



SUMMARY OF NEXT STEPS

New wineskin

- Five years ago now we requested the elders to please ask the Lord for the next generation of pastoral leadership, and offered to step down immediately the provision was clear. After seeking the Lord and taking counsel, they asked if we would stay in our role until I turned 70. After prayer, we agreed to do so, as long as this was evaluated and discerned on an annual basis, to ensure what was best for the church.
- In July last year, both in a public service and in a follow-up pastoral letter it was announced that the elders had engaged a process of transition, trusting the Lord for a new generation of pastoral leadership, given that Celia and I were retiring on December 31st this year, having fulfilled the extended time of service until I was seventy that the elders had asked from us back when I turned sixty-five. We have been honored to do so. At the end of this year we will have completed 40 years of pastoring and church-planting in the USA (4 years at Calvary Community Church in San Jose CA, 3 years at Christ Church of Washington on Massachusetts Avenue NW and 33 years at COSC). There's something about 40 that seems complete.
- We sensed that we would not just be doing the traditional 'old wineskin' replacement of old pastors with new ones, but we would be experiencing a 'new wineskin' fitted for these times, when the church in our nation is being holily deconstructed and challenged afresh about its vision and mission. The pandemic appears to have forced certain changes upon us, but one can argue that these have served to align the Body of Christ with some much-needed Biblical paradigms for worship, Word, work and warfare that were being lost.
- After months of deliberation, especially the last four months of conversation and prayer with Pastors Josh and Ruth Robinson, we have extended an invitation to them to join us in the leadership of this new wineskin that will be about a new family relationship with Good Hope Church as well as potentially other communities of faith in strategic mission in Southeast. Because our Constitution requires that a pastor be first an appointed elder, the elders have recognized the Robinsons existent eldership in the Body of Christ and affirmed their calling to eldership at COSC, in order to be consecrated later as a Pastor. This gives time over the next three months for developing relationships and engagement in the continuing transition process, and especially time for Josh and Bo to work together on the practical matters of implementation of the vision and mission.
- It strikes me as most interesting that at the very last service at COSC before COVID shutdown, we had Pastor Josh speaking and the service ended with him calling Bo up to the front with them concluding the service standing together. I was out of the city and not there but I heard from folk who felt something of significance in the Spirit without knowing exactly what. I think it is amazingly fitting that they will likely conclude the first

service after all COVID-19 restrictions have been removed for a normal gathering, in the same location and posture.

- We also announced that there will be an accompanying transition in the eldership as some of us who have served for a long time feel directed to make way for a new generation of leaders. This was initiated on Sunday with the announcement that John and Linda Weyrich have been released from the eldership as per their request and thus they represent and pioneer this part of the transition to a new and next generation eldership. Consequently, it was with gratitude for John's and Linda's service that we announced the elders affirmation of Eileen Martin-Yeboah to the eldership.
- In the next few weeks, other affirmations will be shared. We believe it is important as soon as is possible that new leadership participates in this final stage of the transition process, in the formative spiritual and decisional matters that they will be called upon to pastor and oversee. Thus, upon affirmation by the congregation, they will join the eldership immediately and not wait until the elders who are stepping down do so. This will make for a paced and achievable transfer of responsibilities, and for a helpful lead-time of praying and working together.

Immediate Process

- Upon the announcement on Sunday September 13th of the elders' affirmations for eldership of Eileen, Josh and Ruth, the congregation has two weeks to weigh and pray their call, until September 27th, when a workable means for affirmation will be provided. If you missed any of Josh's preaching at COSC then please access on the app for his last sermon at COSC on March 8, 2020 and you will more than catch his heart.
- All other present leadership roles will continue and will serve and lead the church as they have been doing so:
 - Bo and Kristin will continue in their continuous role and ministry, as will all other staff members;
 - present elders will remain a vital part of the mid-wiving of this transition process over the next three months, providing strong continuity;
 - Stuart and Celia will remain on the eldership till the end of the year.

It is a particular blessing for us all that we have these next three months for this transition and for settlement. It is a gift that we are all invited to steward this process thankfully, and hopefully finish this season of church life well, and begin the next with joy and expectation.

On January 3rd, 2020, we will have a celebratory service of releasing and blessing those who have served us well, and of welcoming and commissioning the next generation of church leadership. What a great start to a new year.

Conclusion

- Yes, that's a lot to take in but here isn't a layaway plan to do it. We have all been anticipating this moment for some time and it is now upon us. It may feel emotionally a bit like that Jordan River in full flood that threatens to sweep us off our feet, but our feet are secure as we step into it.
- As Celia and I step down, we believe a good foundation has been laid for others to build on, as long as that foundation remains the teaching of the apostles and prophets, and as long as Jesus is the cornerstone from whom we get all the true angles for building. Then we will continue to be "fitly framed" together (Ephesians 2:21-22).
- This is not about maintenance but mission. It will require all members to have a new and fresh church-planting vision and spirit for a new generation of church life and ministry. Remember, **all** the people crossed over.
- This is not just about COSC and its autonomous needs, but about COSC as a cohesive and dependent part of a developing relationship with God's kingdom work, particularly given the present context in which we are committed to racial reconciliation and the healing of our defiled land. We will continue to discern what is continuous and what is discontinuous.
- Let us pursue His Presence (move on), Position ourselves (move out and move in), Purpose (move over the divide and move over to let God be God). It's sort of interesting that we are being given a new pastor called Joshua and that there is a real River to cross called Anacostia! Christ is indeed Our Good Shepherd (John 10:11), our Great Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20-21), our Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:1-4) and the Shepherd of our souls (1 Peter 2:24-25). We, the sheep of His pasture, are simply required to hear His voice and follow in His footsteps (John 10:3-4).