

Dear Church Family,

In August of 2015 your advisory board extended to me an invitation to continue as your Senior Pastor for an additional four years. In accepting that invitation I also informed the board and District Superintendent. that I felt the church would need to embark on a succession plan sometime during that four year period.

At the April board meeting of this year I updated the advisory board about doors that God is opening for me to prepare young leaders for pastoral ministry through Ohio Christian University and Nazarene Bible College. Because of the time and energy this new calling will require, I informed them that it would become increasingly difficult to both develop this new leadership initiative and continue to effectively lead the Naz into a bright future of ministry. As a result I recommended that the board begin the succession process in earnest with a goal of completing the transition by January 2018.

Over the past two months the advisory board has prayerfully met several times to discuss the succession process and deliberated regarding our next senior pastor. Both internal and external options were considered. Continuation of our current vision and mission were a high priority. As a result, your advisory board has taken a significant step forward in this succession process by unanimously recommending Pastor Dale Benson become our senior pastor effective January 2018. I am very excited about this recommendation and wholeheartedly support the board in their decision.

Since then representatives from the church board have met with Rev. Trevor Johnston, our District Superintendent, and he is recommending an affirming vote from the church membership the weekend of July 8, 9 in all of our weekend services. This vote will initiate a leadership transitional strategy over the next several months culminating in Pastor Dale assuming the role of senior pastor.

My excitement for this recommendation is based upon several factors:

1. It preserves the current vision and mission God has given the church. Nothing is more important than pursuing the vision He has entrusted to us.
2. Pastor Dale possesses the qualities needed to lead the church. Having served effectively as a senior pastor in the past, Pastor Dale will be able to drive the vision forward offering new strategies and initiatives.
3. It provides a seamless leadership transition without losing critical momentum. Pastor Dale already possesses the relational capital needed to assume this important role that would take any outside candidate years to acquire.
4. It sustains the current preaching team model and staff structure. Keeping the team in place is critical to moving the vision forward.
5. And it allows the church to benefit from the leadership development model I am developing as well as enabling me to stay involved in ministry at the Naz. Pastor Dale has already asked me to continue to serve by supporting his leadership and continuing to mentor our younger staff.

Let me add that I am NOT retiring. Rather, I am stepping into the fulfillment of a vision God placed on my heart 20 years ago. As I have said many times, His timing is perfect...perfect for all of us.

It has become clear to me, your church board, the staff and Pastor Dale that God has His hand on this transition. Feel free to unpack this with any of us if you need more information or clarification. As a member, I want your vote to be informed and confident the weekend of July 8, 9. And even if you are not a formal member, you still play an important role in this process. I value your prayerful support and involvement as we embrace the next chapter in God's exciting vision for the Naz...together.

Great days ahead!

Pastor Mark