

This morning I have a brief announcement on behalf of the West Vancouver Baptist Church Council.

Several weeks ago I brought an informal update on Council's activities—the first in a regular cycle of reports. I suppose that means today I am providing an update on our update.

Autumn is “review season.” It's a time when we look closely at the many aspects of our church's life, celebrating the good things that are happening (as items of “Thanksgiving”), and also identifying areas that may need attention or fresh energy as we anticipate the new calendar year which is starting to sneak up on us.

We have been busy with reviews on a number of fronts. This is nothing unusual—it's just normal process. But it has made us increasingly aware of the challenges that our church faces as the interim period between Pastor Axel's departure and the hiring of a new Lead Pastor stretches out. We are conscious that we are in an “in-between” time. Many aspects of our life together are running normally. Still, there are places where there are uncertainties, where arrangements feel tentative or temporary. And there is a certain level of understandable impatience, as we ask the question that saints have raised over the centuries: “How long, O Lord, will you make us wait for the next step in our pastoral journey?”

We are grateful for the work our Pastoral Search Committee have been doing, and are hopeful that the search will come to fruition soon. Nevertheless, we realize that this in-between time has run longer than many had expected. And we are conscious that this creates challenges along the way.

(Incidentally in a recent meeting with local pastors, our regional minister Larry Schram shared some statistics that help to bring some perspective. Did you know that:

- Of the 60 CBWC churches in BC, 15 are currently looking for a new Lead Pastor
- Currently, the average time to recruit and land a new Lead Pastor is between 18 and 30 months?

Please continue to pray for our Search Committee as they work on our behalf.)

With these things in mind, Council has recently decided to make some adjustments to the configuration of our interim pastoral leadership structure. In particular, we believe that West Van Baptist will be better equipped to move through the next stage on our journey by making that structure more explicitly team-oriented.

We have certainly appreciated the strengths of Chris's leadership among us as Interim Pastor. Chris has helped us to find our way through several significant crises. He has promoted good organization and allowed us to operate smoothly, especially through the transition from online back to in-person worship. We are grateful for his diligence, his dedication, and his encouragement to pursue biblically-informed discipleship.

We are also conscious that Chris has found himself carrying a broader, heavier plate of responsibilities than any of us expected at the start of this interim period. Our pastoral and staff team has seen several transitions, and is not as large as it was in summer 2021. Our ministry activities have sometimes been more complicated than we anticipated. The in-between time has drawn out, and will continue for at least a little while yet. In a number of ways this has been a stressful season, and it has had its share of large and small bumps along the road.

So, as we prepare to move forward into the coming months, Council is looking to make some adjustments which will spread responsibility and redistribute leadership. We want to enable Chris to give greater focus to the ministry areas that are his special expertise, while incorporating the complementary gifts of one or more others who will broaden the team. We believe the result will be a more effective and sustainable structure. We also hope this will help us to be even better prepared for the new Lead Pastor the Lord will bring us—understanding that our Search Committee is specifically looking for someone who will work well in a collaborative leadership environment.

What I am announcing today is a direction, not a specific arrangement. Council is in discussion about ways to build a more team-oriented structure to address the interim pastoral needs of the church for the coming season. It will take a little time to finalize plans, and a little more to get all the pieces in place. In the

meantime we have established some directional guideposts, and we will begin making incremental adjustments in the coming weeks.

This adjustment will involve some redesigning of current roles, and it will mean bringing in some additional help. There may be some financial implications, though these will be modest and manageable within our current budget. Council is aware that a more team-oriented approach will require us to work more closely with our pastoral leaders as well; we see this is a positive step both for the present and in anticipation of the future.

Our goal as a Council is to be open and responsive to the congregation. We want you to be aware of things we are working on, and we welcome your suggestions. As more information becomes available, we will be happy to provide further updates.

We are encouraged by the many ways that we see God at work in our church this fall. We are conscious of our frailty—that none of us have reached perfection, and there are always areas where we can do better. That is our goal as we work on this and on other projects.

We are also very conscious of God's grace at work in and through us. We think often of Paul's words in 2 Cor 4, that

We have the treasure of the gospel in jars of clay, showing that the all-surpassing power at work in our midst is from God and not from us.

Thanks so much to you all for your prayers, and your partnership in the church's ministry.

Ken Radant, for Council