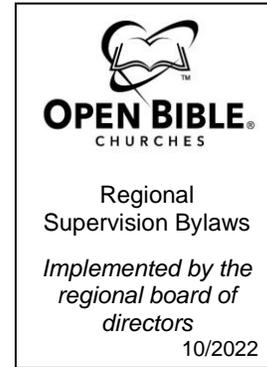
A pastor shall be initially appointed to a term of two years. A pastor in good standing shall be eligible for reappointment upon completion of a successful biennial review by the regional board. Although a pastor may be appointed for unlimited successive terms, no pastor may be appointed for an indefinite or life term.

**OPEN BIBLE CHURCHES**

# **REGIONAL SUPERVISION BYLAWS**

*An electronic copy is available at [www.openbible.org](http://www.openbible.org)*

**Name of Church**  
**Address, City, State, Zip**  
**Bylaws**



**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 advisory 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 advisory 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. Regional Supervision**

(Name of church) is under regional supervision as prescribed in the Open Bible Manual. The purpose of regional supervision is to assist a church back to stability, remove the causes for supervision, and nurture health. It is restorative instead of punitive. The highest goal is for a church to bear fruit as it effectively functions under local leadership.

**Section 3. 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 advisory council;
- F. Financial reports and records; and
- G. Open Bible Manual.

**Section 4. Availability of Records**

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

**Section 5. Reports**

The lead pastor, officers, and members of the advisory 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.

## **Section 6. 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).

## **Section 7. Personal Liability**

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

## **Section 8. 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.

# **ARTICLE 4. PARTNERSHIP OR MEMBERSHIP**

## **Section 1. Definition**

The church may develop a process for accepting members or partners while under regional supervision in consultation with the regional board. Members or partners will have privileges and responsibilities as granted by the regional board of directors.

## **Section 2. 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 or members, other than the lead pastor, found guilty of conduct contrary to Scripture, teaching contrary to the statement of faith, causing conflict among the members or partners, or failure to be in harmony or cooperation with the program of the church and the lead pastor and these bylaws shall be confronted first by the lead pastor and, if necessary, by the advisory council and regional board. The regional board may be asked to intervene by the lead pastor or advisory council with member or partner discipline. Members or partners who refuse to repent or receive corrective discipline in the spirit of restoration may be dismissed from membership or partnership by the regional board, upon recommendation of the lead pastor. Members or partners under discipline forfeit the right to resign from membership or partnership. Resignations from membership or partnership are possible only by members or partners not under discipline. Members or partners who are dismissed from membership or partnership shall be notified by mail by the secretary of the church.

# **ARTICLE 5. CORPORATE OFFICERS**

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

## **Section 1. Eligibility**

An officer other than the president must be a member in good standing of the church and living a godly Christian life.

## **Section 2. Appointment and Term of Office**

The regional executive director or an appointee of the regional executive director shall serve as president of the corporation while the church is under regional supervision. The regional board shall appoint, continue in office, or terminate the other officers of the corporation and determine terms of service.

### **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.

### **Section 4. Resignation**

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

### **Section 5. Accountability**

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

### **Section 6. Duties**

- A. President** – The president is the chief executive officer of the church corporation who implements the directives of the regional board. The president shall serve as member ex-officio of all church bodies and organizations of the church.
- B. Vice President** – The lead pastor of the church may be appointed by the regional board to serve as vice president of the church corporation while the church is under regional supervision.
- C. Secretary** – The secretary shall keep accurate minutes of all advisory council meetings and may act as secretary of any other body or committee as desired by the lead pastor or regional board. 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.
- D. 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, advisory council and regional board, and 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 advisory council, national and regional representatives of Open Bible Churches, and to other parties as required by state law.

### **Section 7. Combined Offices**

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

### **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 and the disciplinary procedures as prescribed in these bylaws.

## **ARTICLE 6. GOVERNING BOARD**

### **Section 1. Definition**

The regional board shall act as the governing board of the church and shall work in consultation with the lead pastor and may work in consultation with an advisory council in performing its responsibilities.

### **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 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 advisory council.
- J.** Appoint the lead pastor of the church.

### **Section 3. Pastoral Review**

The regional board shall review the lead pastor at the end of the pastor's term of appointment. Members of the advisory council shall have opportunity to provide written, signed input during these reviews using tools provided by the regional executive director.

- A. Satisfactory** – Upon completion of a satisfactory review of the lead pastor, the regional board shall notify the pastor and the advisory council.
- B. Unsatisfactory** – Upon completion of an unsatisfactory 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 advisory council, and the members or partners.

## **ARTICLE 7. ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Day-to-day operations of the church corporation and any other responsibilities designated by the regional board may be carried out by an advisory council upon approval by the regional board.

### **Section 1. Definition**

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

### **Section 2. Eligibility**

Members of the advisory 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. (1 Corinthians 12:28-31; Romans 12.) It is suggested but not required that a qualified candidate be a member or partner in good standing of the church for not less than 12 months.

### **Section 3. Composition**

The advisory 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 advisory council by blood or marriage. The lead pastor shall be a member of the advisory council and serve as chair.

### **Section 4. Appointment**

The members of the advisory council shall be nominated by the lead 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 advisory council, upon the recommendation of the lead pastor, the regional board shall appoint a successor to fulfill the uncompleted term of service.

### **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 advisory council may be reappointed, but no member may be appointed to an indefinite or life term.

### **Section 7. Responsibilities**

- A.** Provide a spiritual covering of prayer, guidance, counsel, encouragement, fellowship, comfort, and relational accountability to the lead pastor and members or partners.
- B.** Manage the daily care, maintenance, disbursements, and routine operational matters of properties owned by the church. Individual members of the advisory 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 pastoral searches.
- 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.
- 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 advisory council.

## **Section 8. Accountability**

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

## **Section 9. Discipline**

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

## **Section 10. Dismissal**

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

## **Section 11. Meetings and Quorum**

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

## **Section 12. Minutes**

Minutes shall be kept of all meetings of the advisory council and distributed to each council member and to the regional executive director.

# **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 advisory 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 regional supervision bylaw 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 advisory council to assist in a search for and selection of an eligible lead pastor.

## **Section 4. Pastoral Review**

The regional board shall review the lead pastor at the end of the term of appointment 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 advisory council with approval of the regional board.
- C.** Consistently work to strengthen Christian life among the members or 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.
- E.** Be responsible, with the treasurer and advisory council of the church, for deposits and disbursements of all funds, records, and reporting of finances.
- F.** Recommend members of the advisory council as prescribed in these bylaws.
- G.** Recommend all pastoral and staff positions and personnel, both paid and unpaid, for approval by the advisory council and appointment by the regional board.

- H. Be responsible, in consultation with the advisory council, for reviews and evaluations of staff pastors, members of the advisory 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 advisory 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 advisory council shall review the lead pastor's compensation and benefits package at least annually. The advisory 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 advisory 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 advisory 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 advisory 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 advisory 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 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 member or partner making a charge against the lead pastor must present it in writing to the regional executive director signed by corroborating witnesses.
- B. **Authority** – Charges will be investigated by the regional board to determine if a charge involves a violation of the Open Bible Manual.
  - 1. A charge against the lead pastor, or any staff pastor or any member or partner who is a credentialed Open Bible minister, entailing violations of the Open Bible Manual requires the regional executive director assume authority over the pastor, staff pastor, member, or partner under provisions of the Open Bible Manual.
  - 2. A charge against the lead pastor, any staff pastor, member, or partner who is a credentialed Open Bible minister not entailing violations of the Open Bible Manual may be overseen by the advisory council at the request of and with the assistance of the regional board, if requested.

## 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 advisory 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 advisory 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 advisory council and approved by the regional board.

## **Section 2. Ministry Leaders**

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

## **ARTICLE 10. FINANCE**

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

### **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.

### **Section 3. Other Offerings and Fund Raising**

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

### **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.

### **Section 5. Disbursements**

Disbursement of funds at a level authorized by the regional board shall be under the supervision of the lead pastor and advisory council. All other disbursements must have written, regional board approval. Unless approved by the regional board, checks shall require two, approved signatures from persons who are not related by marriage or birth. Signatories shall include the lead pastor, treasurer, and other officers or members of the advisory council. Checks shall not be pre-signed nor affixed with a stamped signature.

### **Section 6. Investments**

The church shall not invest its funds in speculative investments or in a business in which a pastor, member of the advisory 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.

### **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.

### **Section 8. Fiscal Year**

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

## **ARTICLE 11. PROPERTY**

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

## **ARTICLE 12. RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES**

Scripture instructs Christians to handle disputes among members or partners of the church within the church, not in civil courts. (1 Corinthians 6:1-8.) If a member or partner feels there is an offense or misunderstanding with another member or partner, the lead pastor, member of the governing board, member of the advisory council,

staff pastor, or ministry leader, he or she shall go to the other individual promptly in love in order to resolve the difference.

- 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 members or 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 advisory 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 member or partner and the pastor or advisory council, the pastor or advisory council shall request the regional board to provide a mediator to resolve the dispute.
- D. **Abiding by Mediation** – Members or partners shall agree to abide by the outcome of mediation. Failure to do so may be grounds for discipline.

## 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 the (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 advisory council, regional board, officer of the corporation, or any other private individual.

### Section 2. Withdrawal

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

## ARTICLE 14. 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 advisory council shall be submitted to the lead pastor and advisory council. Appeals to Open Bible Churches shall be submitted in the following order: church advisory council, regional board of directors, and national board of directors.

## 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.

## ARTICLE 16. RELEASE FROM REGIONAL SUPERVISION

Upon determination by the regional board the church has fulfilled the criteria for release from regional supervision, the regional executive director shall consult with and provide counsel to the pastor and advisory council concerning their preferred church-by-law model. When church bylaws have been approved by the secretary of the Association, signed by the pastor and members of the advisory council, and filed at the national office, the church shall be released from regional supervision and function under its approved bylaws and the provisions, procedures, and regulations of the Open Bible Manual.

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Effective date of implementation

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Regional Executive Director

# PASTORAL SELECTION AND TRANSITION GUIDELINES



**CHURCH BYLAWS  
REGIONALLY  
SUPERVISED CHURCHES**  
*Implemented by the  
regional board of directors*  
10/2022

## PROCEDURES

The regional board shall have authority to determine process and make all pastoral selection and transition decisions based on the individual circumstances and needs of a church under regional supervision.

### **A. Eligibility**

A lead pastor of an affiliated church must be a credentialed Open Bible minister in good standing with the Association.

### **B. Term of Office**

A pastor shall be initially appointed to a term of one to three years. A pastor in good standing shall be eligible for reappointment upon completion of a successful biennial review by the regional board. Although a pastor may be appointed for unlimited successive terms, no pastor may be appointed for an indefinite or life term.

### **C. Pastor Departure**

1. Prior to any announcement or release of information to the congregation, a lead pastor must give simultaneous, written notice at least thirty days in advance of resigning to the regional executive director and, if appointed, the advisory council.
2. A lead pastor shall honor the Ministerial Covenant of Ethics for departing pastors and the Pastoral Covenant of Relationship.
3. The regional board shall, in consultation with the advisory council if appointed, develop a reasonable severance package and appropriate farewell considerations for the departing pastor.