

7-21-10

Dear Open Bible family –

I pray this letter finds you and your household blessed, challenged and overcoming through the grace and power of our Lord Jesus Christ! Due to the amount of information I have to pass on to you, let me dive right in ...

As I have been announcing in our services, our parent denomination – Open Bible Churches – has required all of its churches to rewrite and resubmit new organizational bylaws by the end of 2009. This has been done; however, these new bylaws must be ratified through a congregational vote by the end of 2010. We have scheduled our 2010 Annual Business Meeting for Sunday evening, September 12 at 6:30 p.m. You are receiving this packet because you are on our active list of members and therefore are entitled to attend and participate in this upcoming meeting. Any individuals who know that they have not been officially received into covenant membership, or are unsure of their status, may inquire of the church office at 319-363-3117. If you have transferred your membership elsewhere or wish to discontinue membership, please notify us as soon as possible. Because new members must be received at least 30 days prior to a meeting, we will be having a condensed membership training class on Sunday, August 8th, from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. at the church. Attendance at this meeting, followed by ratification by the board of elders that evening, will ensure that all qualified applicants are received into membership, prior to the 30 day deadline. To be a covenant member of the church you must be at least 18 years old, have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that is demonstrated through a godly lifestyle, and must have been in attendance for at least 6 months.

With this letter, you are also receiving a copy of our new bylaws which will be voted upon for ratification by our membership on September 12. I encourage you to read through these bylaws and if any questions arise, please feel free to contact me at our office. These bylaws will also be available on the church's website (www.firstopenbible.com) along with a separate document giving more detailed information about what we were (and what we were not) allowed to change in our bylaws due to national and state law. For those of you who desire more information regarding the process we followed in creating these bylaws, this second document will give you all the information you want (and more)!

At our September 12 meeting, we will be voting “yes” or “no” to these bylaws as a whole. We will not be scrutinizing them, line by line, for obvious reasons. Any questions you may have regarding smaller details in this document that can be answered by us before the meeting will greatly streamline our time together that evening. Along with the bylaw ratification, we will be presenting a fiscal year financial overview of the church and also covering any agenda items preselected by our elders. Our finalized agenda will be made known to you, approximately, one month prior to the meeting.

Now that the “official” information has been given to you, please let me close this letter by sharing from my heart. To be honest with you, I have never been a fan of church business meetings. This is not because we have anything to hide or are reluctant to share important information with our people. It’s because I have heard so many stories of how business meetings harm the unity of a church, instead of help it. Paul writes in Eph 4:3 – “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” In many churches, the annual business meeting becomes a place to air personal agendas in attitudes that are decidedly un-Christ-like. As leaders, we cannot allow this to happen. We will “make every effort” to insure that this meeting (and all future meetings) move our church forward in a spirit of love, unity and respect. We are not opposed to disagreement. Just disagreeing disagreeably!

In order to safeguard the unity of the Spirit and to set the tone for future meetings (which will be held annually per the new bylaws), we will hold strictly to the posted agenda and limit discussion and participation to those areas, alone. We have always maintained an “open door” policy and any other questions and concerns people may have will be gladly heard and responded to on an individual basis.

Thank you for your cooperation and participation in this endeavor. Bylaws are not the most exciting thing in the Kingdom! However, they will ensure the stability and security of our church for many years to come. Please, take the time to read these bylaws, do further research at our website as you deem helpful and come to our meeting on September 12 filled with prayer, expectation and that sense of ownership that comes with the title of Covenant Member of First Church of the Open Bible.

With Love,

Pastor Dan