



At the very beginning of the process, we submitted all of this to the Lord and His timing, knowing that we could trust Him with this transition. We then contacted the North Central District of the EFCA and had a few meetings with them and sought guidance and counsel on how to approach and conduct the pastor search process. They have been very helpful and encouraging along the way.

With your approval we set up a Senior Pastor Search Team who we knew we could entrust the hard work to. They have served faithfully and have done a fantastic job of bringing us to where we are today.

We then received input from the congregation through the input sessions which were primarily conducted through the LifeGroups or special meetings. This input helped to form the church profile, the pastor profile, and the job description which describes who we are to the candidate and outlines the kind of man we want to see in Pastor Next.

The following is a brief description of how we, the elders, have come to know Ben and Beth. On December 30th, 2024, the elders met with the search team, and they shared an update on where they were in the process followed by introducing us to Ben and Beth for the first time. During the meeting, we reviewed his resume, family biography, application documents, ministry match analysis, interview notes between Ben and the search team, interview notes with Ben's references, and even the email correspondence between Ben and the search team. We greatly appreciated the search team's thorough information and level of transparency. On top of that, we were able to watch the recorded interviews on Zoom. On January 17th we had a joint meeting with Ben, Beth, the search team, and the elders. This was the first time the elders spoke with Ben and Beth and it was a great start to our relationship. On January 21st, the elders interviewed Ben over Zoom about theology and doctrine to understand his beliefs, preaching style, theological positions, and his approach to spiritual growth for the congregation. On January 30th, the elders interviewed Ben a second time over Zoom to understand his ability to lead the flock, his personal effectiveness as a shepherd, leadership style, educational approach, his experience in discerning the Holy Spirit's voice, and how to set goals and expectations for the Staff.

After discussing with the search team, reviewing all the candidate information, spending time with Ben and Beth, and investing hours of prayer into this decision, the elders unanimously agree with the search team and we recommend Ben Barthelemy to you, the congregation, as a strong candidate for Valley's next pastor. The following reasons give us confidence in this recommendation.

We have found Ben to meet the **Biblical qualifications** of a shepherd leader found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-3. Ben is above reproach, faithful to one wife, temperate, respectable, able to teach, not quick tempered, hospitable, gentle, not pugnacious, and is able to lead his family and manage his household well. During sermons, he likes to share stories and illustrations to help the truth of the message solidify in the hearts and minds of his hearers. He understands the differences between core beliefs, personal convictions, and preferences and he knows how to discern between these 3 areas. He desires to promote unity at all times. He avoids cherry picking the Bible and strives to teach the whole truth of Scripture. He enjoys teaching from all books of the Bible, both the Old Testament and the New Testament. His heart's desire is for people to know God more and to be more like Jesus. He loves God, loves people, has a strong biblical foundation, has a Godly character, and a heart for missions. We believe he is a strong servant leader, skilled in preaching and teaching, and he shows strong leadership abilities to shepherd God's people.

About his **character and personality**, Ben is calm, cool, laid back, and logical. He is not showy but is very thoughtful and takes his time when answering questions. During interviews he took the initiative to keep the conversation moving forward which made it clear to us that he is very easy to talk with. We had fun talking back and forth, we laughed and joked around, and we shared our hearts about God and the ministry work that He gives us. Ben is patient and is full of grace and wisdom. His leadership style is collaborative, and he enjoys working alongside people and wants to help them feel empowered. He can equip people with tools and resources to tackle challenges. He's a family man. He loves his wife and 4 girls and would do anything to make sure they're cared for and safe. He understands that Valley is a family with our own culture and that we are brothers and sisters in Christ. To Ben, family means that we have a Godly love for one another and that we can still show love and kindness even when we disagree. He has a heart for mentoring, discipleship, relationship, and community. He agrees with Valley's Vision, Mission, and Values, and wants to promote them going forward. We believe that Ben will be an amazing shepherd for God's flock here at Valley.

For these reasons and more, the elders unanimously recommend Ben Barthelemy to you as Valley's next pastor.