

Special Voter's Meeting Minutes  
December 3, 2023 – **APPROVED 3/10/24**

**Call to Order**

President of the Governing Board, Craig Grundmeier called the meeting to order at 1:00pm. There were 145 members in attendance.

**Opening Prayer & Devotion**

Pastor Joe Meyer opened with a prayer and devotion on the Call process.

**Approval of October 2023 Congregational Annual Meeting Minutes**

Dwight Carlson made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 2023 Congregational Annual meeting. Steve Roy seconded. The motion passed.

**Introduction of the Call Ministry Action Team**

Craig Grundmeier thanked the Call MAT and Governing Board throughout this process. Chairman Scott Raecker introduced the Call Ministry Action Team members. In addition to Scott, they are Scott Strachan, Jennie Ganzer, Rachel Onsrud, Cheryl Gilg and Governing Board members Wendy Kropf and Jacque Thole. Craig Grundmeier served as an ex-officio member.

**Report from the Call Ministry Action Team**

Scott reaffirmed what Pastor Joe has mentioned, stating that our congregation is in a position of strength. The members of the Call MAT have all been honored to serve on behalf of the congregation and understand the confidence that has been entrusted to them. This is a divine process and they have relied on the Holy Spirit to guide them throughout the process and know that God's presence was with them and in their united recommendation.

They first met on June 7<sup>th</sup> to review the Call process provided by Pastor Joe, looking at the governing documents that would guide their efforts. They also derived a compact that guided every discussion to help discern God's will. This was shared with the congregation to also help guide today's meeting. The Call MAT also reviewed the list of qualities and characteristics for our next Senior Leader, which was provided by the Governing Board. These were shared with the congregation throughout the Call process and again at the meeting today.

They then met with IDW President, Dr. Steve Turner, reviewing his role and responsibilities throughout the process. Shortly after, names of additional Pastors were provided by President Turner for discernment. These names were all published and again read at the meeting today. Upon receiving these names, information for each Pastor was received (Pastor Information Form and Self Evaluation Tool). The Call MAT then spent hours listening to sermons, reading material, researching and seeking God's guidance.

The field was narrowed from 8 to 4 unanimously. One of these pastors voluntarily withdrew, Pastor Leon Jameson. Pastor Eric Huan, Pastor Philip Robarge and Pastor Ben Johnson engaged in online conversations with the Call MAT. The following meeting was held shortly after these conversations and there was an overwhelming sense of peace with the candidates that they had available to recommend. With unanimous clarity on God's will, the Call MAT identified Pastor Ben Johnson to be brought forward to the congregation for a vote as our next Senior Pastor.

Scott further explained the process of voting and extending a call, which could be approved/declined by the congregation and accepted or declined by Pastor Ben Johnson.

The basis for the Call MAT's unanimous recommendation is that Pastor Ben exceeded all the other pastors in core and critical areas, standing apart in his preaching, orating and teaching gifts. He has the most relevant experience to lead a church of our size with a keen awareness and utilizes a wide range of worship styles from traditional to contemporary. He is aligned with core beliefs of women in leadership, which is our current practice. He is forward thinking, is open to new ideas to reach into the community and embraces technology in his ministry.

### **Motion to Approve Pastoral Recommendation**

On behalf of the Call MAT, and with clarity and faith-filled unity, Scott Raecker made a motion to approve the recommendation for Pastor Ben Johnson to be called for our Senior Pastor at GDLC. Stephen Vernon seconded the motion. The floor was opened for discussion.

### **Question & Answers** (Questions in bold font, answers are not bolded)

1. **With calling Pastor Ben to be our Senior Pastor from a staff of three pastors and one soon retiring, what will happen to fill the vacancy?** If Pastor Ben would accept the call, it would be up to his vision for the church and the process to open another Call to fill that role. Pastor Joe offered additional insight, stating that he would recommend Pastor Ben wait ~6 months to allow himself to have time to get to know the staff and congregation in his new role.
2. **A member clarified that Pastor Ben take 6 months to identify how to go forward, with Pastor Joe staying through Easter, would we be down to 2 Pastors after that?** Pastor Joe clarified that he is under contract through Easter on a part-time basis. After that, Pastor Joe is fine with continuing to preach on a part-time basis (only at the request of Pastor Ben).
3. **A member mentioned having a Vicar at a previous church and the question was posed if we would have guest preachers while waiting to fill a potential vacancy.** Pastor Joe indicated that yes, we could utilize the vicarage program if appropriate.
4. A member stated that we were all called to be at this meeting today and that if Pastor Ben accepts the call, God already has it all figured out and we have continually been blessed at this church.
5. **If we do go the route, looking for a vicar, what is the process for that?** Pastor Joe indicated that Vicars are sent by the seminary to the congregation.
6. **Are many vicars available?** Pastor Joe indicated that there are not many vicars available, but we are a favorable congregation.
7. **There was a question if non-members can vote.** No, only members are able to vote, and all votes are verified with a list of membership.

### **Vote**

Craig Grundmeier opened the meeting to the vote, allowing time for the members to vote. These were collected by Governing Board members and verified for membership. There were 306 votes to approve, 41 votes to decline the recommendation. Six votes were excluded due to inability to verify membership.

### **Prayer of Thanks**

Pastor Joe offered a closing prayer with the congregation praying the Lord's Prayer.

### **Close of Meeting**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:03pm by Governing Board President Craig Grundmeier.

Respectfully submitted by Jacque Thole.