

Dear VCF Family,

Many of you have heard the story of how Natalie and I were compelled by The Lord to pursue the job here at VCF in 2018 which led us to move to Solvang and take on the position as youth pastor. Since the day we moved here we have felt only support, encouragement and love from the people at VCF and within the community of believers here in the Valley. In August of 2020 we visited Iowa for the first time since moving here and we knew it would be an emotionally difficult time going back to the place where we had established roots so deeply and had been so fully committed to for a decade. With open honesty we were considering the possibility that we could move back to Iowa (there was an opportunity that could have allowed this to happen). However, toward the end of our visit it became crystal clear to us that we needed to sell our house and acreage in Iowa and fully commit to living in Solvang with no “plan B”.

When our house sold in October we couldn't have been more relieved. As sad as it was, it meant that we could allow ourselves to fully settle in, commit to VCF in whatever way The Lord would direct our steps and invest in the future of this Valley and its awesome people. This is something that had been steadily growing within us. We came to realize that the same thing that brought us to Iowa all those years ago was drawing us to VCF: a love for the people. As we have gotten to know many of you, our hearts have been filled with a deep love for you. I have immensely enjoyed the relationships that I have been building with the youth in both Velocity and Paradigm. Our love for our friends and spiritual family in the Santa Ynez Valley has grown beyond what I thought possible in just a couple of years. We are putting down roots.

Working with Jay, Louise and Jon continues to be a true joy and we are all thrilled that Lorraine will be joining us on full time staff as the Youth Program Director. She has already been doing this job alongside me for the past year and the dynamic has been exactly what I needed to function within my gifting. I love to preach and teach the Word of God. I am passionate about discipleship and evangelism and will always be doing the work of ministry

This brings us up to our most recent announcement that Jay and the VCF elders have asked me to begin a transition period to step into the role of Pastor. Through much careful thought, prayer and deliberation Natalie and I accept this opportunity with no reservation and with great joy. This will, no doubt, leave many in our congregation with questions. Here are three questions that I anticipate being asked:

First, I imagine the obvious question is this:

“If Casey is going to be the Senior Pastor, what will happen with the youth?”

Right off the bat I want to assure you (especially parents) that I have no intention of leaving the youth without a youth pastor.

Here is our plan:

Transition Timeline

1. For the next 6 months I will be committed to Velocity and Paradigm. (Basically nothing will change including the amount of preaching that I normally do; about once a month).
2. During the first 6 months or so (till after the Hume Lake Camp date in mid July) I will be actively searching for a youth pastor to come alongside me. Lorraine will also assist in training and continue her job as Youth Program Director if we happen to find just the right person.

I have made some incredible friends with young men in youth ministry these past couple of years. Hume Lake has been a great place to meet people and make connections. I have been praying that through these connections that The Lord will provide just the right person to arrive. Should the right person fill the Youth Pastor position and if everything is going well this timeline may be shorter.

3. In the Fall semester I will be handing over much of the responsibilities to the new Youth Pastor while continuing to oversee the ministry and preaching more often from the Sunday morning pulpit.

4. Sometime early to mid 2022 I will fully take over the role as Pastor.

This will probably lead you to ask the next logical question:

So, is Jay retiring? What will happen with Pastor Jay?

No. He will be transitioning into an Executive Pastor Role. This is something he is looking forward to. Since I came on staff I have been mentored by Jay in so many areas that I previously had very little experience. The role of an Executive Pastor is to be primarily concerned about “body life” that is the structure of the church; missional goals, small groups, counseling, finances. (See Jay’s letter). During this transition I will look to Jay for guidance and counsel just as I have during my time as Youth Pastor. Over these past two years I have come to realize that I don’t actually think of Jay as “my boss”, but rather as a trusted ally and a dear friend. I absolutely love working with him because of his support for me, his care and concern for me and for our mutual desire to see this church flourish. Jay is my co-laborer in Christ and we consistently depend on each other and encourage one another as brothers.

Another question you may have:

Will Lorraine be taking over as the Youth Pastor?

No. Lorraine’s position as Youth Program Director means that she will be primarily focused on next generation program and administration. Running two youth programs (Velocity and Paradigm) requires the support of many volunteers and it has been incredibly beneficial to have Lorraine as my administrator and program director. We will be looking for my replacement so that she can continue to do her job as well.

I am so excited about this! I look forward to what The Lord will do in and through VCF in the years to come. I pray that God will allow us to grow in our knowledge and love for Jesus, that He would use us in a powerful way to advance the gospel and that He would bless our desire to glorify His name in the Santa Ynez Valley. I am both grateful and honored to be called as your pastor and I submit myself to The Lord and His will for us as a church.

With the most sincere love and gratitude,

Casey