

Some things to know about Ken Radant

A little personal history

It was my great privilege to grow up in a devout, active Christian family where faith in God was as natural as breathing, and stewardship of one's gifts was "just what disciples do." In that context, I came to faith in Christ at an early age. Like most church kids, I wrestled with issues of faith and commitment in my teens. But thanks, in large measure to camp ministries, a vibrant youth program, and the influence of treasured mentors and Christian friends, I was spared the worst of the spiritual detours that too often waylay church-going young adults. By my final year of high school, I had a clear sense of calling to "ministry" (whatever that might end up being). It wasn't what I had originally expected or planned, but it was unmistakable and affirmed in a number of ways. So after graduation, I left my home in Calgary and proceeded to our denominational Bible College in Regina (then Canadian Bible College, of the Christian and Missionary Alliance) to get further training and direction.

Bible College was a wonderful season. I learned many things, received confirmation about my core gifts, and—perhaps most important of all—met and built a committed friendship with Diane, paving the way for our marriage a year after grad. During those years it also became clear to me that the pastoral roles available to a 22-year-old weren't really a good fit. On the other hand, I had academic aptitudes, suggesting that a little more education would not be wasted. So I went on to do a year of seminary in Regina, followed by an MA and then a PhD in theology and church history at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in greater Chicago.

To our surprise and delight, God brought Diane and myself back to Western Canada, where I have served for the last 33 years as a seminary faculty member, first at Prairie Graduate School in Alberta, then at the ACTS Seminaries of Trinity Western University, and most recently at Carey Theological College. It has been a privilege to work with fine colleagues in each school, and to serve many wonderful men and women who were furthering their education in pursuit of pastoral and other ministry roles.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the life of scholarship and teaching. But the Lord has seen fit to throw some unexpected twists into my path as well. The most significant was a partial reassignment into administration. Schools need organizational leadership as well as competent faculty, and sometimes faculty get the call into administrative roles in spite of their objections and best efforts to stay clear. This has been a large part of my own journey. Between 1996 and 2020, my faculty work has been combined, and sometimes overshadowed by work as an academic dean and principal. The administrative roles have allowed me to contribute to the life of my schools at another level, and they have certainly been a source of personal growth and learning. They are also a main reason for my moving from one school to another.

Diane and I always felt that the call to serve Christ in theological education was every bit as much a form of "ministry" as pastoring would have been. I've done my best to bring that mindset into the study, the classroom, and the boardroom. It has also meant that both of us have looked for ways to serve actively in the local churches we've attended in Alberta,

Abbotsford, and most recently in North Vancouver. Prior to our coming to West Van Baptist, we were both active in various aspects of worship and teaching ministry in each of our home churches. I also served as an Elders' Board member in Calgary and in Abbotsford. Our engagement here at WBVC has varied a little from year to year, but we've thoroughly enjoyed our role in the English-language Conversation Club, together with my occasional speaking and involvement on Council.

So how did I end up as a pastoral candidate for WVBC?

This also was a complete surprise—though looking back I certainly see God's hand at work clearing the path.

In 2020 I was able to set aside my administrative responsibility and return to a full-time faculty role at Carey. It was a delightful transition, and I fully expected to stay in that role for the rest of my working career, perhaps well into semi-retirement. I was happy as a proverbial clam, and not looking for anything new.

Then Covid happened. Carey navigated the challenges of the pandemic quite well, maintaining a healthy student body and good academic programs. But like many Christian schools, our college had to absorb some significant financial stresses, and these continued to affect programming even after the official Covid lockdowns ended. Ultimately it was necessary to do some strategic downsizing, and that included reducing the faculty pool. My own role was part of that process, and so in late April, I learned that I was to be laid off, with a little sabbatical time to help with the transition.

Perhaps I should have seen that a change was coming. Over the 2022-23 year, I found that my prayer times often involved conversations like this: "Lord, I'm loving the place you have put me, and am grateful for the privilege to serve in this way. But I don't ever want to become stagnant or over-comfortable in my walk with You. Please keep me growing, and use me in the ways that will be most fruitful. I am willing to follow You—just keep showing me where I should go."

I expected that He would open some new opportunities in relation to my seminary teaching and writing. I wasn't looking to change lanes into a different area of ministry altogether. But when the news came that my time at Carey was finishing, I realized that this might be a season for different things. Perhaps even a shift into pastoral ministry—something that had always been on my heart, but not on the radar for many years.

Now, of course, I was well aware that West Van Baptist was engaging in a pastoral search. I have prayed often that we would be guided to the right lead pastor. But I never seriously thought about stepping into that role myself. I was already fully immersed in ministry at school, and was involved in other ways at the church as time allowed. The idea crossed my mind now and then as one of those "hmm, wouldn't that be interesting?" things, but it simply wasn't a possibility while I was teaching.

With the news that my faculty role at Carey would soon end, I found myself re-thinking the question. I quickly reached 2 conclusions: (1) that I would be open to the possibility if it became clear that God was pointing me in that direction, and (2) that I would take absolutely no steps to pursue the pastoral position myself.

It is not uncommon for pastors to be chosen from within a church. It can be a very natural process with many advantages. However, it is unusual for a member of a church's Council to move into the role, and it can create all sorts of problems with conflict-of-interest if that person puts himself/herself forward as a candidate. So, I made a commitment not to take initiative in any way with respect to the WVBC search. Besides, this summer I knew that the Search Committee had a couple candidates, and they needed to be entirely free to pursue the fish that were on the line. Now and then people who knew about my transition have asked me whether I'd be interested in pastoring at WVBC. My response has always been the same: "If the Search Committee were to approach me, I'm open to talk with them about it. But I think it is inappropriate to put my name forward for the role, and I will not take initiative to apply for it."

Well, the Search Committee asked the question. This summer it became clear that their other candidates were not right, and they began looking in other directions. That led to conversations with me, and here we are.

In the 5+ years that Diane and I have attended West Van Baptist, we have come to love the church and its people, and we have enjoyed serving in various ways. The idea of taking on this different, more intensive role is exciting. We believe there is a good match between the current needs of the church and the gifts God has given me. We see evidence of His leading, opening and closing doors at the right time, working in our own hearts, and guiding conversations both formal and informal. Diane and I recognize that there will need to be further confirmation, both to the congregation and to us, before a final decision is made. In the meantime, we are seeking to be obedient to what the Lord has indicated so far, and we continue to pray, to consult with friends and counsellors, and to walk through the discernment process with all of you. We don't know exactly where the path will take us—remembering that it has been full of surprises up to this point!—but we are confident that our Lord will make the way plain and give all the grace needed to follow His leading.

What kind of pastoral candidate am I?

An unusual one.

Unusual because I was asked while serving as the Chair of Council. There's nothing illegitimate about moving from the one role to the other. My experience on Council over the past 1.5 years has actually been very helpful in terms of getting to know the church, understanding its history and strengths and weaknesses and challenges and opportunities, building bridges with its leadership, etc. In a lot of ways I have an advantage, since I'm not starting out from zero. But it's still not typical, and it has required some very careful stepping over the past couple months, to do my Council work well without crossing lines I shouldn't cross.

I'm also unusual because I come as someone who trained to be a pastor, and who has spent over 3 decades working in theological education and training others to be pastors, yet who has never actually been a professional pastor myself. I've got plenty of church leadership experience, many resources to draw on, and a great connection of colleagues who have taught (and continue to teach) me many things. I'm extremely well equipped for some aspects of pastoral ministry, where I've specialized. There are other areas where I'm going to have to learn and grow and develop. I don't think that's a bad thing—everyone needs to learn as they come into a new place of ministry. But it's an unusual situation all the same.

Hopefully I'm also a good candidate. That, of course, is ultimately something that the Search Committee, the Council, and the congregation will need to decide. I wouldn't allow my name to stand for this search if I didn't believe that I have the kinds of gifts and abilities to let me fill the role well. I want what's good for West Van Baptist and its people, and would only take on the role if it's clear to us all that I am in fact the right fit for this season. As I've said already, Diane and I see evidence of God's leading in this direction, which is why we're engaged in the candidacy process. We are confident that He will continue to lead, and that if He does place us in the role, He will also gift and enable and guide in all the ways that are needed.

A few other things about me

I'm conscious that people will have a long, long list of questions as they think about whether I'd be the right person to step into the pastoral role at WVBC. Many of those need to be addressed in the interview process and over time as we all get to know each other better in this context. But it's common to say a few things about one's philosophy of ministry and related perspectives at this stage, to help cover some of the biggest questions. So here are a few points that I hope will help to give a better sense of who I am and how I lead.

1. ***Anchored in Scripture:*** I am deeply committed to the authority and power of the Word of God. We don't worship the Bible, but it is through the Bible that we have received the gospel, and in the Bible that we find the essential content of the Christian faith together with guidance for our lives and ministries. The Bible doesn't answer all our questions; but we need to pay very close attention to the things it does say, and let it guide our life as a church. My teaching ministry over the past 30+ years has centered around Scripture, and that would be the anchor for any kind of pastoral ministry I do.
2. ***Theologically informed:*** This builds on the previous point. I do not mean that I spend all my time talking about theology, quoting famous authors, promoting traditions, etc. The point, rather, is this: there are many different things that we could lean upon to guide our planning and decision-making: tradition, pragmatics, what is most popular, the latest fad in ministry strategy, and the like. There's a place for other things. But ultimately I think we need to begin with what we believe to be *true* (which is what our theology is). That truth needs to be clearly understood and internalized. And it needs to be the starting point for other plans and decisions. I want to be truth-guided.

3. ***Theologically conservative (but hopefully not in a simplistic way):*** Over the past few centuries, many people have attempted to redefine the Christian faith in ways that fit better with current ideas and cultural trends. The problem is, in doing this we inevitably end up with a Jesus who looks just like us, and a faith flavored by whatever is popular at the time. Genuine Christian faith has always been in tension with popular culture. I am committed to the historic Christian faith and worldview, as I understand it, which makes me a theological conservative. At the same time, I don't think we are able to share the gospel in a relevant way in today's world if all we ever do is quote old clichés which answer questions that no one is asking anymore. The faith-once-delivered needs to be clearly understood in its historical and biblical context, and effectively communicated to the 21st century world, speaking to today's questions as well as those of the 1st century.
4. ***Teaching emphasis:*** A healthy church which is grounded in Scripture and a solid Christian worldview needs to be marked by good teaching. This is one of the most important roles of a pastoral leader. It also happens to be one of my major areas of giftedness, and the thing I have spent most of my time doing as a faculty member. I'm committed to providing good teaching myself (in sermons and elsewhere), and to encouraging good teaching throughout our church.
5. ***Gift and Body-based ministry:*** The church is the Body of Christ, equipped with gifts from the Spirit. This can sound like a cliché, but I include it because I want to emphasize that the church is not the pastor, or the Council, or the larger leadership structure. The church is the community of people who follow Jesus together, in our case gathering as WVBC. And it is *the church* that does ministry. Pastors and other leaders provide teaching, coordination, facilitation, and a certain amount of guidance. But our role, as Ephesians 4 makes clear, is to help the church to grow and to serve. That has been my mindset as a faculty member, training others to serve. And it will color my work as a pastor, called to train and equip the Body to serve.
6. ***Team orientation:*** A healthy church functions as a Body, made up of gifted and mutually-supportive members. And that church's leadership need to function as a team. Leadership is not about a pastor or any other individual calling the shots and telling everyone what to do. It is about sharing wisdom with each other and listening to the Lord's voice together. This is true in the staff team, the Council team, and all our other leadership structures. I don't feel a personal need always to be the team captain — though I can play that role when needed. I definitely value and want to work with leadership as a team, learning and serving together.
7. ***Consensus building:*** This goes with the previous point. Both among our leadership and as a congregation, we want to hear the Lord and plan our responses together. But it's more than just that. People often think that, especially in Baptist and other congregational churches, our way of decision-making is essentially a kind of democracy in which the view with the most votes wins. This is not what the church should be. Simply voting and finding out who has the majority is how we create a division between

winners and losers. Our task is to follow the Spirit's leading *together*. As much as possible, this means trying to build consensus, finding the path that we can agree upon as the thing God is calling us to do. We won't always all agree on everything. But as much as possible we need to seek for the consensus which signals the Spirit's leading.

8. **Process orientation:** I've played a variety of leadership roles in different kinds of ministries and organizations. Each has its own unique flavor, and sometimes different styles of leadership are needed. For the most part, I have found that if the goal is to build consensus and to work together as a group, the best way to lead is to establish, understand, and follow good processes. (This, in contrast to an approach where the leader tries to get others to follow through personal charisma and a lot of shouting and cheerleading or nagging.) This is the kind of leadership I've exercised in academic settings. Personally, I think it's what we need in most church settings as well. It isn't always as exciting as the charismatic, "hey everyone follow me!" approach, and sometimes it moves a bit more slowly. But it allows us to move *together*.
9. **Missional commitment:** In a world where there are always a million things to do, it's critical that we never forget the main things. I confess that I'm enough of a detail person that I sometimes can get a little tied up in the small things. But my commitment and goal is to keep coming back and centering on the most important matters—both personally and as a leader. There are certain basic things that we're called to do and be as a church. We can debate exactly how to do them. We may supplement them with other things. But we need to be sure those essential things happen, and make them the compass that helps us to know what direction to go. That's one of the roles of a leader, and something I'm committed to pursue.
10. **Transparency and integrity:** It's hard to build consensus and to work as a team if we don't trust each other—and hard to trust if we're not trustworthy. I'm committed to maintaining integrity, in my personal life and in my leadership. And I'm committed to an open and honest approach to people and things as much as possible. Obviously there are areas where we need to keep confidences as well (that's part of integrity too). But if we're going to journey together, it's important to keep lines of communication open.
11. **Diligence and balance:** The work of the Kingdom deserves our very best. Jesus asks for our all, and He is worthy of nothing less. I want to be a diligent servant who stewards my life and resources effectively. At the same time, I serve the God who created rhythms, who gives us sabbath, and who calls us to shalom. I do not believe the popular misconception that God wants His children to "burn themselves out" in His service. (Even if I did, I'm not in my 30's anymore, and I simply can't do 80 hour weeks the way I sometimes have.) I'm committed to giving my very best. I'm also committed to pace myself so that I can sustain my service over the long haul and not run out of gas next week.
12. **Prayer and Spirit-reliance:** Of course, in the end, fruitful ministry isn't a matter of our efforts. It flows out of gifts of God's grace, and it depends entirely on the enabling and

fruit-producing work of the Holy Spirit. I know that intellectually, and I seek to apply it in my ministry as well. Prayerfulness is one aspect of this attitude since it places us in a posture of trust and dependence on God. It's critical for me, and for our church as a whole.

Well, I could probably add a bunch of things. But these are some of the values that have shaped my life and ministry, which I bring with me into this candidating process, and ultimately into a pastoral role should the Lord lead in that direction.

May His guidance be clear for us all, and His grace abundantly on us as we continue to serve Him, wherever the path leads.

Ken