

Hillcrest Baptist Church

Reaching and Serving with the Love and Compassion of Christ



April 26, 2010

Greetings, Hillcrest Family!

I've been with you as your pastor for just over two years and I thought it might be a good idea to share with you some things that have been on my heart.

I realize that, in the past, you've gone out of your way to reach our neighborhood. I would like to commend you for your efforts! After hearing about some of the things you've done and the exuberance with which you've done them, I know that your heart is in reaching people for Christ. I also know that you've met with some discouragement and frustration along the way. It would seem that the neighborhood immediately around our church has not been receptive to the outreach efforts of Hillcrest Baptist Church, and they clearly have not been receptive to the gospel. I've sensed that the prevailing attitude has become, "Well, we've tried everything we know of to reach these folks. Maybe it's time to take a break." I can't blame you for that. Even Jesus took time to rest from ministry. That said, I feel that we still need to reach out to our neighborhood. In fact, I think we have an obligation to reach our neighborhood.

The Bible says in Galatians 6:9, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." We can, and should, take a break, regroup, and forge ahead with renewed energy and a new direction. That's what I'm suggesting in the following proposal. I've spent time praying and seeking God's direction for Hillcrest Baptist Church, and I know you have as well. As your pastor, I sense our Lord saying, "Now is the time to move ahead in a different direction." What follows is the result of my quiet time with God and what I sense God is leading us to do in the immediate future. I ask you to read this with an open mind and a prayerful heart.

1. Discontinue everything we are doing with the exception of Sunday morning worship for up to one year. Here's why: We are trying to be a full service church without adequate resources. All we do should be done with excellence. After all, we are here to bring glory to God! Our focus for this year would be twofold. Our first priority would be "perfecting" our Sunday morning worship experience so that we truly honor God with a heart of worship. Second, we would spend time reevaluating who we are, where we are going, and how we are going to get there.

2. Revise our structure to become an elder-led church. Here's why: It's biblical! My proposal would include immediately appointing Duane Caldwell as an elder since he has already been ordained as such. Duane and I would then prayerfully consider appointing up to 3 more men to serve as elders. As with our deacons, we would bring these men before the congregation for affirmation.
3. Rewrite the constitution and bylaws to reflect our new structure. Here's why: Our constitution and bylaws legally represent how we operate. Though we often do, we cannot legally make up the rules as we go along. It also serves to afford us legal protections against individuals who might want to challenge our method of operation and cause disruption in the body. Our current constitution and bylaws afford us no substantial legal protections.
4. Discontinue the current church council. Here's why: Elders are the primary decision makers in the church. As such, it is incumbent upon the elders to solicit input from the congregation at large as they pray and seek God's will and direction for the church. In the early stages of our restructure, seeking congregational input is a simple task because we are small. Church growth would necessitate a more streamlined approach leading to the development of a Leadership Team consisting of trained ministry leaders.
5. Provide leadership training. Here's why: In order to function properly, ministries require trained leaders. No ministries, including small groups outside of the church, would be started without appropriate leadership training. Additionally, in order to assure leadership accountability, no ministries would be started without an application to begin a new ministry and subsequent approval by the elders. All approved ministries would move us toward fulfilling the mission of Hillcrest Baptist Church.
6. Change our name. Here's why: A new name would afford us the opportunity to begin anew and create a new image thereby allowing us to make a positive impact on our community.

These are the main points of my proposal. I know it's a rather radical approach, but this is what I've come up with as I've prayed about how to lead Hillcrest Baptist Church. As you can see, I'm asking that we start over. Our average attendance hovers around 30 on any given Sunday. Realistically, that's less than the number of attendees found in most church plants preparing to launch their first public worship service.

I'm asking you to pray about this proposal for two weeks. At the end of the two week period we will spend our normal Sunday morning worship time discussing this proposal. I am excited about what God **can and will** do through Hillcrest Baptist Church!

In His Grip!

Pastor Carl