



# THREE STEPS TO A MORE EFFECTIVE ANNUAL CHURCH BUSINESS MEETING

HOW TO DO MORE THAN JUST SURVIVE THE  
ANNUAL CHURCH BUSINESS MEETING



# INTRODUCTION

A few weeks before churches across America conduct their annual church business meetings, you can almost hear the groaning and sense the dread.

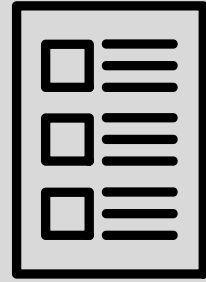
Often, pastors look at the annual meeting with fear and trembling, viewing it as something to be survived, to be endured. They pray to walk through the waters and not drown and through the fire and not be burned!



But, is there a way to prepare for a church business meeting that takes out the dread and may even turn the meeting into a positive for the pastor and church?

**Here are just a few ideas to help pastors and churches do more than just survive the annual meeting.**

## BE PREPARED BY REVIEWING THE CHURCH'S BYLAWS



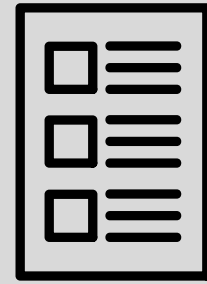
An important key to taking the dread out of the meeting is to be prepared for what might lie ahead. As an attorney, I face questions from judges and objections from other attorneys in court all the time.

The best way I've found to reduce anxiety is to anticipate what may come up and be prepared with answers. Of course, a pastor can't anticipate every turn an annual meeting might take, but he can prepare in a way that reduces anxiety and enables him to lead the meeting effectively.

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You may have to send out a search and rescue team to find the bylaws as most churches seem to hide their bylaws in a glass case that can only be broken in case of emergency. But the church's bylaws contain important information that the pastor needs to know before the meeting.

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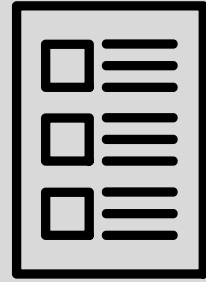
Here's what you need to look for:

## ***Notice Requirements***

A church's bylaws should prescribe the notice required for the meeting, as well as the method of notice required. For example, many churches require that the members be notified of the meeting at least fourteen days before through electronic mail or first-class mail. Others require that the meeting be announced in the church's worship services for two weeks immediately prior to the meeting.

What's most important is that the pastor is prepared by knowing what notice requirement is in his church's bylaws and, then, follow that requirement so that the meeting can be duly called and noticed.

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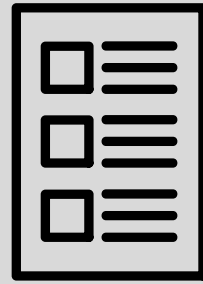
## Quorum Requirements

For the actions taken in the meeting to be binding, the required number of members must be present for business to be conducted.

The church's bylaws should prescribe what percentage of members must be present for the church to conduct business; however, the current trend is to prescribe that the members present constitute a quorum so long as the meeting was properly called and noticed.

**Churches with a percentage requirement should update their membership lists before the meeting to compare the list of those present to the membership list, determining whether the percentage has been obtained.**

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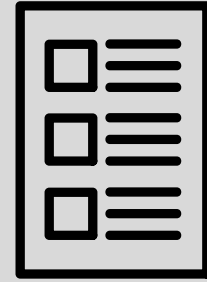
## ***Voting Requirements***

The bylaws may require that the church vote on officers, directors, amendments to the constitution and bylaws, sale of property, and any other number of issues at an annual meeting. Often, the percentage required for election, adoption, or approval varies based on the issue at hand; for example, an election may only require a simple majority, while the sale of property may require a two-thirds majority of members present and voting.

**To avoid running into trouble at the meeting, a wise pastor reviews and knows what percentage is required for the various votes before the meeting.**

In addition, the pastor should review the bylaws to determine whether proxy votes (allowing one person to vote on behalf of another) or absentee votes, allowing members to vote without being present are permitted. Finally, the pastor needs to know how votes must be conducted. Do the bylaws require a voice vote or a secret ballot?

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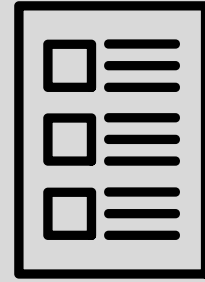


## ***Order of Business Requirements***

Often, bylaws prescribe the order of business for the annual meeting. If it does not, many churches follow an agenda similar to the one below:

- (1) Opening Prayer Devotion
- (2) Determination of Quorum
- (3) Minutes of Last Meeting
- (4) Pastor's Report
- (5) Financial Report
- (6) Elections
- (7) Previous Business
- (8) New Business
- (9) Question and Answer
- (10) Adjournment and Closing Prayer

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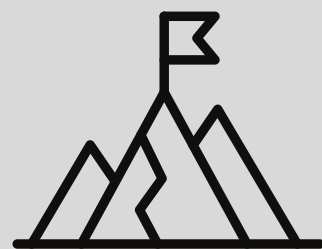


## ***Parliamentary Procedure Requirements***

To help guide the meeting the bylaws may provide that the church follow a certain guide for parliamentary procedure. The most often used resource is Robert's Rules of Order, and, while a pastor does not need to be a certified parliamentarian, it is important for him to have a working knowledge of the rules to effectively chair the meeting.



# SET THE ATMOSPHERE FOR THE MEETING



The annual meeting can simply be a business meeting or it can be an opportunity to move forward the church's vision; in fact, many churches refer to the annual meeting as the Annual Vision Meeting.

## ***Spiritual Atmosphere***



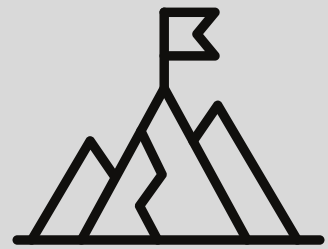
While the annual meeting often does fulfill a church's corporate requirement for an annual meeting of its members, it also has a spiritual component. That spiritual atmosphere is set by the worship songs that are sung to start the meeting, as well as the opening prayer and devotion. Again, this isn't a service, but taking ten to fifteen minutes to set a spiritual atmosphere is important to conduct a church's business.

## ***Strategic Atmosphere***



During the Pastor's Report, the question and answer session, and at other key points in the meeting, the pastor has the opportunity to...

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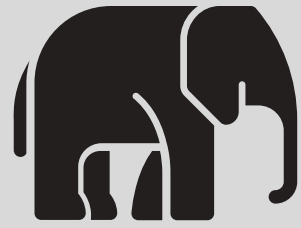
describe where the church has been, is now, and where it's going. This is simply another opportunity to share the church's vision and invite people on the journey.

## ***Professional Atmosphere***



When agendas, reports, and other pertinent information is printed well and provided to members and when the meeting is run with a positive tone and according to the agenda and rules, the church creates a professional atmosphere that inspires trust in the church's leadership. Of course, the opposite is true, sloppiness ruins credibility.

# DON'T AVOID THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM



Too often, if the attendance is down or the finances are off, a pastor may be tempted to shy away from disappointing information; however, avoiding an elephant never makes her go away. Instead, the leadership should bring the issue out into the surface, explaining what happened, why it happened, and how the church is going to move forward.

If you're a pastor preparing for your annual business meeting, hopefully these ideas can help take some of the dread out of it.

***If you have questions or if your church needs  
legal assistance, you can contact  
Reynolds Law Group, PLLC  
at 757.219.2500  
or  
online at [www.reynoldslawgroup.com](http://www.reynoldslawgroup.com).***

# GLENN S. REYNOLDS, D.MIN, J.D.



Glenn S. Reynolds earned his Juris Doctor from Regent University School of Law, graduating as a member of the Honors Program. In addition to his JD, Glenn earned a Doctor of Ministry in Redemptive Leadership and Organizational Development from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, where he also graduated with Honors.

Glenn's vision for the Reynolds Law Group is to come along side clients, particularly churches and non-profit organizations, to help them solve problems and protect dreams. He views the practice of law as a calling that demands effective and ethical lawyers who serve clients and society.

Before founding Reynolds Law Group and Reynolds Leadership Group, Glenn served as the lead pastor of a church plant that grew from fifteen to over 600 people, as well as the tenth pastor of a church that grew from 1,500 to over 2,500 during his tenure.

Glenn and his wife Amberly have been married for nearly thirty years and have three incredible children, ranging from high school through college to married. Glenn roots hard for the Kentucky Wildcats in basketball, the Baltimore Orioles in baseball, and the Iowa Hawkeyes in football.



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