

A concise summary of crucial church principles

Note: there is no space here for references and exposition, I have done that in many other papers, which can be consulted for more information.

Leadership

- Is by a team of equal elders (parity and plurality).
- There is no single leading elder or senior minister. No such terms exist in scripture.
- Deacons manage practical affairs to deal chiefly with caring for the poor and needy. They have no spiritual authority.
- Leaders don't dominate but lead by example, teaching and counsel - like fathers.
- Strategic decisions are made by consensus of all.

Church buildings

Do not exist; it is a sin to waste God's money on such things. Furthermore, they work against the principles of the church to be a family of interdependent, mutual ministries.

Ministry

- The Sunday gathered assembly is an opportunity for *koinonia* (fellowship) where all can participate under God's sovereignty and the Spirit's direction. It is the job of pastors to ensure that this is orderly.
- Teachers (who are also pastors) have an important ministry. Without teaching the church will suffer greatly since the job of the church is to ensure that members are equipped to serve, and this is done by teaching. Teaching is so important that, if necessary, a separate night ought to be used for ministry. Teaching should also take place in homes where people can be catechised and matured in doctrinal thinking.
- Teaching always involves discussion, dialogue and questioning.
- Sermons are especially the way the Gospel is preached to outsiders in the NT. Within the church the emphasis is upon dialogue, encouragement and participation.
- The word of God undergirds all teaching ministry. There is no place for drama, dancing, slide-shows, light shows, media presentations or worldly entertainment.
- Women are not allowed to teach or have authority over men.
- Giving of money is chiefly for the poor and needy; first in the body but then also to neighbours.
- Full-time leaders are the exception. Money is only given to those who have an itinerant ministry and cannot work, or to local elders who would otherwise be overwhelmed; however, in a team of equal elders such cases are rare. There are no salaries, but only freewill gifts by members in response to God. Leaders must live by faith.
- Evangelism is done naturally by members through their personal contacts.

Meetings

- The central place is the Lord's Supper. This is the reason why the church meets. It must be conducted with all reverence and opportunity for prayer, worship, and thanksgiving.
- A communal meal may precede the Supper, but is distinguished from the Supper.
- As well as the Supper there are: prayer, singing, scripture reading, sharing, exhortation, encouragements and admonishing, in the exercise of those ministry gifts that God has given to members. The church functions like a family.
- There is no mention in the NT of musical instruments in the church.
- There is no place for disorderly behaviour of any sort.

Scripture quotations are from The New King James Version
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