

Newport Covenant Church

January 10, 2021 Congregational Meeting Minutes – *PENDING APPROVAL*

Opening

- Welcome and Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 12:40 pm by Merrie Carson, Chair, via Zoom. The meeting was recorded.
- Opening Prayer and Scripture Meditation: Merrie Carson, Chair, I Samuel 16:1, 6-13
- Opening business. A quorum was established with 44+ people – Dan Miller.

Note: There is only one item on the agenda so there was not a motion to accept the agenda.

The Pastoral Search Committee Final Report

Introduction and presentation of the candidates

David Wirrick, chair of the pastoral search committee, reviewed the process of call and read a description of the education, qualifications, ordination and experience for Pastor Britta Burger and for Pastor Paul Burger. Both candidates have Master of Divinity degrees and are ordained ministers with the Evangelical Covenant Church in Mt. Vernon, WA with seven years' experience most recently Pastor Britta as Associate Pastor of Youth, and Pastor Paul as Associate Pastor of Worship and Administration.

A review of the process followed to select Paul and Britta Burger

David Wirrick described the process used in selecting the pastoral candidates, in particular how the Elder Board (EB) and staff was brought into the process since it was not expected that our church would be calling co-pastors. The search committee wanted a unanimous decision in the search recommendation as every voice was important, relying on wisdom from God for each step.

Terms of call and effective date

When would they start? The Burgers would start the position on March 1, 2021. They will be finished with their work at Bethany Covenant at the end of January.

Concerning the terms of their call, a portion of the job description and letter of call was read. "Purpose: Newport Covenant Church (NCC) seeks a Lead Pastor who executes the following responsibilities with a pastoral heart. We seek a leader who is a relational collaborative shepherd, nurturing intentional community, equipping and empowering others, and setting healthy boundaries. We seek someone who has a passion for Jesus and making disciples, who seeks God's wisdom and truth, and encourages intentional discipleship, service and outreach.

Job Description: The Lead Pastor is responsible for the overall preaching, teaching, and pastoral ministry of Newport Covenant Church by providing leadership, care for the church, and support

of its ministries and outreach. The Lead Pastor will serve with the Elder Board to lead the church in The Simple Way of Jesus: living and teaching a lifestyle of “Apprenticeship to Jesus” and building “Intentional Community” among our people while reaching out to those beyond our doors.

More specifically we are calling them to:

- Preach and teach the Word of God as revealed in the Old and New Testaments;
- Administer the Sacraments, Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, according to the practice of The Evangelical Covenant Church;
- Lead us in ministry to all the members of this faith community according to particular needs;
- Lead us in fulfilling our church’s responsibility to witness for Christ and to gather into community the lost and the unconnected;
- Lead us in a public witness through ministries of compassion and justice;
- Give pastoral leadership to our congregation’s boards, ministry committees and activities;
- Keep their lives in harmony with the Word of God, striving in word and deed to be a worthy example in Christian living;
- Keep their practices consistent with the Covenant’s Rules for the Ordered Ministry, and its Ethical Principles for Covenant Ministers;
- Work in accord with the Covenant Affirmations, and the Constitution, Bylaws, Policies and Guidelines as established and approved by the Elder Board;
- Oversee the administration of official church records/ministerial acts as necessary;
- Encourage us to support the mission of Newport Covenant Church, our Pacific Northwest Conference, and the Evangelical Covenant Church.”

MOTION: Moved and Seconded to extend a call to Pastors Paul and Britta Burger (as stated below by Merrie Carson, NCC church chair)

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NRSV) Tells us “Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” In Light of this Scripture, I move, on behalf of your Elder Board and the Pastoral Search Committee, that the congregation of Newport Covenant Church call Paul S. Burger and Britta C. Burger to be our Co-Lead Pastors.

Discussion:

- Please explain how will they do self-care, vacations and sabbatical? There will be a “Day with Jesus” on a monthly basis as part of their letter of call; they both have mentors and a counselor and/or a spiritual director, sabbaticals will be also be arranged. Days off and vacations will be worked out with the EB. The situation for a sabbatical is not that different from a solo lead pastor who would also take a sabbatical.

- Is it one position or two? How will disagreements between the two of them be managed? It is one position, which they will share. They will have one vote on the EB. There will be more hours offered than just one full time position. It is a 1.25 full time equivalent. For disagreements, they will have to work that out and discuss.
- What are the specific tasks for each one, especially Paul where there seems to be staff already covering areas of worship and administration which are Paul's areas of gifting? Please refer to the Vinn Diagram that was distributed earlier (this was also shared in the Zoom chat and see Addendum A). Both will be doing pastoral care, preaching, both will supervise ministry teams, so they will share that. Each will work in other specific areas with the EB with their gifts, strengths, interests, and passions as lead pastors. For example, Britta loves pastoral care ministry. Paul brings a great deal of administrative strength, technology, and strategic thinking. Their goal would be to be at a 1.5 FTE eventually. Their skill sets blend.
- Are they covering the youth group services? Amanda is the lead of the youth and one of the pastors (Paul or Britta) would supervise Amanda Moffat.
- The job position is a 1.25 FTE position. We had budgeted for a lead pastor with more experience, and a greater financial obligation, but because they have less experience than anticipated, the salary range will be attainable with our budget.
- Are we providing housing support? That is not part of the call. There are restrictions within the State of Washington for providing housing loans because a lead pastor is part of the 'board of directors' and a loan is not allowed. In the past we provided housing support for associate pastors. If we help, it would have to be a gift, and that has tax implications. Could we do an equity sharing agreement? It is possible but requires a lot of legal help. Moving expenses are also taxable. It is possible individuals could provide housing assistance personally, but the church could not do that. Moving expenses are provided in the budget, but this is not tax deductible. They are moving from Mt. Vernon, WA will require renting of moving vehicles, but they anticipate this expense.
- Do they anticipate having outside jobs? That is not planned as far as we know at this time. They want more family time.
- Did the search committee discuss the Burgers with Bethany Covenant Church? We received letters of recommendation from staff members at Bethany. It was noted that there had been difficulties at Bethany and these were explored. The search committee also spoke with Greg Yee about the difficulties. Concerning their potential call to NCC, we have tried to keep things very quiet, but Paul and Britta have been sharing and the staff, leadership and close friends at Bethany are informed. It is likely many people at Bethany know, so this will not likely be a surprise to anyone at Bethany.

- There was a question about the Burgers giving notice with their last day January 31st and the fact that the call has not yet been extended pending the NCC congregational vote. They are required to give six weeks' notice, so they have discussed this with their lead pastor and the notice was contingent on our congregational voting to call them.
- There was some concern expressed on how young they are, and they have not been Lead pastors before. There was the anticipation of someone having strong leadership/lead pastor experience. NCC is not an easy church, however, the Scriptural references for the devotion today and the unanimity of the committee was persuasive, and the person fully supports the move to bring them on as lead co-pastors. The search committee prayerfully considered and meditated on all of that and the Scriptures, the Lord, and circumstances led them to Paul and Britta.
- Another pastor gave witness that he was called as a Lead pastor at 25 years old and it can work. We also have some very strong, mature leaders and pastors/former pastors) at NCC that can be mentors and support to them (Mary Klug, Merrie Carson, Ray Bartel, Al Folmar, and Rick Mylander). Another shared that we have a big responsibility to support them and trust God in this process. The person was very excited about it! Another person shared the ways of going forward concerning philosophies of ministry, racial justice, and other political things, but the Lord brought to mind that this couple, that their hearts, could help us lead us in racial justice and to reach young families. Another comment was that NCC is a prime place to mentor younger people, including the Burgers and others. Pray that we would train leaders. Another church in Seattle with a sea of young people do not have mature Christians who are older, and their church is praying for mature believers to help the new, young believers. This is a gift that NCC has that we can provide to younger people.
- A search committee member told how they decided that they decided that they wanted to go to the EB to get their input and this additional input from the EB was very valuable. She is excited about this younger couple who brings a vitality to learn, grow, and serve.
- Another comment was that the person feels settled in his spirit, trusts the work of the search committee and staff. The job descriptions are a living document. The person made a motion to accept the nomination and close the discussion.

MOTION: To close the discussion and call for the question.

No second was made and the chair requested that discussion continued so more questions could be answered.

- On person made a comment about the Burgers being young and inexperienced, and that people with greater maturity will help, but that we should not dismiss new ideas and youthful idea that are brought forward. Some of our younger leaders have had some negative reactions to their new ideas. They asked everyone to exercise care and seek discernment before reacting to new ideas.

- A person asked the question concerning if there are issues with one of the pastors, or one leaves or goes on leave, or there is a disagreement (and half of all marriages end in divorce), what is the mechanism to resolve that? The search committee discussed this possible situation. We are calling them to co-pastors to one position. So, one cannot leave, as we are calling them together, it is all or nothing. If one decides to depart, there would have to be a renegotiation and a new call would be set before the congregation. Since they are sharing the position, it could be that one will do more hours than the other at various times, for example, maternity or paternity leave, surgery, or something else. Together they do the 1.25 hours and they will determine how best to divide those hours, for example one takes a 1 FTE and the other takes a 0.25 FTE.

MOTION: The Motion to close the discussion and call for the question was readdressed. Voting was done via hand raise as there was not a good alternative mechanism for taking this vote.

This Motion was seconded and by raise of hand on Zoom and passed by the majority. No oppositions were noted.

Instructions on voting

Stephen Kraft of the Pastoral Search Committee provided instructions on how to vote. There were two methods: 1) A link was sent in the chat to participate in a Google Forms document where the members name would be entered, and a vote (Yes/No) cast and submitted. If two members or more are on one Zoom call, they should both vote by using a second response. 2) If that is not an accessible option, the person could call Stephen at 574.253.3885.

Vote

Time of Sharing and Prayer – Ellen Brenden led the group in prayer concerns of the church while waiting for the vote to be tallied

Declaration of the election by the Teller/Chair – Stephen Kraft & Merrie Carson

MOTION PASSED: 83 Yes and 0 No

Closing prayer and Adjournment – Ellen Brendan opened in prayer, others prayed, and Pastor Scott Burnett closed. Merrie Carson adjourned the meeting at 2:08 PM

Addendum A

BRITTA & PAUL CO-PASTORAL MODEL

