

SENIOR PASTOR SUCCESSION PLAN FAQ's

Q: Has Pastor Matt been involved in planning this transition?

A: Matt recognized 3 years ago the need to begin more serious planning for his succession. Since then, the Board, together with Matt, have prayerfully sought input from other churches, the EFCA, professional consultants and published research to create a succession plan. The plan is designed to allow for a smooth hand-off of leadership and continuity in the life of the church. We will hire a new Senior Pastor and have an overlap between Pastor Matt and his successor before Matt retires. More details, timeline and milestones of the plan are available at ehope.org/senior-pastor.

Q: What are Matt and Carol's plans?

A: Matt and Carol have faithfully served Hope Church for the past 24 years and we pray that God blesses them as much as they have blessed our church. We're excited for what God has in store for them in this next season! Pastor Matt is pursuing an opportunity to work with IPM (Interim Pastor Ministries). IPM is an organization that provides temporary pastors to strengthen churches during pastoral transition for greater effectiveness. Pastor Matt and Carol are also hoping to have more time with their 5 sons, 4 daughters-in-law and 5 grandchildren.

Q: Will Carol continue serving (in MOPS, children's min, etc.)?

A: If they are in town, Carol would still like to be involved depending on the circumstances as the transition unfolds.

Q: What will the overlap between Matt & his successor look like?

A: The Board and Matt plan to have an overlap with Matt's successor. This overlap may be weeks or months long and will be determined by the Board, Matt and Matt's successor once the new Pastor is hired. The overlap will include helping the new Senior Pastor build relationships within the church along with passing the baton relative to all of the day-to-day things Pastor Matt currently handles.

Q: What are the foundational qualifications for the new Senior Pastor?

A: The Board has developed a list of qualifications related to the Character, Competency, Chemistry, and Calling of the type of person who will lead Hope Church into the future. These include meeting the biblical requirements of overseers, Elders, and Deacons outlined in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Our new Senior Pastor will be able to lead a medium to large church, build teams, equip the body, and cast a compelling vision for the future. Along with leadership experience and proven pastoral skills, this person will need to have a Bachelor's degree in Biblical Studies, Theology, or a related Christian or church leadership focus at a minimum, with a preference for a Masters of Divinity degree. They will also need to have strong alignment with the EFCA Statement of Faith and philosophical agreement to major on the majors. The Search Team will work with the Board and a Search Firm to create the final candidate profile and that will be shared with the congregation when it is complete.

Q: Do they have to be ordained with the EFCA or a pastor within the EFCA?

A: Ordination with the EFCA or a similar denomination is highly desired. If they are not ordained in the EFCA, they would need to agree to become ordained within 18 months.

Q: We've noticed that different people have been preaching more regularly in the last year or so. Has that been intentional and is it something that will continue with the new Senior Pastor?

A: Having some variety in who is preaching has some positive aspects. It provides different voices that may resonate with different demographics in our church. While we will continue to have opportunities for different people to preach, the frequency will largely depend on the desires of the new Senior Pastor with advisement from the Board.

Q: Has Mark Smith been considered for this role?

A: We love Pastor Mark! Mark feels like he is currently serving in the sweet spot of his pastoral and relational gifting as the Pastor of Life Groups and Connections. We agree with him and feel like he is thriving in this important role for Hope Church. Mark is not interested in pursuing the Senior Pastor position.

Q: Has Marty Rietgraf been considered for this role?

A: We love Marty and really appreciate his gifts! As we had conversations with Marty and Deanna and they prayed about it, they decided the best course of action was for Deanna to maintain her position. In order to avoid conflicts of interest or the potential for favoritism in hiring and personnel management, Hope Church has an anti-nepotism policy that has been in place for several years. Deanna's position, along with all of the Pastor and Director roles, has an indirect supervisor/subordinate relationship with the Senior Pastor. We are blessed that Marty will continue to preach periodically and serve in multiple ways at Hope.

Q: Will you consider a female?

A: We wholeheartedly acknowledge the gifts, abilities, perspectives, and roles of both women and men as an essential part of the church in order for us to most effectively live out God's mission in the world. Hope Church has women in leadership on our staff team as well as women serving in key leadership roles in our church. At the same time, Hope Church and most EFCA churches conclude that the biblical texts teach that the roles of Elder and Senior Pastor are reserved for men. This view, also known as the complementarian view, sees distinct roles and responsibilities for women and men in the church. Complementarians believe that men and women are created in the image of God, equal in honor, status, and gifting, and they are created to complement each other. Based on the interpretation of Scripture and the fact that the Senior Pastor's primary responsibility is preaching and teaching the Word, complementarians believe that the role is reserved for men. *Scripture: 1 Timothy 2:11-13, Genesis 2:7, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:6, 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, Ephesians 5:21-33.*

Q: Will the new Senior Pastor make a lot of changes?

A: While the new Senior Pastor will have his own passions and obviously have the freedom to lead, the Board is not looking for someone to make a lot of major changes in our approach or what we focus on as a church. We will continue to take a simple approach with an outward focus to help more people connect with God. The Life Group model will also continue to be our central strategy.

Q: Are there any other staff changes planned in the near future?

A: None are planned at this time. God has blessed us with a staff of great people serving in areas that match their passions and gifts. Everyone on staff is highly motivated and on mission to help lead our church through this next phase and into the future.

Q: Will we be using a search firm?

A: Yes. The Board has selected The Shepherd's Staff (TheShepherdsStaff.com) to assist with a nationwide search. They will help us develop a comprehensive candidate profile, conduct a broad search and complete robust screening of all potential candidates.

Q: What do our Bylaws say about hiring a Senior Pastor?

A: Our Bylaws require that a Search Team be called from membership to support the Elder Board in the search and hiring of a new Senior Pastor. The Search Team is made up of church members elected by the membership and three of the Elders. The Search Team is responsible for vetting candidates and recommending a final candidate to the membership for a vote. A Senior Pastor can only be hired after being affirmed by a 3/4 majority vote of voting membership. This section of our Bylaws has not been updated in over 20 years. Because we desire to have a well-rounded and diverse Search Team, we will be recommending some changes to the Bylaws at our April 2022 Congregational Meeting. Those changes will call for at least 2 women to be on the Search Team and allow a vetting process of potential Search Team members.

Q: How can I be part of the Search Team?

A: A description of the Search Team's role is available at ehope.org/senior-pastor for anyone who is interested in serving on the team. During and after the April 2022 Congregational Meeting, there will be a period of time to nominate Search Team members, and also to self-nominate, if interested in serving on the team. The Board will then talk with each person who is nominated to make sure they understand the commitment and are aligned with the mission and direction of Hope Church. After these conversations with each nominee, the Board will recommend a final list to the congregation for election at the August 2022 Congregational Meeting.

Q: Beyond the Search Team, how much visibility will the rest of the congregation have to the candidates?

A: We will regularly communicate with the congregation throughout the search process – you can find updates at ehope.org/senior-pastor. Once the candidate pool is narrowed down, there will be opportunities for the congregation to meet and interact with the final candidate as part of the overall vetting process.

Q: When will we find out more about potential candidates?

A: The Search Team will be assembled in the fall of 2022. Our best estimate is that the initial work with the Search Firm and initial screening will proceed through the fall of 2022 & winter of 2023. As the candidate pool is narrowed, more information will be shared about specific final candidates.

Q: Who gets the say in who is chosen as our next Senior Pastor?

A: Ultimately, the membership of the congregation gets the final say. After the Search Team completes the vetting and interview process, they will recommend the candidate to the congregation at a future Congregational Meeting. Our bylaws require a membership vote with 3/4 of the voting members required to approve the hire of a new Senior Pastor.

Q: What if I still have questions?

A: Feel free to email the Elders at ElderBoard@ehope.org. The Elders will also make themselves available after services in the weeks leading up to each of our Congregational Meetings for people to talk to in-person.