

Introduction to an Update from the Pastor

January 29/30 2022

Saturday 6 PM introduction by Nathan Reed, elder at The Gathering.

Sunday 10 AM introduction by Ron Reynolds, elder at The Gathering.

We would like to take a few minutes today to bring you an update from Pastor Garth and Patty.

Many months ago the elders of our church began discussing how we could best prepare for the conclusion of Pastor Garth's official fulltime role as our Senior Pastor. As our founding, church-planting couple, Pastor Garth and Patty have worked very hard to foster simple worship, passionate prayer, and strong teaching in our church.

The Gathering is now well established. We are doing well financially. We have a good team in place, and Pastor Garth and Patty feel that it's time for them to do something else.

Pastor's Update on the Transition

Patty and I have been talking and praying about this season in our lives for a long time. We have watched carefully over the years and prayed fervently as friends of ours have stepped back from full-time ministry, moved into retirement, and found new avenues of ministry and service for the King.

We have sensed the very clear leading of the Lord to finish up here at The Gathering at the end of June. So, the last Sunday of June will be my last Sunday on staff, and we are still riding the roller coaster of emotions over that. I am eager to finish well, and I want to conclude my time as your senior pastor while I still have some "gas in the tank."

I will bring three or four more updates before the end of June. I know I can't answer all of your questions today.

But let's rejoice together in the gospel!

Just a few of us started a Saturday night Bible study in our home in the fall of 2013, and since then our little church has experienced the most striking, sustained blessing of the Lord I have ever seen. God has been so faithful, and the last 8 years have been the most rewarding and the most fruitful years working and serving alongside of you.

The succession plan we put together over 18 months ago included hiring another pastor with enough time for him to get accustomed to The Gathering before I finish. I'm happy to say the

Lord led us hire Jay Maynard who started his ministry with us in March of last year - roughly 10 months ago.

Phil and Jay and I all serve as elders along with Nathan Reed, Ron Reynolds, and Dan Wilson. There are six elders in our church who share in the ministry, and three of us serve as pastors. When I am done, these five remaining elders will carry the torch together, serving in the council of elders together, making decisions together.

1 Peter 5 exhorts local church elders to shepherd the flock of God (5:2-3), and that's what our guys love to do.

Elders are responsible for *protecting* the local church from false teachers and bad theology (Acts 20:28).

Furthermore, Biblical elders are men who teach the Word of God in a variety of settings and *feed* the flock with the Word. Not every elder will preach from the pulpit, but they must be able to teach. Some are given wages for preaching and teaching, and others are not.

Elders also *lead* the church. In his instruction to the church, in 1 Tim 5:17, Paul says, "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor." To "rule well" means to direct, govern, or manage the affairs of the church well, to the glory of God. That's the work of elders.

Some elders are better at ruling or leading, while others are better at preaching and teaching, and that's the beauty of a plurality of elders. We can cover the bases.

The elders in a New Testament church also bear the responsibility for *meeting the practical, diverse needs* of the entire church. They are responsible to pray for the sick, to help the weak, to care for widows, and so on and so forth.

Our elders are very blessed to serve alongside seven biblically-qualified men who currently serve as deacons in our church. The deacons work alongside of the elders to look after so many practical needs around the church. They are Jon Bondy, Chris Daugharty, Jeff Gaspar, Shawn Mariani, Bill Robert, Rick Tarte, and Nate Veltkamp.

I am extremely grateful for these men and the work they do here at The Gathering.

We we have good *leaders* in place. We are so grateful for each and every one of them! As Patty and I prepare for this life-changing evolution at the end of June, we are doing so with

great confidence in the elders and deacons and staff that God has called and appointed to ministry in our church. We have worked hard to create and establish a strong, healthy, vibrant team of leaders, where each one contributes to leading our church out of their natural talents and spiritual gifting.

The senior pastor or the lead pastor is not The Boss! Jesus is the head of our church. The pastors are elders, and the elders serve as pastors. We serve together as a New Testament council of elders. However, the Bible also seems to give special honor to those whose work is preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 5:17).

Long ago the elders at The Gathering concluded that if an elder gives himself over to being the main teacher, or the principal leader, then he should be accorded an extra measure of leadership and respect. *He will serve as "the first" among equals.*

I have served in that capacity since we joyfully planted this church, and I am grateful for the delightful opportunity you have given me to teach and preach and lead and love *and* be the first among equals as an elder in our church. Thank you. I exhort you and encourage you and plead with you now to do the same for Jay. When I am done at the end of June, he will continue to serve as one of the elders, and he will be one of the pastors, but he will also be your *lead* pastor, and I ask that you to honor him and respect him in that role.

Thank you for listening so carefully.

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for your faithfulness, thank you for your love, thank you for your kindness to us in Christ. We are so grateful to you for all you've done in our church, and we look forward to more demonstrations of your power and more opportunities to serve you in the days ahead.

*There is no healer like the Lord our Maker
There is no equal to the King of kings
Our God is with us we will fear no evil
'Cause You do impossible things*

Father, the future of our church is in your hands, and we trust you!
'Cause you do impossible things. Amen.