



Lead Pastor Succession Frequently Asked Questions

Wait ... what??? Pastor Paul is retiring?

Yes. On Sunday, July 4th Pastor Paul announced his retirement via video played at all services and all campuses. The video was also distributed via email to all SMCC attenders. You can still see it on the SMCC Succession Planning webpage: www.smccutah.org/succession. This webpage is also where you can go to get more information regarding the entire process.

July 4th seems like just a short time ago. Why are we making a decision so fast on our next Lead Pastor?

Well actually, Pastor Paul shared his plans for retirement with the SMCC Elder Board in February of 2020. Since that time the Elders have engaged with an outside consulting firm (Vanderbloemen) to work through all the strategic planning and organizational issues related to choosing a new Lead Pastor for a church the size of SMCC. So the succession planning process has really been going on for over 20 months.

SMCC Elder Board? Huh? Who are they? And why do they get to choose the next Lead Pastor?

Like most evangelical non-denominational churches in the United States, SMCC is governed and led by a group of SMCC FDFD attenders who meet the biblical qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Elders fulfill two roles. First, they provide oversight to the church as prescribed in 1 Peter 5. Second, they function as the SMCC corporate Board of Directors just like a Board would do in any other non-profit corporation. When SMCC was first incorporated as a church in Utah a document called "The SMCC Bylaws" was developed to outline how the church would function. It is these bylaws that specify it is the Elder Board's responsibility to nominate a new Lead Pastor to the congregation when the current Lead Pastor retires or steps down. It is then the responsibility of the fully engaged attenders in the congregation to cast a vote to either affirm or disaffirm the nomination. If two-thirds of the votes affirm the nomination, then that individual will be the next SMCC Lead Pastor.

So what was the process used to nominate Pastor Eric to succeed Pastor Paul?

A detailed review of the process will occur at the campus town hall meetings. We'd highly recommend you attend one. But generally speaking, the process was composed of the following steps:

1. The Elder Board hired a consulting firm (Vanderbloemen) to help develop and assist with the process.
2. Vanderbloemen conducted an initial assessment in August of 2020 and made several recommendations to setup SMCC well for leadership succession.
3. The Elder Board implemented most of the recommendation to include changes to church governance, organizational structure, and leadership development.

4. The Elder Board commissioned a congregational survey asking what our congregation expected from the next Lead Pastor. These results were used to develop a Lead Pastor Search Profile documenting the qualifications, experience, and character traits needed on SMCC's next Lead Pastor.
5. At the recommendation of Vanderbloemen, the Lead Pastor Search Profile was shared with SMCC staff and qualified internal candidates were invited to apply. Pastor Eric applied.
6. A robust evaluation was conducted by both Vanderbloemen and the Elder Board. These evaluations involved Pastor Eric and several other SMCC attenders/staff (men and women) using both written questionnaires, personality assessments, and extensive interviews. The input of all participants was evaluated by both Vanderbloemen and the Elder Board.
7. Conclusion. To quote from the Vanderbloemen evaluation report, *"Based on our conversations with Eric and others and with our understanding of the needs, vision, and culture of SMCC, we believe Eric Nelson will be an effective successor to Paul Robie as the Lead Pastor at SMCC and recommend the Elders officially call him to that role. We recommend him for the role without reservations."* In addition, a succession planning committee consisting of eight SMCC Elders representing all five campuses, after reviewing all the evaluations, considering input from multiple sources, personally evaluating Eric's leadership acumen as XP of Ministry, and conducting a thorough interview, unanimously agreed with Vanderbloemen's recommendation to nominate Eric.

Based on this process, why does the Elder Board believe Pastor Eric is the best fit for this position?

Again, you should attend a campus town hall meeting to hear directly from our Elders and Pastor Paul about this. But to summarize, the Elder Board believes Eric possesses the doctrinal knowledge, growth-oriented vision, teaching/preaching gifting, team building experience, leadership acumen, education, and character necessary to lead SMCC.

Did the Elder Board consider any candidates from outside of SMCC? If not, why not?

No, the Elder Board did not seriously consider other candidates. Early in the process, our Vanderbloemen consultant made it clear that our mission and ministry strategy was uniquely crafted to provide evangelistic witness and discipleship to those coming from the predominant religion in Utah. As such, he believed being able to hire from within would give us the best opportunity to maintain our unique ministry strategies. In addition, Vanderbloemen has data showing the churches of our size who hire a **QUALIFIED** candidate from within experience less staff turnover and more growth (in terms of attenders) than churches who must bring in an "outsider". So the Elder Board's challenge was to determine if we did have a **qualified** candidate from amongst the staff – emphasis on "qualified". As the Elder Board worked through the process of building the Lead Pastor Search Profile, it became clear this profile would be the measuring stick to determine if a candidate was "qualified". As Pastor Eric worked through the evaluation process, many of the people involved in the evaluation, both inside and outside of SMCC, formed the opinion that not only was Pastor Eric qualified, but he was **HIGHLY** qualified as measured by the Search Profile. In addition, our Vanderbloemen consultant continuously recruits Lead



Pastors and Executive Pastors for churches all around the country. He is familiar with who is currently available for job relocation and he believes it would be highly unlikely to find anyone more qualified than Pastor Eric. For all these reasons, the Elder Board chose not to extend the job search any further.

If I don't know Pastor Eric personally, what should I do?

Attend a campus town hall meeting and hear from him directly about his vision for SMCC and why he wants to lead us. Also, take into consideration the people involved in the nomination process and the thoroughness of the process. If you trust the people and the process, consider casting a vote supporting their recommendation.

Who can vote in this process?

SMCC attenders who meet the following criteria:

- Are baptized believers in and followers of Jesus Christ (self-verified).
- Attended an SMCC worship service (in person or online) within the past three months unless unable to do so for medical reasons or extended travel (self-verified).
- Currently participates or actively participated within the past 12 months in an SMCC small group (any of our ministry groups count) or volunteered on a ministry team (verified via SMCC group/team records).
- Has made a financial contribution to SMCC within the past 12 months (verified via SMCC financial records).
- Either tithes to SMCC or considers themselves a growing giver to the church (self-verified).

When/Where can I vote?

You have three options:

1. Immediately following any of the campus town hall meetings.
2. Sunday, December 19th immediately following the worship services.
3. If you are unable to vote in-person for medical reasons or extended travel please contact your campus pastor to arrange to receive a ballot.

When will we know the results of this process?

The Elder Board hopes to complete the vote count within a few days after December 19th; but certainly no later than January 1, 2022.

What will Pastor Paul and Jini Robie be doing after the transition is complete?

Presuming the congregation affirms Pastor Eric for the position of Lead Pastor beginning July 1, 2022 Pastor Paul will immediately focus his time and energy on coaching Pastor Eric and the staff towards a smooth Lead Pastor transition. On July 1st when Pastor Eric takes the reigns, Pastor Paul and Jini plan to take a well-deserved sixth month vacation away from SMCC. This will give them time to relax and recharge. It will also give Pastor Eric and the congregation time to firmly cement Pastor Eric as the leader of SMCC. Pastor Paul and Jini will always be welcome to attend SMCC as their church.