

Constitution & Bylaws

of Open Door Bible Church

Memphis, Tennessee

Revised 2019

ARTICLE ONE

The Name

The name of the church shall be The Open Door Bible Church of Memphis, Tennessee.

ARTICLE TWO

The Purpose

This church, under God's direction, is a body of professing Christians joined together for the purpose of divine worship, study of the Scriptures, proclamation of the gospel of the grace of God as the one means of salvation, and the building up of the Body of Christ through Christian fellowship. Our commitment individually and corporately is to be vital in prayer, devout in worship, informed in Scripture, aggressive in evangelism, close in fellowship, and zealous in missions.

ARTICLE THREE—The Doctrine

Section 1. The Holy Scriptures

We believe the Bible to be the verbally inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings. Such inspiration extends equally to all parts of both the Old and New Testament Scriptures. The Bible is the final authority in all matters about which it speaks, and is sufficient as our only infallible rule of faith and practice. (Matthew 5:18, John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21; 3:15-16)

Section 2. The Godhead

We believe in one God, the Creator and Preserver of all things, who is infinite in being and absolute in perfection. He exists in three equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

Section 3. The Person and Work of Christ

We believe that, eternally existing, God the Son became flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ. Undiminished deity and complete humanity were united in one sinless, virgin-born Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, forever. (Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 1:26-35; John 1:1-18; Colossians 1:15-18; Revelation 1:8)

We believe that God, by His sovereign choice and out of love for men, sent Christ into the world to save sinners. (Mark 10:45; Romans 5:8; Galatians 4:4-5)

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a perfect and God-satisfying substitutionary sacrifice. His bodily resurrection guaranteed the hope of eternal life for all who trust in His atoning work. We believe that Jesus ascended to the Father's right hand where He is Head of the Church and intercedes for believers. (Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:24-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3: 11-14; 1 Peter 2:24; Hebrew 3:1; 7:23-25; 1 John 2:1-2)

We believe in the personal, imminent return of Christ to establish His kingdom wherein He will rule and reign in righteousness.

Section 4. The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a person. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and draws men to personal faith in Christ. At salvation He imparts to the believer new life, baptizes him into the body of Christ, and permanently indwells him. The Holy Spirit bestows spiritual gifts, produces spiritual fruit, and enables the believer to walk in obedience to Christ. (John 14:16-17; 16:7-11; Romans 8:14-17; 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; 5:18)

Section 5. Man

We believe that man was created in the image of God, and therefore affirm the sanctity of human life, including the preborn and the infirm. Through Adam, sin entered the race. The consequences of this sin affect the entire human race. All human beings are sinners by nature, commit sinful acts, and are lost apart from the atoning work of Christ. (Genesis 3; Romans 3:9-23; 5:12-21; Ephesians 2:1-3)

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, believers to enjoy everlasting life with God and unbelievers to experience judgment and everlasting suffering apart from God. (Luke 16:19-31; John 3:36; 1 Corinthians 15:20-24, 35-44; Philippians 3:20-21; Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:13-15)

Section 6. Salvation

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Savior from sin and that all who personally trust in Him for salvation are declared righteous by God on the basis of His shed blood. This salvation is not the result of any human effort or merit; by grace God chooses us to be His own and brings us to saving faith. (John 1:12; 3:16, 36; Romans 4:5; 5:19; 1 Corinthians 15:1—4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:1—10)

We believe that a true believer is eternally secure, that he cannot lose his salvation, but that sin may interrupt the joy of his fellowship with God and bring the loving discipline of his heavenly Father. (John 10:27—30; Romans 8:1; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 1:12; 1 John 5:11-13)

We believe that it is the goal of every Christian to grow in spiritual maturity through obedience to the Word of God and the indwelling Holy Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; 1 John 3:7-10)

Section 7. Angels

We believe that God created angels as sinless spirit beings. Some have remained in that holy state and serve the Lord. Others rebelled against God and are fallen spirit beings, among whom is Satan (Isaiah 14:12-16; Ezekiel 28: 1-19; Matthew 25:41; John 8:44; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:14; 12:22; 1 Peter 5:8; Jude 6; Revelation 20:10)

Section 8. The Church

We believe that all in this present age who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit belong to the one true Church, the body of Christ. This Church is seen in the world through local assemblies of professing believers who are joined together for the purpose of glorifying God, edifying one another, and evangelizing the world. The local church is a theocratic organization served by elders and deacons. (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 12:13-14, 27; Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:24-30; 1 Timothy 2:1-8; 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 10: 23-25)

The two church ordinances are baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is a public testimony of conversion. Baptism by immersion shall be the customary practice of Open Door Bible Church. The Lord's Supper is a memorial symbolizing His death on our behalf. (Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

POSITIONAL STATEMENT

Intro

We recognize that there are certain issues over which godly and sincere Christians differ in their understanding of Scripture. In these instances, preserving the “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” is our highest aim.

The following position statements shall accurately reflect the convictions of every elder and member of the pastoral staff. Further, no member shall press, teach, or practice any contrary view so as to cause or threaten division in the church.

1. Spiritual Gifts

We believe that certain of the spiritual gifts were given for the express purpose of authenticating God’s Word. Gifts of healing, tongues, interpretation of tongues, miracles, and discerning of spirits were given to some very early in the Church’s history and contributed to the foundation upon which the Church is built. The absence of these gifts in the Church today in no way signals a lack of spirituality, but rather is traced to God’s sovereign purposes. (1 Corinthians 12:11–13; 13:8-12; 14:21-22)

2. Healing

We believe that God heals physically in accordance with His sovereign will and that such healing must never be demanded or expected based upon one’s degree of faith or position in Christ. Prayer for healing must be carried out in recognition of God’s purposes for good in permitting our suffering. (Job; Psalm 119:67,75; Romans 8:17-23; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Philippians 2:26-27; 3:20-21; 2 Timothy 4:20)

3. New Testament Signs and Wonders

We believe that New Testament miracles done by Christ and certain men who followed Him had a particular significance for that place and time. While God is quite able to work miracles in this present age, their absence is not an accurate indicator of sin or unbelief in the church. Miracles, signs, and wonders were never designed to produce faith. Rather, they always served to demonstrate, authenticate, and confirm the deity of Christ and the authority of His apostles. (Matthew 12:39; 16:4; John 20:29-31; Acts 14:2-3; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 11:1)

4. The End Times

We believe in the personal, imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the air to receive His Church, to be followed by the seven-year tribulation on earth which will culminate in the return of Christ to establish His millennial, earthly reign in fulfillment of the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants. The Church began at Pentecost and is distinct from Israel. (Daniel 9:24-27; John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:6; 2 Thessalonians 2; Revelation 3:10; 6:17; Ezekiel 20:33-38; Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:1-6)

5. The Atonement

We believe Christ died for all, the provision being unlimited in value and effective for those who trust Him. (2 Corinthians 5:19; 1 Timothy 4:10; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:2)

ARTICLE FOUR—Membership

Section 1. Qualifications for Membership

Any person shall be eligible for membership who gives clear witness of his acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior and his desire to live a consistent Christian life, subscribes to the doctrinal statement (Article 3) in its entirety, and pledges his willingness to abide by this constitution and to seek the unity and prosperity of the Church.

Section 2. Procedure for Membership

Prospective members shall be interviewed by representatives from the Board of Elders who will then make a recommendation to the full Board. Acceptance into membership shall require the unanimous approval of the full board.

Section 3. The Membership Rolls

Three types of membership rolls shall be maintained under the supervision of the board of elders:

- (1) Active Membership Roll
- (2) Associate Membership Roll
- (3) Inactive Membership Roll

Associated membership shall be available to those who maintain membership with another church but whose involvement with the church indicates that the people and affairs of the church are a part of their concerns, prayers, and activities. They shall have all the privileges of regular church membership except that of having voice or vote in the management or control of the church.

The inactive membership roll shall consist of any member who has failed to attend services of this church for at least six months and who has not given satisfactory explanations for such absence. A member being moved to the inactive roll will be notified by mail of this action. Inactive members will not be entitled to vote or enjoy other rights and privileges of church membership unless they are reinstated. They may be reinstated upon application to and approval by the Board of Elders.

Section 4. Discipline of Members

Discipline is the responsibility of the Board of Elders which may terminate the membership of any member for heretical doctrine or disorderly conduct which mars the testimony of the church. Such action shall only be taken after appropriate attempts to restore the erring individual in accordance with the biblical mandate of Matthew 18. Upon repentance, reinstatement shall take place upon application to and approval by the Board of Elders.

Section 5. Termination of Membership

The Board of Elders is empowered to remove any member from the roll of the church either upon that member's request, after they have been on the inactive member roll for at least six months, when the member has joined another church, upon death, or in the case of church discipline.

ARTICLE FIVE – The Government

Section 1. Final Authority

The ultimate authority for the operation of Open Door Bible Church resides in the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ. For purposes of carrying out our Lord's will in the life of the church, the voting membership shall have the responsibility of recognizing qualified men who shall serve in the offices of elder, deacon, and pastor. These officers, in turn, shall be responsible to involve the voting membership in major decisions affecting the church.

Section 2. Officers of the Church

The Board of Elders shall have the oversight in all matters relating to the church. The elders shall be men of mature spiritual experience, exemplary in their home, business, social, and personal lives in accordance with the biblical qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1—7 and Titus 1:5—9. Every elder shall subscribe without equivocation to the doctrinal and positional statements of this church. They shall be men of prayer, committed to the nurture, growth, and unity of the church family. The care of the spiritual interests of the church shall be the special responsibility of the elders, including the reception and dismissal of members, administration of the ordinances, overseeing all organizations and programs of the church, making provision for pulpit supply, exercising discipline, constituting the Trustees of the Corporation, representing the congregation in matters involving other organizations, guarding the reputation and teachings of the church, providing comfort and counsel to those with special needs, promoting missions at home and abroad, and being responsive to all other matters affecting the well-being of the church. In stated areas, the Board of Elders shall be responsible to involve the voting membership in the decision-making process. It shall have the authority to appoint individuals or committees for the transaction of its business.

The Board of Deacons shall be composed of men who are in good standing in the church and who live exemplary lives in accordance with 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:3. Their office and responsibilities are essentially spiritual in character and must be carried out in a spirit of prayer and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. To them shall be committed the business and financial interests of the church, including the receipt and disbursement of all funds, and the care of the physical plant and property of the church. The Board of Deacons shall provide care for needy members and friends of the church in special cases through the Benevolent Fund. They shall appoint and oversee the Church Treasurer who shall be himself a member of the Board of Deacons unless necessity dictates otherwise. The Board of Deacons shall have authority to appoint individuals or committees for the transaction of its business.

In matters relating to the acquisition and disposition of real estate or any interest therein, building programs or major modification of church property, and such other matters involving the work of both groups, the Board of Elders and the Board of Deacons shall meet in combined session. The Chairman of the Board of Elders shall preside and the Secretary of the Board of Deacons shall serve as secretary. Final decisions shall require the approval of the Board of Elders.

The Pastor shall have general oversight of the spiritual life of the church in conjunction with the Board of Elders. It shall be his duty to preach the Word in the regular services of the church and to administer the ordinances. The pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all other boards and committees, and shall have full voice with the other members of the official boards of the church. He shall live a consistent Christian life, ruling his own house well and having a good testimony among unbelievers. As a member of the Board of Elders, he shall meet all qualifications for that office.

Section 3. Appointment of Officers

We believe that holding office in the church is by

- (1) the calling of God by the Holy Spirit;
- (2) the conviction of the will of God on the part of the candidate;
- (3) the approval of the Board of Elders;
- (4) the concurrence of God's people.

The appointment of elders and deacons shall normally occur at the annual congregational meeting. The Board of Elders shall nominate those candidates deemed qualified to hold the office of elder or deacon. Recommendations from the congregation will be given full consideration. Any such recommendation should be made no later than two weeks prior to the congregational meeting. A simple majority vote of the eligible members present is required to confirm these appointments.

Elders and deacons shall serve for a period of three years. Those who have completed a full term shall not be eligible for reappointment to the same office until one year has elapsed. Vacancies may be filled as necessary at any called meeting using the regular guidelines for approval. Such appointments shall stand until the next annual meeting.

The appointment of pastor, associate pastor, or other ministerial staff shall be upon the recommendation of the Board of Elders and approval of the voting membership. A two-thirds majority of the voting members present at the duly called meeting shall be required for appointment.

As necessary, a pastoral search committee shall be formed to facilitate the securing of a pastor. This committee shall be composed of the Chairman of the Board of Elders, two additional elders of their choice, the Chairman of the Board of Deacons, one other deacon chosen by the Board of Deacons, and two others chosen by the eligible voting members present at a meeting called for this purpose. This committee shall continue unchanged, notwithstanding the expiration of the term of any member's office. The Pulpit Committee shall report to the Board of Elders, which in turn will present its recommendation to the congregation.

Section 4. Removal of Officers

When any officer, member of the pastoral stall, or employee of the church shall tender his resignation, the Board of Elders is empowered to receive it. In the case of an action to remove an elder or deacon, it shall be the responsibility of the Board of Elders to establish just cause and to dismiss the officer. A majority of the voting members at a called congregational meeting shall be required to confirm a recommendation by the Board of Elders to dismiss the pastor, associate pastor, or any member of the ministerial staff.

Section 5. Congregational Meetings

Meetings. The Annual Congregational Meeting shall be held within six weeks after the first day of each calendar year. The fiscal year of the church shall run concurrently with the calendar year. Special Congregational Meetings shall be called by the Board of Elders whenever they deem it necessary or when requested in writing by at least one fourth of the regular members of the church. The written request must state exactly the business of the meeting and must be in agreement with all rules pertaining to the government of this church in order to be binding.

Meeting Call. The call for a congregational meeting shall come from the Board of Elders. Regular members shall be notified by mail or by public announcement during the Sunday services for at least two weeks prior to the meeting. The proposed budget and candidates for office shall be provided to regular members at least two weeks prior to the Annual Congregational Meeting. In the case of a Special Meeting, no business shall be transacted except that stated in the call.

Voting. Voting shall be limited to regular members who are at least 16 years of age. Those members who are eligible to vote and are present in a properly called congregational meeting shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Congregational Matters. The congregation, when meeting as a body in a properly called business meeting and acting in accordance with the procedures outlined in these by-laws, shall have the responsibility of prayerfully discerning the mind of Christ with regard to

- (1) Selection of all elders,
- (2) Selection of all deacons,
- (3) Concurrence by majority vote of eligible members present with major elder decisions before they become effective.

The areas of business requiring congregational concurrence are the selection of paid ministerial staff, the dismissal of paid ministerial staff, the purchase of property, new building programs, commitments of ongoing missionary support, and the approval of the annual budget. All other business shall be carried out under the direction of the Board of Elders who may bring before the congregation any such matters they deem appropriate.

Section 6. Parliamentary Procedure

The Chairman of the Board of Elders shall preside as moderator of all congregational meetings. In his absence, the Board of Elders shall appoint one of their members to preside. The Secretary of the Board of Elders shall act as secretary for congregational meetings. In the transaction of business, congregationally or at the board level, *Robert's Rules of Order* shall be used in cases not covered by this constitution and by-laws.

ARTICLE SIX—Missions

Section 1. Our Commitment

We believe missions to be any endeavor to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, directed beyond the immediate influence of the local church, which directly or indirectly accomplishes the goal of evangelism, discipleship, and the establishment of local congregations. Our commitment is to participate in such activities, locally and around the world, as God provides.

Section 2. The Missions Committee

Under the authority of the Board of Elders, a Missions Committee shall oversee the promotion of mission efforts that are consistent with the goals and doctrine of Open Door Bible Church. It shall allocate funds to missions and other causes approved by the Board of Elders. Recommendations for regular support or termination of same shall be presented at a congregational meeting. The committee shall develop and maintain the missions policy of the church and a program designed to inform and challenge the church family toward involvement in missions.

This committee shall consist of the following members: the Pastor, a member of the Board of Elders appointed by the Elders, a member of the Board of Deacons appointed by the Deacons, and not fewer than three other church members appointed by the Elders. The term of service shall be three years, with reappointment available.

Section 3. Qualifications

Missionary agencies and individuals supported by Open Door Bible Church shall be in doctrinal agreement with the church. In cases of doctrinal disqualification, the Board of Elders shall act to terminate support.

ARTICLE SEVEN

Constitutional Amendments

Amendments may be made to the constitution and by-laws by a two-thirds vote at any regular or special congregational meeting, provided such amendments have been introduced and explained at a preceding congregational meeting. The regular membership shall be provided with a written copy of the proposed revision no less than two weeks prior to the vote.

ARTICLE EIGHT

Dissolution

No part of the net earnings of this corporation shall ever inure to the benefit of any donor, member, director, or officer of the corporation or any private individual; and no donor, member, director, or officer of the corporation or any private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any of the corporate assets. Upon dissolution, any assets of the corporation shall be distributed to the organizations being supported by the missionary program of the church at that time. The share of each organization shall be the same proportion that it receives of the total missionary budget of the church for that year. In the case of individuals being supported by the missionary program of the church, the proportional amount shall be paid to their mission boards provided that they qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), as the Board of Trustees shall determine.

ARTICLE NINE

Ordination

Since it is our hope that Spirit-filled men will be called by God from among us to proclaim the gospel of the grace of God, such men may be given a commission to preach and to administer the ordinances by an ordination council convened for this purpose. The council shall be composed of the Pastor and such members of the Board of Elders and guest examiners as the Board of Elders shall determine. The applicant shall be examined by the council concerning his understanding of and agreement with the doctrinal statement of this church, his scriptural qualifications and call to the ministry, and any other areas which the council may specify. Upon a favorable decision of the ordination council, the applicant shall be recommended for ordination. The time and form of the ordination ceremony shall be determined by the Board of Elders.

ARTICLE TEN

Statement on Marriage and Sexuality

In accordance with the teaching of the Scriptures, the testimony of the people of God down through history, and the practice of Open Door Bible Church since its inception, marriage is understood to be the lifelong commitment of one man and one woman under the care of our Triune God.

We believe sexual intimacy is a wonderful gift of God that is only to be expressed between one man and one woman (as genetically defined), within the love and bonds of marriage (Genesis 2:24-25; Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Corinthians 7:3-5; Hebrews 13:4). Therefore, we believe any other form of sexual intimacy is both immoral and a perversion of God's gift (Leviticus 18:1-30; Proverbs 6:32; 1 Corinthians 6:18; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8).

We believe that in order to preserve the function, unity, and biblical integrity of the church as a local Body of Christ and to provide a proper role model for church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons united to the church in membership, employed by the church in any capacity, or serving as volunteers should abide by and agree to this Statement on Marriage and Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly whether at church, home, or in the community.

No member of Open Door Bible Church will perform a ceremony of marriage that is in opposition to this Statement on Marriage and Sexuality. Neither shall the facilities of Open Door Bible Church be used to declare or celebrate such unions.

We affirm that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Romans 8). And we further affirm that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, and dignity at all times (1 Peter 2:13-25; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).
