

Succession Plan FAQ

Why now?

It is said that “there is no success without succession.” Succession is always part of the church’s plan and after 30 years, The Fellowship’s Lead Pastor has made the decision to hand the baton to our next Lead Pastor. Jerry and the Pastoral Management Team (PMT) believe that this is timely, wise and in the best interest of our mission and vision as The Fellowship moves forward. Jerry has spent the last few years preparing for this change in roles and he will continue to serve as our Founding Pastor.

What is the Pastoral Management Team?

In our bylaws, it states: “In accordance with God’s plan for leadership in The Fellowship, the primary leadership and decision-making body of The Fellowship shall be led by Elders serving as the Pastoral Management Team (PMT). The primary responsibility of the PMT is to provide the leadership to achieve the mission of The Fellowship through the vision cast by the Lead Pastor. The purpose is to discern spiritual matters, establish policies, provide management guidance and accountability thereby freeing members for ministry and minimizing maintenance. Therefore, the PMT is responsible for and may establish policies, task forces or ministry teams to support or otherwise delegate authority including, but not limited to spiritual matters, personnel issues (within the limits of the budget), business matters, annual budget, use and maintenance of church property, all ministries whether standing or arising out of a recognized need.”

The current PMT members are Jerry Edmonson, Wendell Vines (Chairman), Juan Martinez (Vice Chairman), Joe Probst (Secretary) Hayward Sparks, Brad Hulyk, and Dave Trout

Is Jerry retiring or leaving?

No. Jerry is rewiring ...not retiring. He will be staying on staff as our Founding Pastor.

What will Jerry be doing differently?

Jerry will continue to be a part of our preaching/teaching team, lead in the areas of Folleadership development and Faithwalking, and be a mentor, coach and wise sage to our staff and new Lead Pastor. Jerry will still preach, serve, lead, and contribute as a member of The Fellowship staff, as a pastor and as an elder.

What will Brian be doing differently?

Brian will be responsible for the overall vision and mission of The Fellowship and will be the primary communicator to the congregation, PMT, and community. He will oversee all staff in implementing the church's mission, vision, and strategies. He will serve as a standing member of the PMT. He will be responsible for the overall teaching and preaching ministry of The Fellowship.

Who will have the Executive Pastor role?

There is no plan to replace the Executive Pastor position currently. Brian's pertinent responsibilities in operations, finances and ministry coordination will accordingly be reassigned. Pertinent responsibilities for financial management and for coordination of ministries will be delegated to existing staff members who have shown their ability to handle more responsibility. Hayward Sparks has agreed to assume the leadership role of the Finance Team.

Why Brian?

Jerry and the PMT believe that Brian is ready to take the helm. He has passion, drive, and a calling to lead, and we want to set him up for success now and into the future. We feel that Brian meets or exceeds the qualifications as a pastor and has served The Fellowship well. But beyond being a pastor on staff, there are unique responsibilities that are part of the Lead Pastor role.

1. **Organizational Leadership** - Leadership can promote the flourishing of others, including church health and growth. Understanding the church organizationally, biblically and having the capacity and capability to focus on its health and its effectiveness, is key. Brian has demonstrated his understanding and ability to lead and foster positive change.
2. **Strong Communication** - Effective communication requires clarity and intentionality. Brian does an excellent job of communicating with the staff, the church leadership, and others. Jerry has personally learned a great deal from Brian in this area.
3. **Posture of Lifelong Learning** - A commitment to ongoing learning is key to personal development and leadership growth. Real world, Spirit-given wisdom is the gem that is pursued. Brian continues to read, study, and grow as a pastor, leader, and follower of Christ.
4. **Spiritual Maturity** - Positions of authority without spiritual maturity can lead to the trap of pride. This is a position that must not be held by a new Christian or one who is young in their faith. Brian is a mature believer whose life is worth following and emulating in many ways.
5. **Good Spiritual Disciplines** - This is a key area for all in leadership. As Followers, we must practice the priority of following Christ first and leading others second. Even the best leaders are tempted to allow the demands of the ministry to outpace their practices. The Lead Pastor must have a walk with Jesus that is visible to those he leads. Not that it is done

for show, but that as he follows Christ, and he can say, “follow my example.” Brian has demonstrated his commitment to prayer, study, solitude, and silence. Jerry and the PMT believe that he has a solid foundation upon which to continue growing an intimate relationship with Jesus.

6. **Strong Relational Skills** - People matter to God, and the church is first and foremost about people. Brian has demonstrated his love for people and desire to listen to their stories and engage them at their point of need. He has demonstrated the capacity to manage the larger relational needs of the church.
7. **Vision Casting** - Vision casting is a necessary part of painting a preferred picture that is both compelling and shared by others; Brian has demonstrated his capacity to cast vision as it relates to both his preaching and in his leadership. Jerry and the PMT are especially impressed with his leadership and implementation of our GREAT values as he methodically led our staff to embrace and embody these values.
8. **Impart Biblical Truth** - The Lead Pastor is the primary communicator responsible for the teaching content and the maintaining of an ethos of biblical truth that both instructs and inspires. Brian has grown over the years as he has preached more and more at The Fellowship, and he continues to grow as a communicator of God’s Word. Brian receives feedback well, learns by watching his preaching afterwards and is very good at implementing suggestions.
9. **Healthy Marriage and Family** - The Lead Pastor role is a heavy load but one that is shared by the staff, the Elders, and family. Brian and Debbie invest in their marriage, their communication, and their family as a whole. Jerry and the PMT have recommended to Brian that he and Debbie do annual marriage enrichment.
10. **The 5 C’s Matter** - Over the past ten years, Brian has grown and developed into an effective leader, a loving pastor, a good thinker, and a competent preacher. Jerry and the PMT would like to sum it all up with 5 C’s that have shaped our thinking as we have considered Brian as Jerry’s successor:

Calling - It is amazing to think that Brian started his spiritual journey here at The Fellowship. He came to faith in Christ **here!** He first began to serve others in ministry, **here!** He first felt called to pastoral ministry, **here!** Brian has demonstrated his call as a disciple and follower of Jesus Christ, as well as his call to pastoral ministry. Without a clear call from God, Brian could not and would not take this on.

Character - Spiritual formation is at the heart of the Gospel. As Christians, we are being formed into the image of Christ for the benefit and blessing of others. Brian is more like Christ than he was when we first met him, and we know we will continue to see more of Christ in him over the years. As Brian has grown, he has surrendered more and more of his life to Christ, modeling a Godly character and living as an example of Christlikeness.

Competence - The list above in terms of basic and specific qualifications falls into this area. Competence is a demonstrated behavior. To the best of their knowledge and what they have witnessed and experienced in Brian, Jerry and the PMT believe he is competent to assume the role Lead Pastor of The Fellowship.

Chemistry - The first three C's are easy. There are many who are called, with godly character and great skills. But when it comes to how they connect with others, how people respond to their leadership, the trust that is developed in order to move the mission and vision forward ... these are key! Brian has great chemistry with the staff, elders, leaders, and the church. He has garnered the respect of others through his work ethic, his teaching, and preaching, his character and his commitment to The Fellowship's mission, vision, and values.

Culture - Our GREAT values are embedded in the DNA of our church and leaders. Jerry and the PMT think that Brian has not only taught them but walked them. Leadership creates culture and it is not without saying that there are things that will change with a new Lead Pastor at the helm, but Brian is part of The Fellowship's culture, and he embodies who we are and who we want to be as a church.

Did we consider any other pastors?

Yes. As outlined in our Succession Planning Process document, all available pastors within The Fellowship were taken into consideration. The Fellowship has a great team of Pastors who are all gifted and serve faithfully. They looked at skill, experience, competencies and more. Robert Jackman was certainly considered. One thing that is recognized is Robert's tenure and many ministry contributions over the years. Even now, he is thriving in his ministry position as our Spiritual Care Pastor. In previous conversations with Jerry, Robert expressed that the Lead Pastor role is not something he aspires to. Here is Robert in his own words.

"I have found so much joy serving our church in a variety of positions throughout my tenure at The Fellowship. While it is a huge honor to even be considered for the Lead Pastor position, I believe God has made it clear that my greatest influence for His Kingdom does not hinge on my being in the lead chair; therefore, it is not a position I aspire to hold. I love being the Spiritual Care Pastor and am excited to continue serving our church in that role."

How does Debbie feel about Brian becoming the Lead Pastor?

The PMT met with Debbie and Brian over lunch and asked her how she feels about this. As you can imagine, she is experiencing a full range of emotions, but is trusting God for the future. She is excited about the opportunity and filled with anticipation. Debbie is very confident in her husband's calling, character, and competencies for the role of Lead Pastor. Like any wife, she is concerned about the weight and load of ministry on her husband. But Debbie is extremely supportive and ready to go with him into this new season of ministry.

What is going to change at The Fellowship?

There are not wholesale changes in store for The Fellowship as the church continues to strive to become whole people, who take the whole Gospel, to the whole world. Jerry and Brian have been working on this succession process for over a year. They have been strategically transitioning more and more responsibilities and decision making from Jerry to Brian.

When will it become official?

Subject to affirmation by the members of The Fellowship, Brian will transition into the Lead Pastor role October 20, 2024, at our Annual Fellowship Celebration (AFC).