

Pastoral Apprenticeship Program Proposal

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Approved by the Elders as a working document at their Mid-Term Retreat, January 15, 2010.

Updated at the elder meeting on May 18, 2010 in preparation for the annual meeting. Approved by the congregation at the annual meeting on May 19, 2010.

Overview

I propose that we investigate and implement an apprenticeship program to provide highly qualified candidates under the senior pastor's supervision a two-to-three-year intensive introduction to ongoing pastoral ministry in the local church and to provide the church with a pastoral staff member who would implement a specially-selected project to enhance our ministry effectiveness.

Biblical Principles

Paul prepared Timothy for his independent ministry to the church by personally conveying to him both teaching (2 Timothy 1:13, 2:2) and example (2 Timothy 3:10-11). 2 Timothy 2:2 commands the perpetuation of this pattern. The Lord himself prepared his disciples for ministry through personal training and evaluation before he sent them out to carry on without him. With some of these he had very close relationships. Barnabus took Mark with him to Cyprus and, presumably, his leadership played a large role in Mark's restoration to Paul's favor. Old Testament examples reinforce the value of apprenticeship in ministry (e.g., Joshua under Moses; Elisha under Elijah).

Qualifications

I propose to set the standard high such that any selected apprentice sees the opportunity as a privilege and I have the assurance that the apprentice is an asset rather than a drain on time and other resources. Among the qualifications to consider:

1. A strong, ongoing relationship with Grace Baptist.
2. Commendable completion of advanced ministry training.
3. Willingness to invest significant time, energy, creativity, and emotion into the program.
4. Demonstrated recipient of both an internal and external call to pastoral ministry.

Application

The application would include verification of the above qualifications and several questions to try to ascertain what goals the applicant would pursue during an apprenticeship at Grace. A resume and list of recommendations would also be included.

Acceptance

The senior pastor, elder chair, and ministry administrator will review all completed applications, conduct interviews, and present the top qualifying applicant (if the position is available) to the elder board for a final interview. Upon approval, the church's financial circumstances will determine the start date for the apprenticeship (see next section).

Funding

The goal is to avoid carrying another staff position in the operating budget and create the expectation that it would remain filled after the apprentice leaves. This program would only be in effect when there is a highly qualified applicant and the church is in a position to offer an apprenticeship.

I propose that a designated account be created for donations from various sources (individual donors, reserve funds, etc.). The elders would determine the minimum threshold required to support an apprentice for the remainder of the fiscal year in which the apprenticeship is to begin. When the threshold is crossed, a formal invitation would be issued to the approved applicant who would decide whether or not to commit. That commitment would be for two years.

During the budget cycle of that first year, the apprenticeship program would be added to the general budget. That arrangement would continue through the remainder of the apprenticeship. At the end of two years both the church and the apprentice are free to discontinue the apprenticeship. The elders will decide whether or not the church will add the year extension. No apprenticeship may last longer than three years.

Benefits to Apprentice

1. Ministry experience alongside the senior pastor and other ministry leaders.
2. Opportunity to reflect and process seminary knowledge and experience.
3. Time to better evaluate potential long-term ministry positions.
4. Opportunity to pursue ordination.
5. A caring, nurturing church for himself and family.

Benefits to Church

The Lord calls his people to love without regard to any return to them. I offer these notes only to help us see ways this program may help us.

1. Fellowship with young, freshly-trained servants of the gospel.
2. Staff work devoted to medium-range projects with an emphasis on leadership development so that lay leaders can continue the work after the apprenticeship.
3. A built-in "interim" ready to fill an unexpected staff vacancy.
4. Day to day training for the senior pastor and other staff members in leadership development.
5. A means to serve the larger body of Christ by refining future pastoral leadership.

Implementation Timeline

The elders have authorized me to make a motion to the congregation for approval of this program during the 2009-2010 annual meeting. This would simply create a designated fund and allow applications to circulate. Funding would not be proposed until a viable application is received.