

# Board, not congregation, sets Elevation Church pastor's salary

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[NBC Charlotte](#)

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Elevation church pastor Steven Furtick

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 Sept. 29. "He's been calling around and people have been calling us." (See NBC Charlotte video of this report [here](#).)

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 compensated 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.