

# "The Fleecing of the Flock"



## **I-Team: Pastor's salary set by board, not congregation**

October 23, 2013

CHARLOTTE, N.C. -- Pastor Steven Furtick made generous giving a cornerstone at Elevation Church, recently passing \$10 million in giving to outside groups since the church's founding eight years ago. But Furtick will not talk about his own compensation.

When NBC Charlotte started asking about it, he mentioned me in one of his sermons. "There's an investigative reporter," Furtick said during a sermon September 29. "He's been calling around and people have been calling us."

Furtick and his lieutenants refuse to tell the people who pay his salary, the congregation at Elevation Church, just how much he makes.

"We don't know," said Warren Cole Smith, who writes books about the evangelical church from his home in Charlotte, "and the reason we don't know is because they won't say. The real problem is there's a lack of

transparency.”

Furtick recruited a so-called “board of overseers” to set his salary. The board is made up entirely of other megachurch pastors, just like him. Smith said to him, the board looks like a paper tiger. “The financial well being of those guys are intimately intertwined.”

That means Furtick agrees to pay them to preach at Elevation, and they pay him to preach at their conferences or megachurches. “They attend each other’s conferences and are compensation for that regularly,” said Smith. When Furtick held his Code Orange Revival last year, three of the headliners, pastors Stovall Weems of Jacksonville, Fla., Perry Noble of Anderson, S.C., and Kevin Gerald of Seattle, were all board members at Elevation. Those are three of the five votes that set Furtick’s salary.

Executive pastor James “Chunks” Corbett told NBC Charlotte that pastors get paid for appearances at Elevation Church, but said the pay is “small in scope,” and he won’t disclose the amounts.

“These guys scratch each others’ backs. That’s not accountability.” said Chris Rosebrough, who runs a podcast called Pirate Christian Radio from his home near Indianapolis and is a critic of Furtick. “All of the accountability in Steven Furtick’s church goes from the top down.”

Elevation Church was founded by, got loans through, and gives missionary money through Southern Baptists. But unlike many Baptist churches, there are no elected deacons or elders here overseeing the church.

There is one man living in the Charlotte area who runs Elevation: Chunks Corbett. If you want to understand Elevation you have to understand his role. As executive pastor, Corbett is at the center of Furtick’s organization. In 2005 he incorporated Elevation Church. In 2007, he incorporated Corban Properties Southeast - a for-profit company. In 2008, he signed on as trustee for the Jumper Drive Trust that owns the Furtick’s home. And in 2009, he incorporated Sun Stand Still Ministries - another non-profit. All four list the same principal address: 11416 East Independence, Suite N, the location of the Matthews church.

Corbett declined to speak on camera to NBC Charlotte, but spent 90 minutes with me. He praises Furtick for his generosity with the church, but he refuses to release the church's audited financial statement or its bylaws.

That's in stark contrast to another local megachurch, Forest Hill, which spells out how it's elders are elected right on its website. "We then screen them, we interview them, look at their experience here in the church and their commitment to Christ," said Steve Brown, the church's financial committee chairman, who also releases the church's audited financial statement. "We want people to see exactly what this congregation is giving."

Many other evangelical groups, like the Billy Graham Evangelical Association and Samaritan's Purse, release their tax returns by law. So if you give, you might not completely approve of what Franklin Graham gets paid, but at least you know, and you get a say. The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina puts a salary chart right on its website. You can look up what Baptist preachers get paid depending on the size of their congregations.

The highest pay here for churches over a thousand members is \$231,000 per year. But megachurches like Elevation are in a category all their own. They hire compensation consultants to look at other megachurches. And no one is releasing those numbers.

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(Courtesy of: [jaxwatchdog.blogspot.com](http://jaxwatchdog.blogspot.com))

Last night Stuart Watson's 2nd installment of his investigation into the Elevation Church and Steven Furtick's finances - and Furtick's new \$1.7M, 16,000 square foot mansion on 19 acres - [aired on WCNC in Charlotte](#).

And there is a Jacksonville connection to this very hot story that has Steven

Furtick's finances under a microscope: as Watson reports our own Jacksonville mega church pastor Stovall Weems of [Celebration Church](#) is or was one of the five friends Furtick recruited to make up a so-called "Board of Overseerers" that votes on Furtick's salary!



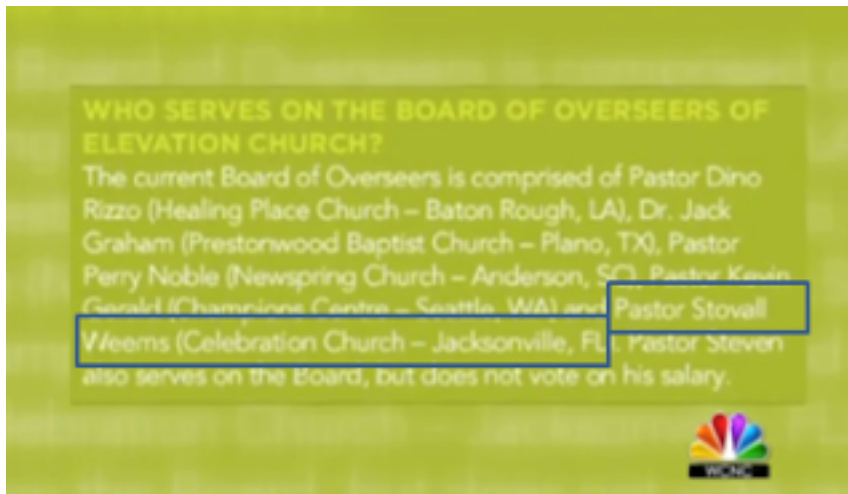
But that is not all. As reported by Watson, there seems to be a conflict of interest involved with Weems and two of the other 4 "board of overseers" in that they personally have financial connections to the Elevation Church. As reported in the story:

***"The board of overseers is made entirely of other mega church pastors just like Steven Furtick. 'The financial well-being of all of these guys are intimately intertwined'. That means Steven Furtick agrees to pay them to preach at Elevation [including Stovall, pictured above] and they pay him to preach at their conferences or mega churches."***

So how on earth is it justified that men who earn money from Elevation Church by speaking at Furtick's church - yet have no official connection to the church itself - are on the board that sets his salary, yet none of the members who pay for the salary are able to find out what that number is?

The one Elevation Church official who IS speaking to Stuart Watson

confirms that men like Stovall



do get paid for their speaking gigs at Elevation, but the pay is "small in scope". But he won't give any ranges of numbers.

Maybe I can help. I wrote about this practice two years ago in an article entitled ["Modern Day 'Circuit Riders' - Traveling Mega Church Pastors Finding Another Way to Fleece the Flocks and Recycle Their Sermons."](#)

And in that article I wrote:

***"Insiders tell me that visiting preachers at mega churches will earn up to \$3000 for a Sunday morning sermon, or \$5000 if they do the hard work of staying over and preaching the Sunday evening sermon also. But I'm sure they have not one iota of guilt, since they tithe on the money, which makes them super spiritual.***

***Not bad scratch. If they earn \$3000 in addition to their travel, meals and lodging, that is about \$100 per minute for an average 30-minute sermon. Not an hour. A MINUTE. That is professional baseball player per minute money. While churches everywhere are seeing their revenue continue to decline, the mega church pastors are hot and heavy to get out on the circuit to get their share of the visiting preacher dollars. "***

And that number of \$3000 to \$5000 is for a more "modest" SBC mega church here in Jax. I am going to go out on a limb and estimate that Furtick's bunch pays much more than that to its visiting Men of God. But of course we'll never know. It is all top secret.

And while I'm at it, let me quote myself again from this article of two years

ago, because this circuit-riding practice gets worse - many of these pastors like Furtick pay other pastors to come in and "beat the sheep", or what I would call shake-down the congregation, to get them to give more money. I wrote:

***"Sometimes preachers are brought in to do the dirty work of the pastor. One of the more brazen moves was Perry Noble of NewSpring church hiring [Robert Morris](#) to come in for two straight weeks to beat up the sheep over tithing, telling them of the curse on them and their money unless they gave Perry's church 10% of their income. Shameless."***

As I said yesterday, I'm glad reporters like Stuart Watson are finally reporting on these practices that are fleecing congregations all over our country, and which will eventually drive evangelical Christianity into the ground as all of this is exposed.

And I highly, highly recommend that members of mega church pastors here in Jacksonville read the Wartburg Watch article yesterday, "[Steven Furtick Proves That It Is Time to Stop Giving to the Local Church](#)." Dee and Deb give EXCELLENT advice to members of today's modern church regarding their financial support of their church.