



Pillar Church of Dumfries
ELDER ETHOS

WE VALUE BOLD FAITH

All of the best things that have happened at our church have happened as a result of bold steps of faith. When we have known what God wanted us to do, no matter how crazy it seemed, we have been willing to attempt it. This kind of boldness is harder and harder to justify as the church gets larger and the assets we steward are greater. Even so we want to be intentional not to fall into a mentality that sees protection of the resources God has provided in the past as our primary responsibility. In other words, we see true wisdom as fierce obedience to the word and spirit of God.

WE VALUE MULTIPLICATION OVER GROWTH

Sometimes leading Pillar Church feels more like leading a small mission agency than it does leading a church, but we wouldn't have it any other way. We have a finite amount of assets and resources at our disposal. As elders, we have the responsibility to allocate those resources for the glory of God in our community and in the world. Pillar Church's leaders have chosen from our earliest days to place a greater priority on multiplication than we have on growth. We dedicate an unusually high portion of our resources to the multiplication of churches and the development of new kingdom leaders. This stretches but is not limited to the time of our pastors and elders, the money in our bank account, the leveraging of our assets, and the energy of our people.

WE VALUE PEOPLE OVER PROJECTS

It is tempting to view people as resources and to organize them for maximum progress. We have made the decision to value the people of our body, particularly those who go out on mission for us, over the work they accomplish in the name our church. This value manifests itself in many different ways but primarily means that we are never too busy to stop and help a brother or sister in need. Often those who are most negatively affected by ministry efforts are the people that lead them. They receive the rebuke and criticism that comes with leadership, they have unrealistic and unbiblical expectations placed upon them, and they face relentless satanic attack. We seek to interact with one another like members of a loving family, and not employees at a fortune 500 company.

WE VALUE VISIBLE PLURALITY

The simplest and most accurate answer to the question, "Who is the pastor at Pillar Church?" is... The church's elders pastor the church. Every member of the elder team at Pillar Church has been entrusted with the responsibility of leading the church. The "Pastor" who preaches on Sunday has no more authority in the church than the "Elder" who was just appointed to the role. Because this is pretty uncommon among American churches, we want to work hard to make sure the congregation understands who elders are and what responsibility they have. Elders should seek to influence the congregation far more than exercising authority over it. In accordance with God's instruction not to domineer over the flock but to be examples (1 Peter 5:3), we should seek together to lead the church with humility, kindness, and forbearance.

WE VALUE CONSENSUS AND DEFERENCE

Unfortunately, churches in our society are not known for their unity. We think this grieves God, particularly in a culture so divided and contentious. Our harmony with one another is a display of the power of the gospel. In Pillar Church's first elder meeting in April of 2008 we made, what may be the church's most important decision, not to move ahead on any matter without consensus. We haven't always agreed on every matter, but we have remained committed to deferring to one another, fighting for unity, not fighting with each other. We should always be "mutually submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21). This practice has resulted in some very long meetings and many tabled decisions, but the positive effects of working for consensus can be felt on every level of our congregation. We don't expect that every leader will agree on every matter but that some leaders will feel strongly about some matters. When those occasions occur, we assume that God is using the team of elders to protect our congregation. In other words, we trust the determination of the group more than we do the determination of any one individual. "Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed." (Proverbs 15:22)

WE VALUE CONGREGATIONAL TRUST

Up until this point our congregation has exhibited an unusually high level of trust with our leaders. The congregation has followed our elders through some difficult leadership challenges and have remained unified and supportive throughout the process. We believe this unity is a gift from God and a result of the congregation's confidence in the character of our elders. To maintain this level of trust with our congregation we must remain committed to living exemplary lives before them both in our leadership and our conduct. Therefore, it is essential that when we struggle with sin, feel ourselves growing restless or frustrated that we share these concerns with one another and seek counsel about the wisdom of our continued service. Elders at Pillar Church should seek to have "relational equity" with the congregation so that in those rare times when we are to take decisive action or exercise authority we are not doing so simply as an impersonal body of leaders but as friends and family.