

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Penrith

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ENCOURAGEMENT LETTER – 2April25

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

How are you today? I am thankful for our newcomers' lunch and the new people that are coming to church. I am thankful for their eagerness to be a part of the church at Penrith Presbyterian.

Today, we are continuing with reflections on the Congregation Snapshot with our encouragement on Session: Approachable and Godly, before moving onto other church matters.

ENCOURAGEMENT: What we are doing well – Session: Approachable and Godly

We are considering our Congregation Snapshot over the next number of weeks looking at what we value, what we are doing well and what we need to work on. Today we look at something you said we are doing well: Session – Approachable and Godly.

What is it we want in our leaders? How many churches have suffered because of the moral indiscretion of one of its leaders? It could be a blatant moral failure that damages the church and its witness, or it could be an ingrained self-protectiveness that shields itself from any criticism and refuses to listen to the advice of others.

It is encouraging that the godly example of Session, is what you are considering we are doing well. One thing the Scripture is clear about is the godliness of elders. Listen to the way that Paul writes about elders (overseers):

Now the overseer is to be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

The Christian leader leads out of his relationship with God and his character is a display of God's work in him. An elder is to be a man who lives for God and displays the gospel of Christ in his life. This is not to say elders are perfect. We are all still works in progress but it is evident that God is working in them by what they say and do. What stands out to you in the list of requirements for an elder that Paul lists?

It is also encouraging that the approachability of Session is another thing you consider we are doing well. Scripture sees elders as shepherds that care for the church. The word "pastor" means "shepherd", so all our elders are pastors who looking after the church. Peter speaks of elders as shepherds:

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

1 Peter 5:1-4

To effectively shepherd God's people, leaders need to have a relationship with them. To effectively care and watch over God's people, involves conversation and spending time listening, hearing their struggles and understanding where they are with Christ and faith in him. People need to feel comfortable to be able to share with and listen to their leaders in order for leadership to be effective. This is indicated by approachability, that you consider us approachable and that you are able to talk with us about what is on your heart and seek help and direction.

The leadership of elders is to be a reflection of Christ's own leadership as the Chief Shepherd of the God's flock. Our leadership is to be an extension of that of Christ, the Good Shepherd – loving like he loves, watching over them for their good like he does, serving like he does and speaking the words of Christ, the good news of his grace and mercy to us. Christ must be the pattern of our leadership.

Please pray for us, the Session, that we might continue in godliness as shepherds of God's love, always seeking to be like Christ and serve his people.

EASTER SERVICES:

Good Friday Service: 9am - Friday 18th April

Easter Services: 9am, 10.30am and 5pm - Sunday 20th April

FINAL COMMENTS

Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

*“You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being.”*

Revelation 4:9-11

As always, love and prayers,
Steve