

Transition Team Update

August 22, 2019

On July 12, 2019, the elder board of Life Church was informed that Pastor Patrick Herzog, senior pastor, as well as Pastor Nicholas Preston, associate pastor, would resign effective August 31, 2019 in order to plant a new church in Alexandria, MN. The congregation was informed of the resignations during the Sunday morning service on July 14th, 2019. The following week, a transition team was formed in collaboration with the existing elders (Roy Lemke, Gene Field, and Wayne Preston) as well as the one remaining associate pastor, Pastor Greg Permann. There were some significant events and decisions that were made leading up to this resignation, as well as several decisions made in the wake of the resignations. The following is a factual timeline of events as they occurred.

Transition Team Members:

Dave Lindgren

Doug Newby

Nicole Rostad

Amber Gerstmann

Mary Robertson

Greg Permann, Associate/Children's Pastor

Wayne Preston, Elder

- December 2018 - July 2019 - Multiple conversations and events took place during this time period among staff (Pastor Patrick Herzog, Pastor Nicholas Preston, Pastor Greg Permann) and elders (Gene Field, Wayne Preston, Roy Lemke, and Dan Johnson). There are multiple views about what was communicated among staff and elders. The facts, as we understand them to be, are:
 - December 2018 - Pastor Greg was initially reassigned to another position by Pastor Patrick.
 - January 2019 - The elders reinstated Pastor Greg to Children's Ministry as they did not feel that that was a decision that should be made without their input.
 - This initiated a series of elders' meetings that took place over the course of multiple months.
 - May 2019 - Dan Johnson was removed from the elder board via a vote by the pastors and elders (Pastor Greg Permann abstained from the vote). More meetings continued to take place with multiple lay people expressing their concern about what the Biblical grounds were for removing Dan as an elder, as well as expressing a desire to have a third-party consultant come in to help the leadership, and the church at large, work through the conflict and identify/address the areas of concern.
- July 9th - It was agreed upon by elders and pastoral staff at the elders' meeting to bring in a third-party consultant. It was decided that a team of lay people and elders would be formed to interview and hire the consultant as someone who could come in with a fresh perspective

to help resolve the remaining conflicts and assist in developing a plan to address the governance structure of Life Church.

- July 12th - Pastor Patrick and Pastor Nicholas submitted their resignations to the elders and communicated their desire to plant a church in Alexandria. It was also discussed at this time that the Life Church - Fargo campus would most likely come under the umbrella of their new church.
- July 14th - Pastor Patrick and Pastor Nicholas announce to congregation their new call of planting a church in Alexandria.
- July 18th - Initial meeting with Transition Team - Discussion here was predominately about the importance of still bringing in an outside consultant, with zero connection to anyone past or present at Life Church, to help us both address the past, and assist in navigating into the future. Pastor Greg and Nicole Rostad were tasked with interviewing a variety of potential consultants whose names or firms were recommended to the transition team either by professional counselors and/or pastors not from Life Church.
- July 21st - The whole church was invited to join the elders and Transition Team members in prayer at the church on Sunday nights for the foreseeable future for the purpose of praying out the will of God for our church.
- July 23rd - Transition Team Meeting - Pastor Greg and Nicole communicated with the Transition Team regarding their findings as they interviewed Eric Hulstrand - Moving Forward Is Possible, A.J. Mathieu - The Malphurs Group, Jim Anderson - Senior Pastor at The Harbor Church, and also consulted with Pastor Steve Hoffman, Superintendent of the Prairie Lakes District - Nazarene Church. Each and every person with whom they talked had helpful feedback and solid biblical advice. After some discussion, Pastor Greg and Nicole narrowed it down to Eric Hulstrand and Jim Anderson. Over the course of the next week, the transition team met face to face with both Eric and Jim to interview them further as a team. Eric Hulstrand offered references of prior churches with which he has worked. All four references were called by different members of the transition team with overwhelmingly positive feedback about their experience with Eric's consult.
- July 28th - another night of corporate prayer as we seek the Lord in this transition time.
- August 2nd After much prayer as a team as well as the natural pieces of what we felt was "due diligence," it was recommended by the Transition Team to hire Eric Hulstrand, with Moving Forward is Possible, as our consultant. Pastor Patrick also communicated around this time that his last Sunday would be August 11th. This was after a request from the elders for him to be done sooner in an effort to aid in the transition process.
- August 4th - Corporate prayer continued and the Transition Team met after prayer to discuss the logistics of the coming Sunday's dinner and send-off time for Pastor Patrick and Pastor Nicholas.
- August 4th - Trevor and Amber Gerstmann accepted an offer to join the Life Church staff as worship pastors.
- August 9th - Transition Team meeting to finalize all items for the coming Sunday.
- August 11th - Pastor Patrick and Amy's and Pastor Nicholas and Amanda's last Sunday was shared together with our community. We ate together, shared memories over the last 30 years together, and also addressed the fact that there were a mix of emotions for so many

that day. The congregation was encouraged by Doug Newby, Transition Team member and representative, to be the body and be a part of the coming process with the consultant as we move ahead into what God is doing among us. Doug also shared with our community the verse that had been coming up in several places including Sunday night prayer, found in Isaiah 43:16-21:

This is what the Lord says—
he who made a way through the sea,
a path through the mighty waters,
who drew out the chariots and horses,
the army and reinforcements together,
and they lay there, never to rise again,
extinguished, snuffed out like a wick:
“Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.
See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.
The wild animals honor me,
the jackals and the owls,
because I provide water in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland,
to give drink to my people, my chosen,
the people I formed for myself
that they may proclaim my praise.

This verse has been a source of encouragement to us as we look to the future.

- August 12th – Gene Field submitted his resignation as an elder.
- August 12th – Trevor and Amber Gerstmann officially began working as worship pastors and Nicole Rostad accepted an offer to join Life Church staff as Director of Ministries, effective immediately.
- August 18th – Dave Fournier preached at our Sunday service and Sunday evening prayer took place at the church once again. A timeline (that is subject to change, of course) was communicated by Nicole Rostad at prayer and included the following:
 - August 24th – Eric, our consultant, will meet with Transition Team (1:00 PM) to finalize the survey and make sure Sunday is ready to go.
 - August 25th – Eric will preach at church and communicate the consultation process to the congregation.
 - September 6th – 8th – Listening weekend for Eric to hear from congregants and leaders.

- September 13th – 15th – Eric will meet with elders & transition team and present observations and recommendations to congregation on Saturday and Sunday, and Monday if needed.
 - September 28th – 29th – Mile Post Sunday – Eric will lead this service as a way for people to reconcile and move forward into the future that God has for Life Church.
 - October will begin Phase 2 which will address our governance.
- August 20th – Transition Team Meeting – The transition team met and discussed all major ministries in an effort to work together to make sure ministry at Life Church does not just survive during this time of transition, but thrive. The bulk of this meeting was to review the survey questions and make sure that we believe they will give everyone the opportunity to communicate what is in their hearts to communicate. The survey questions came to the Transition Team from Eric for review and Eric has taken feedback from the Transition Team to make minor adjustments to them. The discussion about the timing of finding an interim pastor was also discussed during this meeting and it was decided that we would lean heavily on Eric for his expertise in this very important decision.

Please subscribe and check back for ongoing updates in the coming weeks and months. We love you, Church!

-The Transition Team

Doug Newby

Dave Lindgren

Amber Gerstmann

Wayne Preston

Greg Permann

Nicole Rostad

Mary Robertson