



EXCITING NEWS!

Welcome Rev. Brandon Long to Armstrong Chapel

After a long and prayerful journey, we are excited to welcome Rev Brandon Long as Armstrong Chapel's Director of Discipleship, a position that seeks to leverage Brandon's skills with the current and future needs of Armstrong.

Introducing Brandon

Brandon is a lifelong Kentuckian who has worked in education, ministry, and communication. He graduated in May 2022 from Knox Theological Seminary, Ft. Lauderdale, FL. with a Masters of Divinity and holds a Bachelor of Science in Integrated (Classical) Studies from Clarks Summit University, PA. Brandon is currently pursuing a Doctor of Ministry at Bexley Seabury in Chicago, IL, and hopes to complete his degree in 2028 with a DMIN in a focus on Congregational Development. Brandon is currently pursuing transfer and recognition of ordination in the Episcopal Church. A proud father of 3 sons, Eliah, Micaiah, and Gideon, Brandon enjoys travel, fitness, and bourbon, and is passionate about history, theology, and politics. He may also be familiar to some as our 2022 intern leader for our youth Confirmation program.

Recapping the Journey

In June of 2024, Armstrong Chapel was faced with the challenge of filling two key vacated positions – Associate Pastor and Director of Children & Family Ministries. While several volunteers stepped in to support our Children's and Women's programming, many of the Associate Pastor responsibilities passed to our Senior Pastor or had to be put on hold. After 5 months and no interest, it became clear we needed a) to revisit the responsibilities of the role(s) and b) help to increase our search beyond the greater Cincinnati area and the UMC. In December, we contracted with Vanderbloemen, a Christian search agency that works with churches to understand the culture, clarify the need and ensure the best long-term fit for our congregation.



A "passionate and experienced faith formation leader with a strong background in Christian education, curriculum development, and congregational engagement. Committed to lifelong learning and discipleship, with expertise in program development, small group facilitation, and digital ministry. A creative and strategic communicator dedicated to fostering spiritual growth across all ages..."

VANDEBLOEMEN SEARCH TEAM

The Search Team

- Sandy Ader
 - Douglas Earhart
 - Kaleigh Hollyday
 - Amy Jo Jones
 - Erika McShay
 - Galen Mills
 - Benny Mitchell
 - Niki Mitchell
 - Leslie Pennell
 - Sue Porter
 - Kent Smith
- and Pastor David Brown

In January 2025, 12 representatives from Armstrong dedicated themselves to be part of a Search Team with Vanderbloemen. Through the next several months, this team met several times to check progress, drive expectations, reassess the job title, and responsibilities (shifting from Associate Pastor to Director of Discipleship) and pray for God's continued guidance. While nearly 300 individuals were approached by Vanderbloemen between January and August, only 9 candidates applied. Brandon was the only candidate to complete the full interview process including:

- Phone Screening with Vanderbloemen Recruiter
- Phone Interview with Vanderbloemen Consultant
- F2F (Face-to-face) formal interview with a 4-person panel from SEARCH team; remainder of team listened/joined via Zoom
- 1:1 F2F informal discussion with Senior Pastor
- F2F informal interview with a different 4-person team over breakfast

Here are some of the reasons why the Search Team unanimously recommended Brandon for this role:

- Brandon's core values center around the gospel of Christ, prayer, and mission. He related this to aspects of upward, inward, and outward which syncs well with Armstrong's goals to connect, grow, and give.
- Brandon's education background (Director Education, Teacher, Pastoral Intern with Children's and Youth programs) was greatly appreciated. The team saw opportunities for Brandon to invest in our full youth journey, engaging from Preschool through High School.
- Brandon did not grow up as a Christian. His experiences and learning journey started 20 years ago. As Armstrong seeks to understand how we grow disciples and attract new Christians, his journey and curiosity to learn was encouraging.
- Brandon has experience preaching, including at Armstrong, but when asked, he shared that he believes political views should remain out of the pulpit. Jesus is neither left nor right - he meets both of them and loves them.
- Brandon was thoughtful and comfortable with the team - it felt like he just "fit" with interviewers in both face-to-face interviews.
- The younger members of the search team found Brandon relatable and "real." Our Confirmands from 2022 liked him and his encouragement to get out of their comfort zone - one still credits Brandon for the Bible app she still uses on her phone!

Thank you for being a part of introducing Brandon to our warm and welcoming congregation!

Grace and Peace, Pastor David Niki Mitchell
 Lead Pastor Chair Church Council

Welcome

OCTOBER 5

We will officially welcome Brandon on October 5th - in all three worship services and during the hospitality time in the Atrium.

Please

be sure to wear your nametags!

EMAIL

You can reach him via email at blong@armstrongchapel.org

OFFICE

His office will be located in the Jefferson Building, to the right as you enter the front door - just past Pastor David.