

## Pulpit Matters

Conventional wisdom in many church circles would advise us to ditch the pulpit. Many say it's an unnecessary barrier between the preacher and the people. It hinders personal communication, limits the preacher's dynamic movement, and reduces the number of things that can be done on the platform. If a pulpit must be used to hold notes, let it be a thin, transparent lectern that is nearly invisible and easily moved.

In 2003 we expanded our church sanctuary and did indeed remove our large, heavy pulpit. We replaced it with one that was even larger and heavier! Why the change? To prove that we're not just behind the times, but *really* behind the times? Quite the contrary. We did so because while it's only a representative piece of furniture, we believe the symbolism of the pulpit really does matter.

At Covenant our pulpit is intentionally and deliberately positioned. It stands at the center of the platform because the proclamation of God's Word is to be at the center of our lives, both personally and as a congregation. It stands directly under the steeple, lifting our eyes up to God through His Word. It stands at the foot of the cross, reminding us of the centrality of our Savior's death and resurrection. It stands above the communion table, reestablishing the biblical priority of God's Word above even the sacraments (as seen in 1 Cor. 1:17), correcting an order that had become inverted prior to the Protestant Reformation when the Word was eclipsed by the altar of the Roman Mass.

As for the pulpit itself, it is opaque because we believe that Christ is more fully revealed when the preacher is more fully obscured. Its lectern keeps the Bible squarely before the minister and its sides keep him from wandering about (physically as well as spiritually, Lord willing!). Apart from rare exceptions (such as for weddings) the pulpit stands immovable and fixed just as God's Word stands as the immovable anchor of our lives.

Finally, the pulpit itself is *nonessential*. God's Word has been preached in fields, marketplaces, and dungeons. It has been proclaimed on ships, in homes, and everywhere God's people have gathered. It is by no means essential, yet it is a helpful tool to keep our main attention where it needs to be: upon the preached Word of God that proclaims our crucified and risen Savior. Through the ministry that takes place at the pulpit and beyond, may our eyes be forever drawn to Him!