

Collins Street Baptist Church

RE-VISIONING PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

I. INTRODUCTION

The year 2019 will be my tenth year of ministry at Collins Street. As I look back on this period of service, I do so with a continuing sense of commitment to the life and mission of this church.

Just one year into my appointment, I was delighted in the church's decision to invite Carolyn Francis as Associate Pastor. After eight years of shared ministry, I remain grateful for the strength of our working relationship and for the quality of ministry we are able to provide together. Our gifts are as different as our personalities, while our vision for the church and its mission has a remarkable coherence. Through our years of service, the complementarity of what we do has been routinely affirmed by the church.

Appreciating the strength of what we have and with a view to the church's future, I believe it's now appropriate that we review and renew the structure of pastoral leadership in which Carolyn and I exercise our ministry. Should we continue to be the people appropriate to the church's future, there are things we need to ensure:

- that the form and focus of our leadership continues to fit the needs of our community and the challenges it faces;
- that our shared call to leadership is affirmed, strengthened and extended in appropriate ways;
- that our particular areas of responsibility draw most effectively on our gifts and passions in service of the church.

II. THE CONTEXT

A. The Church

A renewal of our pastoral leadership structure is timely step to take at this stage of the church's life. Prior to my appointment as pastor in February 2010, the church underwent a review of its identity and mission, affirming the following statement of purpose:

We are a welcoming and caring community of believers seeking to express our beliefs through a deeply-held spirituality, a vitality of worship, and a Christ-centred expression of justice in our community relationships and in our outreach to others.

Based upon this statement, the church detailed its aspiration to be a Christian community in which spirituality is nurtured, gifts are expressed, worship is prioritised, the gospel is proclaimed, care is offered and the commitments to justice and hospitality are integral to its mission.

With this in place, the church sought to articulate the sort of pastoral leadership it was seeking. The role of the senior pastor was centred around the aspects of (i) leadership, (ii)

preaching and worship, (iii) pastoral care, and (iv) prayer and spiritual nurture. Subsequently, the role of the associate pastor was developed to work cooperatively with the senior pastor in leadership, worship and mission, and to give particular focus to the church's civic and cultural engagement.

In 2015, the church again engaged in a process of discernment around its priorities in mission. Seeking greater clarity in the church's application of its gifts and resources, we sought to discern God's leading together. The three areas of focus that became clear in that process were those of (i) hospitality, (ii) justice, and (iii) growth. It is our renewed commitment to these three priorities that has enabled us to navigate through a period of significant change, especially in relation to the closure of Urban Seed and the reorientation of our Verandah ministry.

This year, following the conclusion of Urban Seed's ministry, we have seen (i) the rebirthing of the Central House community, (ii) the appointment of Sherry Maddock as the church's *Coordinator of Neighbourhood Engagement*, (iii) the church's affirmation of *Planted Places* as a social enterprise based in the Green Room, and (iv) the reopening of the Verandah Café as a volunteer-supported ministry on our front steps.

Given these developments in the ministry of Collins Street, and our recent celebrations of the church's 175th anniversary, it is appropriate that we consider the leadership structure most suited to the church's future.

B. The Pastors

An opportunity to renew the church's leadership structure is also important for both Carolyn and me.

Personally, there are two factors at play. First, while I continue to experience a good sense of 'fit' at Collins Street — one affirmed by the church's 2017 review — the issue of longer-term sustainability is pressing. This has been heightened for us in Brenda's appointment to the role of Principal of St Hilda's. The challenge of holding two significant roles is one we embrace with equal enthusiasm and caution. We need to find appropriate ways to make it life-giving for all involved. Second, I often feel that some of the best of what I have to offer in ministry is marginal to what I do. I am routinely frustrated by the lack of time I have for pastoral care and for intentionally nurturing the gifts of others. I am keen for this to change.

Regarding Carolyn's role at Collins Street, I have a strong sense that her calling as a leader, communicator and pastor needs to be affirmed and extended. While we benefit from her gifts and the wider Baptist work is enriched by her presence, I believe that Collins Street holds a duty of stewardship in regard to Carolyn's ministry. What's more, her significant gifts in teaching and preaching are obvious and she brings a level of expertise to the worship life of the community, especially its music. Given the changes we are currently navigating in relation to the church's music, we have a new opportunity for creative leadership in this area.

III. THE PROPOSAL

In summary, I propose the following:

1. that we move from a structure of senior and associate pastors to that of co-pastors — a collegial model of leadership in which Carolyn and I share the pastoral leadership of the community with roles that have equal standing and responsibility in the eyes of the church;
2. that we re-work the job descriptions accordingly, Carolyn taking responsibility for ministries of teaching and worship, and me for ministries of pastoral care and community;
3. that Carolyn move from a 0.8 appointment to full time and I move from a full time appointment to 0.8.

The two roles I propose are these: Carolyn as **Pastor for Teaching and Worship**, and me as **Pastor for Care and Community**.

IV. JOB DESCRIPTIONS

It is proposed that the *Pastor for Teaching and Worship* and the *Pastor for Care and Community* serve as the **co-pastors** of the church — those appointed by the church to work collegially under God and with the community in the leadership of its life and mission. As servants of God and the community, **the co-pastors will work together** to provide spiritual and pastoral leadership in the life of the church:

- working with the church in developing and implementing vision for its life and mission;
- nurturing a community of worship, proclaiming the Christian way and communicating with relevance into the lives of the people of God;
- deepening the spiritual life of the church as a community of prayer and discipleship;
- providing a reflection of Christ's love and support through pastoral ministries of listening, wisdom and understanding;
- inspiring, equipping and releasing the people of God for ministry;
- challenging the community with a broad vision of social justice, inclusivity and neighbourhood mission;
- speaking and acting prophetically on social issues.

In particular, the **Pastor for Teaching and Worship** will:

- oversee the planning and leadership of the Sunday gatherings for worship;
- develop appropriate expressions of liturgy and music for worship;
- set the direction of the preaching and teaching ministry of the church;
- develop opportunities for broader participation in worship;
- ensure a variety of worship forms that match the needs of a diverse congregation;
- oversee programs and opportunities for education and formation;
- promote opportunities for the church's engagement in civic and cultural issues;
- participate in the pastoral care ministry of the church.

In particular, the **Pastor for Care and Community** will:

- oversee the church's ministries of pastoral care;
- develop appropriate means of welcoming and integrating newcomers into the church;
- oversee the nurture and development of leaders for the ministry of the church;
- identify and encourage the expression of gifts for ministry across the community;
- support and resource volunteers to contribute to and strengthen the ministries of the church;
- extend and strengthen networks and relationships of spiritual support within the church, including the development of small groups;
- develop appropriate ways to deepen the experience of community within the life of the church;
- participate in the preaching and teaching ministry of the church.

Together, the co-pastors of the church will be accountable to the deacons in their leadership and, in cooperation with the elected officers of the church, jointly responsible for:

- maintaining regular reporting mechanisms to the deacons and the church;
- chairing meetings of deacons and members where appropriate;
- exercising general oversight of church employees, ensuring the smooth operation of the administrative and related functions of the church;
- providing oversight for the day-to-day running and good order of the church's activities, ministries and facilities.

V. THE CHALLENGES

Anticipating a significant change like this one presents particular challenges.

- ***The model of co-pastoring is a new idea for Collins Street.*** While the church has a long history of team ministry, these have always centred on the appointment of a senior minister. There are certainly churches that have moved to a co-pastoring model, St Kilda and Brunswick Baptist Churches being two local examples. Further afield, Canberra Baptist, Wellington Central (New Zealand) and Bloomsbury Baptist (London) have explored and implemented forms of co-pastoring. In considering this, I have sought conversations with others who have experienced a co-pastoring model and have been encouraged by its potential. Success seems to depend upon four things: (i) the personalities of those involved; (ii) the clarity of job descriptions; (iii) clear lines of accountability; and (iv) good patterns of communication.
- ***A new model of leadership requires a new set of assumptions.*** This is especially so when the members of a co-pastoring team have worked for a significant period of time under a prior model. Granted, this will take some work for me and Carolyn, but I have confidence in our relationship and am reassured by the fact that after eight years of partnership we come to this with our eyes open. The need for new assumptions also relates to the church. While we can change titles and job descriptions, it is more challenging to change the assumptions of a community

regarding leadership. We would need to find appropriate ways to shift those assumptions and establish a new model of leadership that has more than notional agreement.

VI. THE IMPLEMENTATION

With the unanimous endorsement of the deacons, I now present this proposal to the members of the church for their consideration. At a special meeting of members following the AGM on **Sunday October 21**, the following motion will be presented:

That Carolyn Francis and Simon Carey Holt be appointed co-pastors of the Collins Street Baptist Church, effective January 1, 2019.

Should you have any questions about this proposal, please be in touch with one of our deacons or pastors prior to the meeting.

Simon Carey Holt
Oct 10, 2018

Some words of endorsement from Carolyn

This proposal represents an exciting possibility for the next stage of my ministry at CSBC. After 7 1/2 years I still enjoy the strong sense of calling to this community that brought me here in 2010 however, in recent times, I have found myself longing for greater opportunities to exercise the gifts in leadership, vision setting and teaching that were key to my previous work as a Senior Pastor. Simon and I enjoy a rare and productive working relationship, and this proposal represents an opportunity for us to each flourish in our areas of greatest gifting and passion. I am grateful to the deacons for their enthusiasm around this new direction and look forward to what 2019 and beyond holds for us all.

Carolyn Francis