

Philosophy of Ministry for Church

Sample (incomplete draft) - Needs customizing to the church's location

What is a Philosophy of Ministry (POM)?

A POM seeks to answer these questions:

- Why has God placed our church at this location, and at this time in history?
- How has he gifted us to uniquely serve as this body of believers?
- What is it that we can do more effectively or more efficiently than any other church could do?

A POM is a philosophy because it addresses all the major areas of concerns in a systematic and comprehensive way. Yet well written, it is not theoretical but immensely practical.

1. What do we believe is real “out there”? How does this impact our ministry?



While we believe in the **Scriptures** as God's inerrant Word, we live at a time when an increasing percentage of our neighbors do not. Before we “preach the word” to them, we may have to defend it to them first. And many of our younger neighbors may have no knowledge of the Bible at all. We may have to introduce it to them and explain why we believe it.



For many of us, as we watch our dispensational eschatology seeming play out in current events, we have a growing sense that the Lord may very well return in our lifetimes. This should cause us to have a heightened sense of **urgency**. We need to redeem the time by living lives of separated holiness and by spreading the gospel in season and out of season.

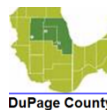


We live in the greatest nation on earth. Americans, as a whole, are self-sufficient and desire to live the American dream. We praise the maverick or self-made man. To invite Americans to deny themselves and follow Christ as Lord is a hard sell. We recognize the **inherent difficulty** we face in local evangelism.

We, ourselves, need to make sure that we have a biblical attitude toward success.

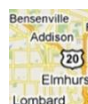


Illinois is not generally considered part of the traditional *Bible Belt* of the Southern states. Yet we are typically known to hold more Midwestern values than people of the East and West coasts. Our neighbors may generally hold **traditional values** similar to ours, but their religion is less likely to be conservative Protestant as is true in the *Bible Belt*.



DuPage County is the 23rd-most **wealthy** county in the US (by median household income).

Most of our neighbors are financially well off. The Bible tells us that this often causes people to trust in their riches and not feel a need for God.



Elmhurst is generally a white-collar community in which the traditional family structure predominates. **Family**, community, education, and often faith, are

2. What can we be certain of our beliefs? How can we communicate truth?

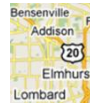


While we **know** that we are right with God through the internal witness of the Spirit, we must **demonstrate** it to others in clear and compelling language. In order to be effective witnesses we must be trained in **apologetics**.

Every age has its own popular “reasons” for disbelief. To defend our faith well today, we need to understand common beliefs such as relativism, atheism, mysticism, and pantheism, as well as the common religions around us such as Catholicism, Hinduism, and Islam.



We must also recognize that while the gospel message can be offensive to lost people, the truth needs to be communicated in a winsome and loving way by messengers who do not cause unnecessary offense. We need to be continually improving our **skills** in communicating God’s message.



Three large, impressive institutions in Elmhurst profess to be in the business of knowledge or truth: the College, the Library and the High School. We need to seek opportunities to capitalize on these resources, and make contact with **seekers** who are looking for truth.

We also know many neighbors and coworkers who are so busy about life, they might be called **non-seekers**. We care about them too, and we need to find creative ways to get them thinking about spiritual matters.

We also know many who are devout and active about their faith, but it is not a saving faith. While some of the mega-churches are all about reaching out to **non-churched** people, we want to also reach out to them. We care about the lost, whether churched or not.

2a. How do ensure that we make decisions & operate consistently with our values?



While the Bible is our sole source of authority, we recognize that its interpretation can be legitimately debated among serious Christian scholars. We hold to a normal, or **literal interpretation** of Scripture as we believe is justified by Scripture. We intentionally attempt to “major on the majors” and “minor on the minors,” or as sometimes expressed: “In essentials, Unity. In non-essentials, Liberty. In all things, Charity.”



While every human institution inevitably develops its own **traditions**, we attempt to keep ours from inhibiting the leading of the Spirit should He move us in new directions. Each of us must be willing to submit to own another, and not let our preferences keep us from supporting the larger picture when necessary. We believe God has chosen the leaders that He has for our church and we are obligated to follow their Godly leading.

3. Do absolute or universal values exist? What difference does it make?



While we believe in **absolute truth** we recognize that an increasing percentage of our neighbors do not. In an age of tolerance, many hold that all spiritual values are merely subjective, have no basis in objective truth, and no particular religion has a “corner on the truth.” They believe that any religion is as good as another, as long as you are sincere. It is considered a breach of etiquette to try to impose your faith on another.



Around town we frequently see bumpers stickers promoting the **COEXIST** (Coexist) message of inter-faith dialog. Ongoing events at Elmhurst College promote a wide variety of religious expression. We have neighbors who are seeking for something more in life and whom we need to find ways to reach. We know that many have a distaste for organized religion, and we cannot assume that they will feel welcome visiting our church. We need to find creative ways to do outreach outside of our walls.

3a. How do we determine what is right and wrong? What values should guide us?



The exclusive claims of Christ are becoming even more of an offense to the secular mindset today. Teaching **moral issues** based solely on the Bible may not have any convincing value to the church visitor today. Pragmatism is the prevailing philosophy of many: *whatever works*. The popular saying is that your truth may not be my truth – a totally unbiblical concept.



3b. What is beauty? How do the principles of order guide us in ministry?



In a culture that values abstract art, celebrates deviance, and glorifies anti-heroes, many people wonder if there can be any way to define **standards** of beauty. Isn't beauty merely in the eye of the beholder? Scripture denies that, of course, saying for example the church ought to be run decently and in order. God's design of the universe, his exacting standards for the tabernacle, and recognition of artists in Scripture all illustrate God's love of beauty.



We must make sure that everything we do is purposely to **glorify God** and illustrates his attributes. Everything He does is excellent; we must always strive to do our best in our service and worship of Him.

4. What guidelines are appropriate in church government?

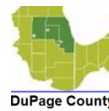


In a day marked by abuse by clergy we need to be especially careful in matters of personnel selection and security. Every member and worker must sign and abide by a **Code of Conduct**. We cannot allow even one abusive event to occur which could damage the reputation and effectiveness of the church, not to mention the suffering of the victim.



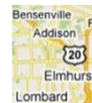
We live in a democratic republic and we genuinely believe it is the best type of human government possible.

We love having a voice in how we are governed and we like having people who are experts in **governing** run the day-to-day affairs of state. We also know that in the millennium Christ's rule will be different, perhaps a kind of benevolent dictatorship.



Our church is sort of a hybrid of those forms. We elect **leaders** who are **accountable** to us. As an independent church we value being able to choose our own pastor. We believe that there is great value to a diversity of opinions -- an application of the "two heads are better than one" principle at a corporate level.

The delicate balance that we face in the area of church leadership is that while we need to respect the people's voice, we expect the leaders' primary direction to come the Holy Spirit's leading.



To implement effective leadership and day-to-day **decision making** we need a clearly defined process, and a thorough understanding of it and commitment to it by our membership. We will define this in our Operating Model. It will address the areas of roles and responsibilities, decision making, voice-of-the-customer, feedback, standard of performance, measurement and evaluation.

Appendix: Why Do We Need to Change Anything?

Over the past 2-3 decades a number of cultural shifts have changed the environment and the people we serve in major ways. A short catalog of some of these would include:

Religion

- New age philosophies, Buddhism, witchcraft, paranormal permeating the media.
- Neighbors and coworkers of Muslim and Hindu faiths.
- Militant atheism; Removal of Christianity from the public square.
- Official Catholic acceptance of evolution; Evangelical abandonment of biblical creationism.
- Rejection of absolute truth; Post-modern philosophy; Acceptance of all beliefs as valid.
- Seeker-sensitive movement; Mega-churches; Charismatic movement; Ecumenical movement.
- Contemporary Christian Music; the influence of celebrity Christians.
- Publicized scandals of religious leaders, both Catholic and Protestant.
- Non-biblically literate adults; Less respect for organized religion.
- Lowered knowledge and practice of Scripture by Evangelicals; Rejection of inerrancy.

Family Dynamics

- Smaller families; Blended families; Single-parent families; Aging parents; Feminism.
- Broader array of juvenile dysfunctions: drugs, eating disorders, sexting, video game fixation, etc.

Culturally

- Explosion of media influence, including the internet and cable television in the home.
- Attack of traditional family values by media, academia and political institutions.
- “Dumbing down of deviancy;” Behaviors previously called *sin* now called *disease* or *alternative lifestyles*.
- Ubiquitous quick-cut video style of MTV, rock and rap music, and secular values of Hollywood influencing Christian entertainment.

Politically

- Increasing polarization between haves and have-nots, ruling class and citizenry, and political parties; Increasing federalism; Increasing power of the judiciary; Declining nationalism.
- Increasing corruption at all levels.

Militarily

- First loss in war; Ending of Cold War; Lone superpower; Unconventional warfare & terrorism.

Economically

- Increased vulnerability to foreign events; Energy dependence on foreign oil.
- Collapse of major institutions; Increased federal control; Historic debt; Economic uncertainty.

Personal Finances

- Increased debt and decreased savings at record levels;
- Unemployment; Bankruptcies; Foreclosures; Economic uncertainty.
- Increased need to have 2 working parents; Increase in DINKs (double-income, no kids).

Medically

- Great advances; Increased longevity; Ethical dilemmas; Rising health care costs.

Technologically

- Internet; Social networks; Online commerce; Cell phones; Smart phones; iPods.
- Google; Amazon; eBay; Internet pornography, gambling and entertainment shopping.

Psychologically

- Increased psychotic rampages and mass murders; Increased use of psychotropic drugs.

We are called to be salt and light in our generation, and to bear much fruit. We cannot influence a world that we do not understand. For the sake of those God has called us to minister to, these cultural shifts force us to reevaluate our practices and traditions. While changing what we do may be uncomfortable, we are called to deny ourselves and to be “all things to all men so that by all possible means [we] might save some.”