

St. Paul's Des Peres Senior Pastor Call Process – October 2025 Update

With Pastor Thomas announcing his planned retirement in January of 2024, St. Paul's began the process to call a new Senior Pastor in early 2024. A call committee was recommended by St. Paul's Church Council, and approved by St. Paul's Voters at a Voters meeting in March of 2024. This Committee consists of a broad cross-section of church members, men and women of varying ages and backgrounds.

Missouri District president Lee Hagan met with the Committee in March 2024 to provide guidance, counsel, and prayerful encouragement. A few weeks later the Committee met with Rev. Peter Kirby to receive an outline of the Call process, and to assist with planning a survey of members. Rev. Kirby works for the Missouri District as the Executive Director of Congregational Services; he is also a member at St. Paul's.

The Committee reviewed St. Paul's bylaws as it relates to the Senior Pastor Call process. The authority to fill a called position rests with the Voters. The bylaws define how the Call Committee is formed, how nominations are to occur, and details related to the Voters meeting to approve issuing a Call.

The Call Committee met in April 2024 to develop a survey of St. Paul's members, to get a sense of priorities of our church, and the skills and gifts that our members feel our Senior Pastor needs. The survey was sent to church members in May of 2024. We received 381 responses; the results indicated that the most critical skills we are seeking are leadership, preaching, teaching, and administration. St. Paul's Board of Elders reviewed the survey results to develop an updated job description for our Senior Pastor.

We gathered nominations of pastors from St. Paul's members over a several week window in June 2024. These names were submitted to the Missouri District Office in July 2024. The district reviewed each submission, and contacted pastors to determine their openness to a Call.

After this review, the Missouri District office sent to St. Paul's a list of 38 candidates for the Call Committee to consider in September 2024. The District provides two documents for each candidate: a Personal Information Form (PIF), which provides detailed background on the pastor's theological views and work experience; and a Self Evaluation Tool (SET), which is a bio with background on the pastor, his family, and his career.

The Committee reviewed the information from these 38 candidates. After several meetings, the group ranked the candidates to select the strongest candidates for initial interviews. In October, we interviewed the eight semi-finalists to interview by video.

The Committee identified the three candidates that stood out in the video interviews as finalists in November 2024. Each pastor visited with us in person over a three day window in late January and early February of 2025. They each had dinner Monday evening with

several Elders. On Tuesday, the candidates were on campus, meeting with pastoral staff, church staff, and school staff. On Tuesday evening, the candidates had dinner with the Call Committee and their spouses. On Wednesday morning, they had breakfast with the Committee chair Desmond Kittelson and the congregation president Mark Cannon.

After the in person visits, the Call Committee met in mid February 2025 to assess our progress and to consider whether we were ready to recommend a candidate to the congregation. After much discussion, it was evident that each candidate had many excellent strengths, but none of them stood out as the right candidates to present to the congregation.

The Committee then began its second round, and again gathered nominations of pastors from St. Paul's members over a several week window in April 2025. These names were submitted to the Missouri District Office in May 2025. The district reviewed each submission, and contacted pastors to determine their openness to a Call.

After this review, the Missouri District office sent to St. Paul's a list of 55 candidates for the Call Committee to consider in June 2025. The Committee reviewed the information from these 50 candidates, and narrowed the list to 20. After several meetings, the group ranked the candidates to select the strongest candidates for initial interviews. In August we interviewed seven semi-finalists to interview by video.

The Committee identified the three candidates that stood out in the video interviews as finalists in late August. Of these three, one interviewed in September 2025, one indicated he was unable to take a call at this time, and the third was unable to consider a call but was unclear on his availability. The third candidate informed us in early October that he would not be able to consider a call for the foreseeable future.

The Committee met in late September, and voted to bring Pastor Eric Van Scharrel as a candidate for Senior Pastor to the Congregation.

We remain confident that God is leading us to the right man to serve as the next Senior Pastor of St. Paul's. We pray for wisdom, patience, and clarity.