

## **A Covenant between The Governing Board of Elders of Church of the Open Door and Dave Johnson**

### **Spirit**

As Pastor Dave Johnson transitions out of the leadership role at Church of the Open Door, he has consistently spoken about his firm understanding and knowledge of the Elders love, respect and posture of being for he and Bonnie. At the same time, the Elders hold responsibility of best practice and intentional decision making for Church of the Open Door. Thoughtful of this, Pastor Dave Johnson has noted multiple times that he is not “fighting” for personal outcomes. In all of the above, Pastor Dave, the Elders, staff and the body of Church of the Open Door have expressed a strong desire and leading regarding the importance of Pastor Dave Johnson and Bonnie to remain tethered to Church of the Open Door community in their new season of ministry.

This covenant is one of prayerful dependence on God’s Spirit to lead in the work of maintaining unity and seeking the best for the body of believers at Church of the Open Door. Desiring Pastor Dave Johnson’s journey of ministry to be an extension of Church of the Open Door requires all parties to recognize the challenge this dynamic presents for a new leader when a long-tenured and influential pastor leaves the role but remains physically present in and around the church.

While the following covenant outlines some healthy relational and professional boundaries between Pastor Dave Johnson and Church of the Open Door for the future, the church and its leadership clearly states a wholehearted desire to bless, affirm, and send Pastor Dave Johnson and Bonnie into the next season of their ministry. With certainty, Church of the Open Door trusts God’s call on Pastor Dave as he continues to impact the Church and kingdom of God.

Church of the Open Door embraces God’s continued leading and guiding of our next steps knowing that He is faithful in all the challenges that may unfold. Together, Church of the Open Door and Pastor Dave Johnson and Bonnie, covenant in seeking the good for one another, discerning well and pursuing God’s best for Church of the Open Door as well as those God allows us all the grace and opportunity to connect with for His sake. Our expectations are high that God will fill, purify, humble, and lead us as these guidelines, not begrudging constraints, will be experienced as pathways of joyful freedom and meaningful connectedness.

## **Covenant**

By calling the relationship between Church of the Open Door and Pastor Dave Johnson a *covenant*, it is distinguished from a legal contract or employment agreement. This covenant is a mutual agreement of what seems wise and fruitful for both parties. It is an expression of promises to guide the relationship until death intervenes, the specified timeframe lapses, or communal agreement replaces the document. The covenant is not a job description, but a relational roadmap guiding mutual expectations and commitments between Pastor Dave and Bonnie Johnson and Church of the Open Door.

## **Title**

Pastor Emeritus confers an honorary title to Pastor Dave Johnson with gratitude for his 38 years of faithful service at Church of the Open Door. The Elders recognize that this longevity is rare in church ministry and understand that as Pastor Dave Johnson enters a new season in his relationship with this church, there will need to be some new language and new understandings of how both he and the church will function. The Elders believe that this title conveys respect and honor while also noting the change in leadership function and status.

The Elders are thankful to God for his faithfulness to and through Pastor Dave Johnson while at Church of the Open Door. We also appreciate the opportunity to walk a new path with Pastor Dave Johnson and Bonnie.

## **Rationale**

This covenant seems wise because, when a long-tenured pastor remains in a congregation after the succession of a new leader, the potential for both *good* and *ill* arises. The *good* includes the blessing of his lay service to the leadership and community in various ways as well as the significant opportunity for counsel, insight and investment into the next generation of leadership - as God leads and as the new leadership seeks out. The *ill* is the possible curse of his intrusiveness in ways that undermine the new leadership of the church and risking members of the congregation remaining overly connected to Pastor Dave Johnson and his teaching.

Maximizing the hope for the former and minimizing the risk of the latter is one purpose of this covenant. Church of the Open Door expects a mutually beneficial and life-giving relationship with Pastor Dave Johnson and Bonnie. All parties recognize the significance of this covenant and acknowledge that Church of the Open Door is Pastor Dave Johnson and Bonnie's home church. The Elders and church body are willing to walk into potential risk and unknown factors while trusting God and pursuing His best for all through this covenant.

Discussing what it means for Pastor Dave Johnson to be tethered to Church of the Open Door, the Elders find it reflected in this covenant. A mutuality is evident in how God has spoken to and through Pastor Dave Johnson, how his life, ministry and teaching have shaped this church and how Pastor Dave Johnson has been formed by God and the people of Church of the Open Door. The Elders view Pastor Dave Johnson's new ministry as a way of turning our faces outward and giving with open hands some of the best we have, as a church, for the sake of others. Leadership knows there is significance for Pastor Dave Johnson and Church of the Open Door to continue in

relationship for the benefit of God's kingdom as well as for each others encouragement and formation.

### **Timeframe(s)**

This covenant will be reaffirmed or revised annually, by the mutual agreement of both parties. As we all are unable to foresee all the various and possible changes and developments that may occur over the years, it is necessary and wise to reevaluate this agreement annually.

While affirming our desire for Pastor Dave Johnson and Bonnie to stay tethered to Church of the Open Door in meaningful ways in the future, the present expectation of the Elders is that they will not be normally attending Sunday morning services at Church of the Open Door. We see this as a way of creating space for both Pastor Dave Johnson and the body of the church as a path to experience and live out church without Pastor Dave Johnson's guidance.

The Elders commit to revisiting this topic of attending services and participating in the life of this body with Pastor Dave Johnson in early 2019. This plan allows flexibility in discerning a way forward with Pastor Dave Johnson and Bonnie. In the early stages, these regular check points provide opportunity for continued discernment within community.

When a new lead pastor begins, the Governing Board of Elders will re-engage with Pastor Dave Johnson to define specifics regarding the period of his absence from Church of the Open Door. At a discerned point beyond that beginning season for the new pastor, the Elders will communicate an invitation to Pastor Dave Johnson in regards to re-entering the community of Church of the Open Door.

After Pastor Dave Johnson steps down from leadership at Church of the Open Door, the Elders expectation is for his involvement performing weddings, commissionings or leading any event/group is through Elder approval. As previously discussed, Pastor Dave Johnson will teach in the Center for Spiritual Formation cohort meetings January and February 2019. Both before and after the new lead pastor is in place and a period of absence has been defined, any requests for Pastor Dave Johnson's participation in something related to Open Door, or his requests to engage in certain events may be directed to the Governing Board of Elders.

### **Covenant Agreements**

The Elders agree that Pastor Dave Johnson and Bonnie will remain members of Church of the Open Door and will fulfill the expectations of the membership agreement that apply to all members in good standing. We agree that Church of the Open Door will provide pastoral care and accountability for Pastor Dave Johnson and Bonnie as well as fulfill the expectations of the membership agreement with respect to any member.

The Governing Board of Elders of Church of the Open Door agrees to support Pastor Dave Johnson's new ministry financially at a decided amount for the next five years. This financial support is in recognition of Pastor Dave Johnson's calling to take what God has given him (and Church of the Open Door) to new audiences and is an affirmation of God's leading Pastor Dave Johnson in this new ministry role. The financial support is also an expression of gratitude for

Pastor Dave Johnson's many years of dedicated service and his pastoral and prophetic leading of this body of believers.

The opportunities for Pastor Dave Johnson to teach in the Center for Spiritual Formation at Church of the Open Door or to preach or conduct weddings or funerals or fulfill other church roles will be discussed and discerned between Pastor Dave Johnson and the leadership of Church of the Open Door. Those opportunities that are accepted will not be additionally compensated beyond the annual support for Pastor Dave Johnson's ministry that is already provided.

It should also be clear that Pastor Dave Johnson's availability for performing pastoral duties, such as weddings, funerals, counseling, baptisms, and visitation should not be assumed by any person or groups of people. For Pastor Dave Johnson's sake, and for the sake of the integrity of the pastoral leadership of the church, the starting point will be to assume that Pastor Dave Johnson is not available for these roles. Any requests for exceptions should be directed to the Governing Board of Elders as they arise by emailing [governingboard@thedor.org](mailto:governingboard@thedor.org).

The Elders agree that the familiar and affectionate title, "Pastor Dave," by which thousands of people, both here in the Twin Cities and around the country and beyond, have come to call Pastor Dave Johnson, is warranted by the title "Pastor Emeritus." "Pastor Dave" does not signify occupancy of an official pastoral staff position at Church of the Open Door.

The Elders agree that Pastor Dave Johnson will not exercise an official pastoral role or an official role as a member of the Governing Board of Elders. As with any other member in good standing, he may be sought out for input and service, as the leaders deem wise, but Pastor Dave Johnson will not insert or offer his voice into pastoral or elder discussions without invitation.

At the point of Pastor Dave Johnson's invitation to return in normal attendance at Church of the Open Door, the Elders will partner with him in determining what being a member of this body is as a former leader. The Elders desire Pastor Dave Johnson to be able to participate in the life of the church body and operate as a member in good standing. The fact that Pastor Dave Johnson led the church for 38 years means he is not an ordinary member which brings us to a place of asking the Spirit to guide us all in navigating this reintegration into the life of Church of the Open Door. The Elders are aware of and cautious around the wisdom of preserving the ordinary governance processes of the church from any restraints or influences people may feel because of Pastor Dave Johnson's presence.

As a sent one and member of the body, the Elders expect that Pastor Dave Johnson will communicate (in all ways) unreserved support/affirmation of the leadership (including the new lead pastor). While Pastor Dave Johnson is a member of the congregation, his leadership and influence weigh significantly on this body and this merits an additional point of conversation here. With an understanding that his influence and impact will continue to hold significance in this church, the Elders ask Pastor Dave Johnson to operate at an even higher level of expectation (than generally expected of members) with regard to affirming the leadership decisions/direction and to not question or dispute publically (whether in a large group or even with 1-2 people). If there is a significant concern that Pastor Dave Johnson desires to address, he will be able to

communicate with the Governing Board of Elders. The Elders specifically ask Pastor Dave Johnson not to take any church concerns or frustrations elsewhere in the body.

The Elders agree that Pastor Dave Johnson will not accept speaking opportunities in church-sponsored gatherings such as small groups, classes, special events, retreats, etc. without invitation and approval from the Governing Board of Elders. We will formalize the specifics of Pastor Dave Johnson's connection to the Center for Spiritual Formation in the next iteration of this document.

The Elders agree that in Pastor Dave Johnson's travels and wider speaking, he will not be an *official* voice of Church of the Open Door. During his days as Senior Pastor and Lead Teaching Pastor, this was the expectation: he represented the church *officially*. This role now belongs to the official leaders of the church. As with any other member, the leadership of the church can bless and send Pastor Dave Johnson on any mission that he and they agree on. As a member of Church of the Open Door, Pastor Dave Johnson will be a representative of the church and an extension of the ministry of the church. Pastor Dave Johnson will be expected to use his words in a way that advances the mission and vision of Church of the Open Door and affirm the directions and decisions of the official church leadership.

The Elders agree that Pastor Dave Johnson's intended next steps and ministry focus are vitally connected to the DNA of Church of the Open Door. We affirm this emphasis on spiritual formation, soul care for pastors and seeking avenues to help pastors remain in ministry for the long haul as well as an investment into the larger community of worldwide believers (the church universal) that reflects our heart and desire. Pastor Dave Johnson's passion and intended focus on presenting and pursuing an emphasis on the incarnational model of the church and the investment in and development of the next generation are all pursuits that the Elders and Church of the Open Door affirm and bless without reservation.

The Elders agree that we will revisit these agreements annually with a view of preserving the bond of relationship maintaining unity and seeking the best for the body of believers at Church of the Open Door. We recognize this journey is part of our desire to enter into the struggle of becoming fully alive in God and trust that He will lead us all in our thoughts, decisions and actions.