

# Letter of Introduction

## **To the Seattle First Baptist Congregation,**

Early this year, church leadership called this group together to examine the structure of our pastoral team and to propose the model we thought would be the most ideal fit for our church. We spoke with current and past pastoral staff and other church staff to gain insights on how the pastoral work comes together in this congregation. After reviewing the literature, conducting interviews of SFBC past and present pastors as well as other staff and leaders, our team has recommendations to share with the congregation.

This work presented a number of challenges, but facing those challenges led us to conviction and consensus we may have otherwise missed. We must first acknowledge the impact that the Pastoral Transition Task Force had on the congregation when one of our members proposed that the church consider not hiring a person of color to be the next permanently placed, full-time pastor. Many difficult conversations ensued after this statement, including meetings with the Anti-Racism Task Force and with our Pastoral Transition Task Force. They helped lead us to a collective moment of clarity regarding this proposal and our future directions.

## **A focus on race equity**

Please let us be clear: The Pastoral Transition Task Force fully endorses and encourages Seattle First Baptist to seek a candidate of color to serve in a full-time pastoral position. While this is an important step in our journey to becoming an antiracist church, this alone is not enough. The church needs to make every effort to support pastors of color in this church, recognizing that we are “at the end of the beginning” of this work, according to Evergreen Executive Minister Douglas Avilesbernal. Equity, diversity and inclusion must be infused into the entire pastoral selection process and the implementation of a new pastoral model at Seattle First Baptist, including built-in supports for the duration of a pastor’s work here.

The task force examined equitable practices and learned that anti-racist philosophies are well-aligned with a flat-structure pastoral model, as opposed to a top-down model. This is further supported by the church’s behavioral norms, which state “We insist on collaboration rather than competition” and “We use power for participation, not for domination - power with, rather than power over.” This is why the Pastoral Transition(s) Task Force endorses the adoption of a co-pastor or pastoral partnership model.

## **Prioritizing consensus**

This model aligns with our church values of consensus and collaboration that can be seen among our pastoral team and in the way our church already conducts business. The Governance Task Force has also explored models for the Diaconate that would flatten the top-down structure. Our current pastoral

team externally looks like a Lead Pastor Model, however our pastors have been internally operating as a team model among themselves for some time.

### **The Priesthood of All Believers**

Our pastors will have a huge task in front of them as they lead us into a new era of growth and change. We believe the enormity of this responsibility should not be shouldered by one, alone. As we prioritize the experiences and needs of our BIPOC members, LGBTQ+ members, children, seniors and people with disabilities we must limit the possibility of leader isolation and burnout. In addition, we increasingly recognize the need to reimagine content delivery for meetings, worship and conducting organizational business. Our church sanctuary is no longer accessed through the doors of our building but through every form of technology. We are engaging our communities in new ways that will never be the same.

This is accomplished not only by our stellar pastoral team, but with the backing of the entire congregation. One of the American Baptist Five Freedoms is the “priesthood of all believers.” This concept requires that we not be driven by the work of our pastors alone, but by the collective work of the entire congregation together.

Often the question we hear about the co-pastor model is “Where does the buck stop?” Who steps up when the hard decisions need to be made. Leadership comes from our leadership teams and congregation working together with our pastors and church staff. “Where does the buck stop?,” it stops with us.

*In Faith,*

*Sue, Nimi, Mary, Larry, Jim and Aaron*

# Recommendation

## Seattle First Baptist Pastoral Transitions Task Force

### Co-Pastor Model Recommendation and Considerations

- The Pastoral Transitions Task Force Recommends that Seattle First Baptist adopt a flat-structure, known commonly as a Co-Pastor Model.
- Pastors in this model would operate on equal footing and share equally in their duties.
- Duties would scale proportionally whether a pastor is full or part time, however a half-time pastor would still have equal voice in pastoral decisions.
- There are no differences among pastors outside of the agreed-upon division of their duties. They will be treated equally and hold the same title.
- The pastors will work together to determine the division of their tasks and determine which pastors are called to a particular ministry. The exceptions will be that all pastors will share in preaching duties and will play active roles in the church's race equity work. The church will set the ministry priorities and pastors will bring their plan to church leadership body that oversees the model for approval.
- Communication between pastors is key. In addition to the weekly staff meetings, pastors should set aside time each week to meet with each other. Pastors will participate in the Executive Committee and the Diaconate to provide regular updates and get feedback.
- The church will designate a leadership body to oversee the ongoing work with the model to refine and ensure that the model is working for the congregation and for each pastor. This could be managed by an existing body such as Personnel or the Diaconate.
- When the congregation brings questions or concerns to the pastors, they will confer together to come up with a unified response. In the case of a congregant bringing a concern or complaint about one of the pastors, that should be directed to the leadership body that oversees the model.
- Decisions by the pastoral team will be made by consensus. When consensus cannot be reached, the pastors can continue to discuss or bring the question to its leadership body or another designated leadership body to pursue a consensus decision.
- We recommend that the church and congregation take steps to embrace its role in church leadership, as supported by the Baptist Freedom that calls us to the concept of a Priesthood of All Believers.
- The church should dedicate time and budget to help pastors manage this system. This includes providing pastoral retreats to have intentional time for planning and visioning, and access to an individual providing support outside of the congregation (which could involve a counselor, veteran co-pastor consultant or individuals who have particular experience representing identities that pastors represent, including BIPOC, LGBTQ+, disability, etc.) This is particularly important to support pastors of color as we continue our work as an anti-racist community.

- We believe based on interviews with pastors and experts on co-pastor models that pastors should receive equal pay per unit of time worked (a half-time pastor would receive half the pay of a full-time pastor). If pastors receive disproportional pay, they cannot be equal. Every form of compensation should be considered, including office space, housing and other benefits.
- Current pastors must have a strong role in every step of the hiring process of a new pastor, and current pastors should be involved in the decision making process and supportive of a new hire.

#### **Other considerations**

- This model will require ongoing management, but it will need particular attention at its initial creation, with planning, education and building the model into the church's bylaws and governance.
- Either an existing governing body or a newly created one should continue this work and offer careful attention to everything it needs to be successful.
- The Pastoral Transitions Team has held conversations with other pastors with experience helping stand up co-pastor models at congregations locally and afar. We recommend a session with them after congregational approval for this model to assist and/or educate SFBC in launching this model.

# Job Description

## Seattle First Baptist Church

The Pastor is an equal part of a team of Pastors employed by the church to care for the congregation, conduct or arrange services of the church, and minister to the community at large. All pastors will participate in the activities of the pastoral team, and collaborate with the Lay Leadership, Church Administrator, other staff and the congregation to fulfill the mission of the Church.

### Specific List of Responsibilities

- Participate in planning and coordination with Pastoral Team together on a regular basis
- Collaborate with the Lay Leadership, serving as a member of the Diaconate and the Executive Committee.
- Preach a proportionate share of worship services, with sermons that are instructive, inspiring, timely, consequential and demonstrate biblical scholarship
- Work with the Lay Leadership and Congregation to fill pastoral vacancies.
- Work as a team, with clear team and individual responsibilities. Collaborate with each other and the members and friends of the church to fulfill the mission of the church.
- Strive to live by the Behavioral Norms of the Church.
- Plan, coordinate, and lead worship services and other parts of the church program.
- Provide pastoral care, including counseling and visitation, to the church community.
- Participate, including contributing content to, the production of the church bulletin, newsletter, and other publications.
- Encourage and enable the involvement of lay members in all phases of church life.
- Support the Program Staff of the church in cooperation with church commissions and the Diaconate.
- Represent the church through in-person and online platforms, including social media, while also providing public-facing interviews, statements and reports.
- Work with and guide lay leadership for small groups and other church ministries.
- All Pastors are called by the Congregation and report to the Diaconate and Personnel Commission.
- Note that the church employs an Administrator who supervises the office, janitorial, and other support staff and coordinates the daily operations of the church office and building.

### Qualifications

- Ordained minister of the Christian clergy or otherwise professionally trained for the ministry.
- Significant experience as a pastor at a Christian church. Experience as a member of a Co-Pastor team or pastoral partnership is desired.
- Personally committed to following the way of Jesus Christ and to love and care for our neighbors with attention for the lives and experiences of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Excellent written and oral communications skills with the ability to speak in ways that convey compassion, hope, courage and wisdom.
- Commitment to and experience with diversity, inclusion, equity and anti-racism work.
- Able to work flexible hours to meet the varying needs of the Congregation while maintaining work/life balance.
- Experience in and supportive of a healthy team environment.