

“THE MAN WHOM CHRIST CALLS.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

August 23, 2020, 9 and 11 AM

Scripture Texts: I Timothy 3:1-7

Prayer: Holy Father, pour out your Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the proclaiming of your Word that we may know you. Make us both hearers and doers of your Word. By your Holy Spirit, fall afresh upon us and help us for the sake of your glory and your gospel. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Introduction.

I trust that all of you read the letter from the council concerning the invitation to Mike and Shelby Brummel to come and candidate next weekend for the position of Associate Pastor.

They will arrive Friday afternoon and there will be an opportunity for you to come Friday evening at 7 pm for a time to meet them and hear from them in a question and answer time. On Saturday he will be interviewed by the council and have lunch with the staff.

On Sunday he will preach at both services. There will be a question and answer time after each service, though the one after the 9 am service will be necessarily shorter so we can clear and clean the room. For those two sessions we ask that you submit written questions to the church by email or drop off during open office hours or give to Gene Tinklenberg by Saturday noon.

Next Sunday evening, weather permitting, we will have an outdoor service on the lawn. Mike will give a short message and a children's sermon. And we will conclude with the third annual Pastor MooWich give away.

This is a big event in the life of our congregation. In fact, I think it might be a first, our first full time associate pastor. It is a big change and change can be scary.

Choosing a Pastor.

Choosing a pastor is a strange business. Basically the search committee has arranged a blind date, and after one date you get to decide if you want to get married, with the hope that this is a match made in heaven and we will live happily ever after.

There is a lot of trust involved, in the search committee and the council, in the process and most of all in God. We have entreated Him in earnest prayer for 15 months. We asked you

to pray since the beginning of 2020. We cannot pray too much asking for God's leading, asking for wisdom, discernment and clarity.

Choosing a pastor is the most important decision a congregation can make. It has powerful influence on the future of the church and the spiritual life of the flock.

Let me take some time this morning to remind us what God's Word has to say about leaders in the church, things we all should have in mind as we consider a man for Associate Pastor.

The man whom Christ calls.

First, the church is Christ's Church, and it is Christ who calls undershepherds for His flocks.

Ephesians 5:23 Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

Christ is the head of His Church and the Church gets its leaders from Him. Look at how God pick the leaders in the Bible. It is very clear it is God's doing.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Elijah, David, Solomon, the prophets, Isaiah, Jonah, the disciples, Paul.

God clearly set each of them apart for ministry, for service, for sacrifice.

So in a sense we aren't really the ones calling a pastor, but rather we are seeking to confirm God's call. These things are spiritually and prayerfully discerned.

Christ is the head of His church; He is the Chief Shepherd and He is the one who calls some out of His Church to be spiritual leaders in the flock and to serve the flock.

Paul calls it a noble task, or a good work. Ministry is work, a work of greatest importance because it seeks a great purpose and end, the salvation, care and feeding of eternal souls. It seeks to turn men and women from darkness and evil to light and life, to bring men and women to glory.

Acts 20:28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

The Church of Jesus Christ is the most precious thing on earth. She is the only thing on earth that will survive the great fire at the end. She is worthy of your prayers, your time, your money, your labors of love. Worthy of the sacrifice of your life, for the sake of that for which Jesus sacrificed His life. It is a noble and good work, an honorable and praiseworthy task.

Second, Christ in His infinite wisdom has decided that His church would have as undershepherds of the flock, sinful men. Not angels, not heavenly creatures, but sinful men.

If we go back to the list of those God called into His service we see all kinds of serious sins and character flaws.

Abraham made some serious errors as a husband. Moses, David and Paul were all murderers. Jacob was a big-time deceiver, Joseph had some pride issues, Samson and David fell into sexual sin, Jonah disobeyed and ran away, Peter denied Jesus three times, and on and on.

There can be no boasting about self-righteousness on the part of any one in Christ's service.

This is to humble us, to make us dependent on God and to look to God for help, and seeing the glory of God we put our faith not in men, but in God.

I Cor. 2:3-5 I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, 4 and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

There is no perfect leader and in fact God goes out of His way to find imperfect, flawed people, people who walk with a limp.

Let me tell you something about who Mike Brummel is not.

Mike is not Robert Woodyard and that is an exceedingly good thing. Our hope is he has gifts and abilities to complement, and add to.

He is not Dan Houston. There will be ways he is similar and different. He will do some things better and some things not as well. So avoid comparisons. Let him be who God has created and called him to be. You graciously did this for me as I am very different from the previous pastor.

He is not the Messiah. He is not Jesus. He is not perfect; he has flaws and weaknesses that make him human and make him as dependent on the Chief Shepherd as all of us are.

He is not the perfect candidate. But the Search Team believes he is the one God has called for us at this time. We are seeking your confirmation that this is the man God is calling to minister among us for such a time as this.

He is a sinner saved by grace. He will be another sinner among us. Don't have unrealistic expectations. He is young, he doesn't have lots of years of experienced. He is eager to grow, and he will.

Third, when God sets out to call a man, He is pleased to use human means, like councils, search committees, profile forms, job postings and congregational votes.

Why are we voting as a congregation? The council debated both sides of this question. On the one hand, the congregation didn't vote for Dan. But on the other hand this is a pastoral position, we are calling a pastor, not hiring a staff person. So they decided to ask him to come and preach and to be voted on by the congregation.

There is one other means God uses, prayer, lots of prayer. Prayer is the first thing.

Matthew 9:36-38 When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 *therefore pray earnestly to the Lord* of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

I urged us at the beginning of 2020 to pray for this search. Many of our elders prayed for this process in their Sunday morning congregational prayers. On the Search team we opened and closed with three people praying in every meeting.

God cares about this very much; He is attentive to these prayers. I urge you again this week to pour out many prayers to God for grace, mercy, wisdom, discernment, the leading of His Holy Spirit, for His will to be done.

Fourth, how do you decide? What do you look for?

If we know we can't look for or expect perfection then what can we look for?

Paul exhorts leaders to watch their life and doctrine closely. Character matters and doctrine matters. These two things must be put above skill and experience. Those can be gained and trained, those are teachable, but the foundation of character and doctrine must be good to build on.

The doctrine is the easiest part to discern. Mike has attended a very good reformed seminary; he has two degrees from there and is working on a third degree from another good reformed seminary. He also submitted to us an excellent statement of his faith and we asked him a number of questions related to his theology to which he gave all good answers.

Doctrinally, Mike was not born and raised in the reformed tradition. He came to the reformed perspective not by birth but by conviction. Having studied it well, he is convinced it is the most faithful and consistent representation of the Scriptures.

Titus 1:9 says an elder “must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it.” We are confident he is on the same page Biblically and theologically with us.

As I said that is the easier part.

But what about character, what about the lists of qualifications Paul gives in Timothy and Titus?

Spiritual leadership requires spiritual character.

This list of traits or characteristics is interesting for several reasons.

First, they are all traits that every Christian should aspire to and strive after. These are Christ-like characteristics.

So it goes without saying it is incumbent on the spiritual leaders in a local church to have these qualities. They are to be expected. The church needs good examples to be set by her leaders. The nature of the work requires our highest and best.

Notice how little of this focuses on the outward, Paul doesn't mention wealth, education, experience, status in the community, worldly attainments, business success. The list focuses on spiritual, moral, personal aspects of one's character, not on skills or abilities or experiences, not on job requirements.

The office is spiritual, the work is spiritual, the qualifications are spiritual. This is what makes discerning call harder especially when there isn't a relationship.

A shepherd of Christ's Church must have a knowledge of the Word of God and a reason for the hope that is in him. He must first have a love for Jesus and His Word and His Church. He must have a heart for the things of the Lord. He must strive to imitate His Savior.

He must be consistent in life and doctrine, balanced, and a clean vessel, keeping himself from impurity and sin, avoiding the appearances of evil and worldly pleasures and pursuits. He must be of good report, good repute, a man of integrity.

When you called me you really didn't know me, you didn't know what you were getting. You had to base it partly on the search committee's work, partly on the council's work and then on a few brief encounters and two sermons, lots of prayer on both sides.

Our Search Team and the council had interviews and conversations. The Search Team talked with the pastors of the two churches where Mike has worked the past three years.

They also talked to a classmate and friend of his who now lives here in Lynden. They did a background check. They talked to his wife. We asked lots of questions.

We are left with seeking God earnestly in pray for Him to lead us and we step out in faith.

If I were going to look for one overarching trait, after doctrinal soundness, I would look for humility. Pride is incompatible with spiritual leadership.

1 Timothy 3:6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.

Pride ruins everything. Pride can lead to the opposite of everything on Paul's list. A proud man will not be respectable or gentle, he will be quarrelsome, he will not see his sins or shortcomings, he won't make allowances for others, he will be full of himself, he won't play well with others.

Humble leaders are transparent, honest, not afraid to be wrong or corrected. Humble leaders listen. A good leader must be humble, have a good measure of himself, of his sin, of his need for grace, of his reliance on God. A humble leader has a repentant spirit and walks with a limp.

Churches should seek humble leaders, and pastors should seek humble churches. So let us not only seek and pray for leaders who are like Paul's description, but let us be a church and church members that are like Paul's description.

This is Christ's Church, and this is His work and His call. Let us earnestly seek wisdom and discernment from the Lord so that our vote will be according to His will and for His glory.

Prayer: Our Lord Jesus Christ, the great head of the Church, for the sake of your name and your glory and the advance of your kingdom in this place, would you make your will clear. Lead and guide us by your sovereign will and grace. Give us your Spirit's wisdom and discernment. Guard and protect us from evil and the evil one. You know all things, lead to us the one you have chosen. We humbly ask this in your name, Amen.