

February 19, 2019

Dearest Family in Christ,

It is with great joy and gratitude that I pen this letter to you as I serve in my 25th year as your Senior Pastor. It has been an incalculable gift to me and to my family, to have had the privilege and opportunity to be a shepherd in Christ's pasture here these many years. No, I am not announcing that I am leaving, let me make that clear right away. That has not even crossed my mind.

Yet, I do believe a change in my role to a new position at POPC, and fresh leadership at the Senior Pastor position is a healthy next step for us all. In this envelope are two strategic letters. This one written by me, and a second letter from your elders. Two letters, but we are all of one accord! Please read them together for a full perspective. My letter gives you insight from my own heart and mind on the changes to be made and how all of this began. The elders' letter gives you more detail and framework/timeline for these leadership advances.

Permit me to explain. As far back as the fall of 2012, at an elders' planning retreat, I began to think and wrestle with the elders about a plan for the day when I would no longer be the Senior Pastor. Every pastor, after all is an "interim" pastor who must be ready to have the church leadership thinking about the next generation of leaders and pastors. It was then, and remains my strong conviction today, that the best model for our eventual Senior Pastor leadership transition is a well-designed pastoral succession plan. I knew the day would come for any number of reasons (age, health, change in desire, etc.) that my tenure as pastor would close. Churches who have had a long-tenured Senior Pastor who suddenly leaves for some reason, do not generally fare well through that transition, and struggle to find a new direction and a good leadership "fit" with a new pastor.

Your elders and I have chosen the path of a well-planned, well-designed, intentional succession model. This will allow our church to benefit from the fresh vision and energy of a new senior leader, while retaining the former pastor's relational capital with people, his institutional knowledge, and his pastoral trust among the people, gained over many years. A well-executed succession model retains the great benefits of having the long tenured former pastor in a new role, while moving forward with the fresh energy, vision, and leadership of a man already on staff who is known, trusted, respected, and loved by the congregation.

When Caleb was called as an Associate Pastor in 2014, he came to us with excellent experience as a pastor, and a wonderful heart, mind, and skill set. He was hired with the knowledge that a succession model of leadership transition was in place, and that he might one day be the Senior leader at POPC, though no guarantees were promised. Caleb has effectively been "interviewing" for this senior pastoral role for almost 5 years.

I am fully in favor of this pastoral succession model and have been actively researching and planning for this for 6 years, and intensively so the last 2 years. Your elders and the church staff are in full support of this planned succession model, and have been involved in the process. We all believe Caleb is the only candidate we should pursue through a thorough, vigorous, interview and evaluation to determine if indeed, he is the man to lead us into the next season of our corporate life together as the body of Christ! The letter from your elders contains more insight and a number of details about the process, so I ask that you read it thoughtfully.

You may well have questions about this significant transition in our life together as the church. Please feel free to call me, or an elder, or Caleb!

With great love for you, and great confidence in our Lord's plans for the future of His Bride here at POFC.

Pastor Carl