



*Eph 3:20 "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us."*

We are here today to share that God has indeed done exceedingly, abundantly above all that we could have asked or even thought according to His power at work in all of us – and I do mean all of us. Your prayers and ours – your obedience and ours – your patience and ours – has led us to this day.

On behalf of the Pulpit Committee and the Elders who sit beside me today, we want to share the following announcement:

One year ago, the elders stood on this pulpit and shared that BCC would be entering a time of transition. That announcement was followed by weeks of prayer and meetings among the leadership to select members of the pulpit committee.

In February of 2019, we convened the first pulpit committee meeting which consists of 7 members; Joe Agresta, Paul Anderson, Geoff Ekstein and John Stewart from the Elders; Marilyn Hannay representing the Missions Committee; Betty Bassett from the Deaconesses, and Steve Rowe from the Deacons.

The Pulpit Committee prayerfully worked to determine the process by which we would conduct the search. We solicited counsel from others who



had been through searches, we read countless articles and we spoke with several search firms to determine if their services would be beneficial. While we decided against hiring a search firm, we did engage a search consultant who provided valuable insights and assistance. Prior to soliciting applications, a lot of work needed to be done, including revamping our website; writing a position profile which includes the job description and information about our church; writing a community profile describing the area; as well as creating the entire application process—including applicant forms, repositories of collected applications, methods to communicate and distribute applications that were received, protocols for communicating with applicants, and the process by which we would evaluate applicants. Once we had completed all this work, we determined that we would post the position on three job sites and with over a dozen seminaries. After many months of dedicated work by all members of the committee, we opened the process to applicants on September 20, 2019.

\*Process slide

The pulpit committee met every Thursday evening. We started every meeting in prayer. We prayed for the process, we prayed for the church, we prayed for the applicants, we prayed for each other, but most of all we prayed that we would be able to discern God's will for the man that God



had already selected to join us here at BCC. We prayed that God would be directing the heart of this man, as He directed ours, and that no one could deny who God had appointed.

In total, we received nearly 100 inquiries by email, job sites and phone calls. All potential applicants were directed to apply through our website in order to be considered. Some 40 applicants completed this formal application process, which required submission of resume, sermon samples, testimony, references and answers to some basic questions including agreement with our Statement of Faith.

When an application was received, Steve would catalog their submission and create a file, while Marilyn would email them and welcome them into the application process. We then met to prayerfully discuss and discern each and every applicant. Every applicant was reviewed by every member of the pulpit committee. No member of the pulpit committee had any more say than another.

Sermons were listened to, resumes were reviewed, and testimonies read. Many applicants were declined after initial review. Several required more information for us to decide to proceed or not. About a dozen made it past the initial screening. Those who we moved forward past the initial screening, received an introductory phone call. A questionnaire was then



presented to these applicants asking for written responses to 12 questions to get a better understanding of their vision for ministry.

Applicants whose vision aligned with BCC, progressed to a video call with all the members of the pulpit committee. This was a 90-minute opportunity to hear men share their hearts and for us to ask probing questions to discern if they would be a fit for BCC. If we believed that an applicant would be a fit, the next step was an elder-led doctrinal video call.

The doctrinal video call, scheduled for two and a half hours, was specifically meant to go deeper into theological beliefs. Questions were prepared to help determine an applicant's position on topics to determine alignment with our Statement of Faith, and discern if there were any aberrant doctrinal positions. After ascertaining doctrinal alignment, a video call with the applicant and his wife was scheduled. This was to discuss, evaluate and ensure family support for the applicant's call into ministry.

Should an applicant meet these qualifications, a comprehensive review was conducted giving each member of the Pulpit Committee the freedom to ask any question or request more information from an applicant. Following the review, a visit to the applicant's church would be scheduled for the purpose of seeing the applicant preach in person and see how he interacts with others.



Upon a successful visit to an applicant's church, the Pulpit Committee would present the applicant to the full Board of Elders. The Elders would then extend an invitation for the applicant to make a secret visit BCC. This would be an opportunity for the applicant, Elders and Pulpit Committee to meet and prayerfully discern God's leading. The Elders would then extend an invitation for the applicant to formally candidate at BCC. The process would conclude with a vote affirming the candidate as Lead Pastor.

When we started this process nearly a year ago, none of us felt up to the task. None of us were confident that we had what was needed to come to a successful conclusion. And the truth is, as we stand here today, we didn't have what it takes – but God always does. Our pulpit meetings were filled with laughter and love – love for Jesus, love for His church, love for the applicants, and love for one another. It has truly been a joyous time for all of us this past year.

On September 23rd, 2019, we received an application that had all members of the Pulpit Committee interested. We were impressed with his thoughtfulness, humility and maturity in both his written responses and his sermons. Every contact with this applicant only strengthened our initial impressions. While we continued to move others into and through the process, this one candidate continued to impress us as we had more and



more contact with him. Along every step of the process, we continued to seek God's will and grew ever more confident that we had found our next Lead Pastor.

On December 6th, following all the prior steps in the process, John Stewart, Paul Anderson, Marilyn Hannay and Geoff Ekstein boarded a flight to Raleigh, North Carolina to visit an applicant and his family. We had the privilege of spending many hours over 3 days with the applicant, his wife and his two sons. We met with his Senior Pastor and elders at "Harvest Raleigh". We attended his church as he preached a wonderful message on December 8th. We then had the privilege of joining the small group he leads for lunch. Spending this time with them was confirming for each of us that this applicant, truly is the man that God is calling to join us here as our Lead Pastor.

After months of prayerful consideration and diligent effort, the pulpit committee confidently and unanimously recommended one individual to the Board of Elders. In turn the Elders have enthusiastically and unanimously affirmed that choice. We are excited to present to you Andrew Watkins as the man that we believe The Lord has called to be Lead Pastor of BCC.

\*Intro Video



Andrew, Veronika, and their youngest son Nathan joined us last weekend. The Elders as well as the Pulpit Committee had the privilege of spending some wonderful time with them. We all found ourselves growing expectant and excited about them joining us here at BCC.

Obviously, this has been a long, thoughtful, laborious and prayerful process. It was a process meant for us as a Pulpit Committee to advance applicants only when we were led to continue the process forward in unity. Andrew was the only applicant to reach the point of the doctrinal video call and beyond. We have spent many hours getting to know Andrew personally and directly. We are impressed with his humility, candor and love of Jesus and His church. Andrew's only goal is to serve where God is calling him to preach and teach the Word. A place where he not only could serve, but a place where he could put down roots and raise his family. After spending time with Andrew and his wife Veronika, we found Veronika to be a wonderful, spirit-filled woman of great faith, loving and supporting her husband's call to ministry.

We are excited to announce that Andrew and Veronika, along with their children will be joining us next Sunday, February 2nd. Andrew will preach Sunday and they will be with us for the week, with Andrew preaching again on February 9th. We have created a new page on our website to introduce



Andrew and his family to you. The tab is labeled “candidate.” There is the video introduction, background information on Andrew and his family, information from the pulpit committee as well as past sermons that Andrew has preached. I would encourage you to get to know him before they join us next Sunday.

During that week, there will be several opportunities to meet Andrew and his family. Along with being available following the worship services, Andrew will join us for Prayer and Praise on Wednesday evening. We will also be hosting a church wide breakfast on Saturday February 8th. The full schedule is also available on the website.

Our desire is that you have an opportunity to meet Andrew while he is here with us. In order to help facilitate questions that you may have, we have created a frequently asked questions section on the website. We have also created a form and encourage you to submit questions on our website so that they may be answered at the breakfast on February 8th.

We will conclude Andrew’s week with us with a church meeting on February 9th at noon to affirm the call of Andrew Watkins as Lead Pastor. The Elders have determined the process for this meeting, information for which is available on our website. Printed copies will also be available along with the ballots beginning next Sunday.





We understand that we have had the responsibility and the privilege of being immersed in this process and Andrew's candidacy. The information that we are providing is to give you a deeper understanding of Andrew and the process which has brought the Pulpit Committee and the Elders to an enthusiastic and unanimous decision to present Andrew Watkins as the only candidate for BCC's next Lead Pastor. We have not been under any timetable. There is no hesitancy or pause in presenting Andrew Watkins to the church. We were not rushed in this decision. We have been prayerful, patient and discerning along the way. We know that you will love him as we do, and you will be just as excited for him to join us as we are. We stand before you praising God for His faithfulness, His provision and His leading all along this process. This is truly a celebration of what God has done.

All praise, glory and honor to His name;

The Pulpit Committee and Board of Elders of Bethlehem Community



## Closing Remarks:

We pray that you will join us as we prepare to welcome Andrew and his family next week. We want to thank you all for your prayers which have sustained and encouraged the Pulpit Committee and The Elders this past year. We also want to thank you for the trust that you have placed in us. We have spent countless hours reviewing and evaluating, discussing and determining, praying and discerning for God's will to be known. We have worked tirelessly to ensure that Andrew met all the qualifications, including educational and doctrinal, to be our Lead Pastor and is equipped to lead the teaching and preaching ministry here at BCC. Your job in this endeavor is to spend time on our website getting to know Andrew before he comes next week. Review the sermons, read his story and submit questions. While he is here, join us for our worship services, come to prayer and praise, enjoy breakfast together on February 8th. But most of all – pray. And when it comes time to affirm Andrew as Lead Pastor, let The Holy Spirit guide you.

Lets close returning to Eph 3:20-21

*“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”*