



Getting to Know Our Pastoral Candidate

1. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and your family?

We are the United Nations in miniature. I was born and raised in Canada (Toronto), my wife was born and raised in Britain, our oldest son was born in Scotland, and our next two sons were born in the USA (Raleigh, NC).

Our youngest two sons are moving with us. The middle son works in a Pharmacy. The youngest is an auto mechanic. Our oldest will be remaining in Scottsdale, AZ where he works in men's (formal) apparel as well as developing a side business in travel.

My wife retains her English accent, though it has mellowed some over the years. Most recently, she worked for an audiologist but is looking forward to returning to being a homemaker and being involved in church life. I enjoy cycling, but it must be said as the years progress I have a growing preference for downhill rides more than uphill rides.

2. What do you consider in order of importance to be the chief duties of the Senior Pastor?

I'm not sure there is a necessary hierarchy of importance to individual responsibilities, but I do believe there is a category of essentials that cannot be neglected.

The easiest way to explain the essentials of pastoral ministry is to point to Matt. 22:37-40 and Jn. 21:15-19. In the first passage Jesus identifies the two greatest commandments that are a summary of the whole law: love God and love your neighbor. In the second passage, Jesus provides the framework for ministry leadership: feed my sheep and shepherd my sheep.

The pastor who does not tend to his own soul by growing in love for God will not be able to draw people to God in love and adoration. Likewise, the pastor who does not love his neighbor, including the congregation, will sound hollow (1 Cor. 13:2) when he encourages God's people to love one another.

Put another way, as the pastor goes, so goes the church.

As for feeding and shepherding God's people, the meaning of this is made more clear in Acts 6:4 where the apostles explained, "we will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word". It is the prayerful pastor who will be the effective minister of God's Word, and the effective ministry of the Word includes declaring and explaining truth as well as applying it as an act of discipleship.

At the end of the day, the pastor's responsibility is to join Paul in urging his people to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship". (Rom. 12:1)

3. How do you view the Senior Pastor's role as a Shepherd?

The work of a shepherd is to lead the people under his care to the Great Shepherd, Jesus. The closer they are to him, the more intentionally they follow in his footsteps, the more the light of the gospel will shine in a dark world.

I could not have been more grateful for the congregation I pastored in NC when two tragedies struck early in my ministry there. The first involved the sudden death of a husband of a recently married couple. The second involved a family whose home exploded in a ball of flame because of a lightning strike that lit up a gas line (they were all out at the time, so no injuries).

Just prior to these two tragedies, I had preached through 1 Thessalonians and one of the phrases I used repeatedly was, "hot love". The idea was that our love for one another ought to be active and intentional. We should always be on the lookout for ways to promote and protect others' flourishing.

It was wonderful to see that a phrase that had caused mild amusement at first soon became the motto for how to respond to these two tragedies. The congregation outdid themselves in showing "hot love" to this young widow and to a family who lost everything. The role of the shepherd / pastor is not to do everything, but to build up a people whose commitment to their Savior is evident in ever more consistent obedience.

4. Describe how you will build the staff into a Ministry Team.

It seems clear to me that the Lord has been building the staff over time, and that includes hires that pastor Rob made while he was here. I am still in the process of meeting everyone, but those I have met who are key leaders in the congregation give me hope for unity and joy in continuing God's work here because they have answered God's call on their life and are obediently living out that call.

One of the most important things I can do to carry on the work of building a ministry team is to take time to get to know everyone. Listening is vital for any senior pastor, and no less so when it comes to learning more about staff members. Understanding people is the bedrock of continuing to build unity and navigate with shared purpose.

Additionally, over the years I have seen the value that accessibility has for building a good team. When the leader is inaccessible or unresponsive, a team will fracture because individuals lose their sense of worth. But, by spending time with staff, taking the time to get to know them, building relationships that extend beyond work, a team can almost build itself because loving our neighbor significantly strengthens the bonds that tie everyone together and actively discourages thinking that leads to silos.

5. What do you consider your greatest strengths in Church ministry?

Whenever I am asked about personal strengths, I immediately think of Paul's struggle in 2 Cor. 12. There, Paul learned an important lesson when God told him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness". (2 Cor. 12:9) This acts as a constant reminder to me that any strength I think I have, any ability I may be tempted to be proud of, any gift I may wish to be noticed is just pride masquerading as maturity.

In light of this, I would say that God has been kind to use my preaching and teaching to encourage, challenge, and build up his people. Additionally, over the years, I have learned that when I pay attention to the wisdom of God's Word and apply it in leadership, people respond positively and are further inspired to do good work.

Also, as I grow older, I understand and experience more of the complexity that comes from living as a Christian in a sinful, fallen world. God has taught me that wisdom is less about a single right answer than about navigating a collection of situations or circumstances in a God honoring way. Thus, while I

am not a counselor in any professional sense, I do find that sitting and talking with people, listening to their stories, and asking questions may be a slower way to offer help, but it is the better way.

6. What do you view as the importance of missions in the ministry of the Church?

Missions has been a big part of my life, even though I have never been called to serve as a full-time missionary in the traditional sense. I have participated in and led short term trips to places like Moldova and the Czech Republic. I have come alongside others to provide teaching and training in Israel and Scotland. I have joined other evangelists in open air preaching in Ireland and Canada.

I believe the church that is Christ centered and gospel preaching is also the church that ought to be mission sending. This means supporting missionaries and our own denominational efforts over the long term, but it also means partnering with others for effective ways to help in short term situations.

7. How do you see genuine discipleship taking place within the Church?

Discipleship is both taught and caught. A believer is not able to grow in Christ and mature in their faith if they are not increasing in their knowledge and understanding of God's Word. This is why Paul frequently refers to knowledge and understanding of believers in his letters. God's Word and the doctrines and theology we derive from it are the bedrock of discipleship.

It must be said, however, that there is an element to discipleship that is caught. It is not always easy to apply God's Word in the world we live in. How to live wisely and well is sometimes best understood in real time and real situations. A young teacher, mother, lawyer, builder, etc. can learn a lot from watching an older Christian in the same field or calling.

Discipleship is accomplished when we live life together. Pastors may take the lead in doing this and directing the congregation, but discipleship is something that involves the entire congregation, and something that older believers should be seeking to do for younger believers.

"We are all following Christ together; imperfect people being sanctified every day."

8. FBC is intentionally multi-generational. What do you believe is the Senior Pastor's role in ministering to all generations?

The senior pastor's role is to minister to the whole body of Christ, not just one part. This is most effectively done on a consistent basis by leading gathered worship every Sunday (and at other times when deemed important). The senior pastor's leadership of gathered worship does not have to mean he is the only one on the platform in front of everyone. It can, and often does mean that he is involved in the planning and order of weekly worship and others are included in various aspects (e.g. music, prayer, Bible reading, etc.).

Having said that, the senior pastor can augment his ministry by guiding and affording qualified members of the congregation the opportunity to lead smaller groups centered around specific stages in life. I know, for instance, that mothers of young children are often grateful for the opportunity to meet together and with older women because in that setting they find much needed rest, encouragement, and wisdom. Another example might be seniors / retirees who are facing a whole new set of challenges and find the fellowship of others who are going through this stage of life a good and even necessary encouragement.

In short, I would say that the senior pastor can minister effectively to a multi-generational congregation by keeping everyone's focus, first and foremost, on gathered worship (where the Word is read, preached, sung, and prayed), but also promoting smaller gatherings lead by members as a supplemental form of help and encouragement.

9. Drawing on your academic experience, how might FBC better reach college students and faculty within our Church and at local higher education institutions (UVA / PVCC)?

My first thought on this is that I need time to learn the culture of FBC and the ebb and flow of college life in Charlottesville. I understand that pastors Rob and Dale already established a connection with Cru (Campus Crusade) at UVA. I hope to continue developing that connection with pastor Benji (at the time of writing I haven't talked to Benji about this, so don't tell him just yet!).

Given that I have served as both a professor and seminary president, I am praying for wisdom about ways I might be uniquely positioned to reach out to faculty. In some ways, this is more challenging, but

the need for faculty to come to Christ is just as great as the need for students to follow Jesus.

On a broad scale, I would say that one way FBC can reach out to college students is by providing a context in which students feel welcome, faculty don't feel like outsiders, and all know, whether implicitly or explicitly, that God is present and at work in this congregation.

10. In light of current cultural controversies, what do you see as the Church's role in addressing those controversies?

Today, some of our particular challenges center around gender, partisan politics, race / ethnic identity, and developments in technology. At times, it may be needed or helpful to address these issues head on. But overall, I would urge people to remember the ordinary means of grace that God has given the church that have always sustained his people and will continue to sustain us regardless of the shape of our cultural moment.

The ordinary means of grace include the regular, consistent preaching and teaching of God's Word. 2 Pet. 1:3 reminds us that God has given us all things required for life and godliness. There is power in the Word of God because it will always accomplish what he sends it out to do (Isa. 55:11). The Word of God has the power to instruct, correct, challenge, encourage, condemn, judge, give hope. Without the regular ministry of the Word, Christians will stumble, grow confused, and erode the foundation on which we stand.

Another ordinary means of grace is the gathering of the church. The Bible commands us not to neglect meeting together, even though some think this may not apply to them. (Heb. 10:25) Meeting together for worship has power. It has the power to encourage the broken hearted. It has the power to correct the wayward. It has the power to guide the lost. It has this power because God's presence is known when his people are gathered in a way it cannot be known individually. Take, for example, the singing of hymns and spiritual songs. Singing them alone can gladden the heart but sung collectively there is power in the presence of hundreds of Spirit filled Christians praising God in unity.

A final ordinary means of grace I will mention are the ordinances or as some call them, the sacraments. Baptism is the external sign of inward grace. The Lord's Supper is a reminder that we must guard our hearts against sin and live in light of the glorious salvation won for us at Calvary. Both of these acts exhort us to look toward Jesus' second coming as an impetus for living obediently in the present.

11. What is your view of Biblical Church governance and how would you define the roles of Pastor-Elder-Overseer and Deacon?

In accord with the Baptist Faith & Message 2000, which has been adopted by FBC as its statement of faith, I believe each congregation has two offices: (1) pastor-elder-overseer, and (2) deacon.

The first, commonly called pastor, is an office / position that has other names as well - elder and overseer. In the New Testament, these three titles are used to describe three perspectives on the same office / position. We see this most clearly in Acts 20:17ff. There, Paul called together the "elders", then charges these same men to "shepherd the flock" which is the church, and to do so as "overseers". Also, in 1 Tim. 3, Paul describes the kind of man who is qualified to be an overseer, and then in chapter 5 warns Timothy not to appoint elders (different word) too quickly. Additionally, the list of qualities that must be true of an overseer is largely repeated in Titus 1 where Paul calls them elders. Finally, in 1 Pet. 5 Peter instructs the elders, who are shepherds, in their work as overseers.

These three perspectives show us that the office / position of pastor-elder-overseer is one of leadership in the church. The picture is of one who is older and spiritually mature, well versed in the Word of God and its application, competent to guide others without falling to the temptations of power, and cares for others in a way that exemplifies what it means to love our neighbor as ourselves.

The office / position of deacon is only specifically described to us in 1 Tim. 3:8-13. This role in the church is not one of leadership in the way the pastor-elder-overseer is. A good picture of diaconal ministry is given to us in Acts 6:1-7. There we see men who were called and commissioned to serve God's people in practical ways that helped the apostles focus on their own calling as leaders.

Obviously, FBC does not currently operate under this structure. Curious about this, I spoke with pastor Rob, and he agreed that elders and deacons are the two offices in the church, and affirmed that had he remained at FBC, a transition from leadership council to elders would have been a priority. From my perspective, I think moving towards a pastor-elder-overseer & deacon form of church governance will take a few years, not a few months. Also, we all need time to get to know one another before pursuing any change of that magnitude.

12. What would you most want our congregation to know about you?

Over the years as people have described me in my various public callings (pastor, professor, president), one of the key characteristics they often mention is my sense of humor. There is much that is serious in life, and it should be taken as such; but we must also guard against taking ourselves too seriously.

Along the same lines, friends have also noted how much I enjoy quality conversation over good food or a hot beverage. Whether building one another up in the faith or getting to know someone new or discussing the finer points of a particular subject, I find both the person and the engagement fascinating!

**"When preparing to preach,
I ask 'how do I help [the
Congregation] to see,
smell, and hear the text?'
Its been said that
'Preaching is turning ink
into blood.'"**

**"Whether through preaching,
teaching or one-on-one
discipleship, my goal has
always been to help believers
grow in their knowledge of
Scripture, cultivate
spiritual disciplines, deepen
their commitment to the local
church, and become
disciple-makers themselves."**