

## Lead Pastor Cover Letter to the Church from the Elders

Dear Church,

As elders of Grace Community Church (GCC), we understand and want to acknowledge this season of change that we are about to go through. Times like this can bring with it a sense of loss, uncertainty about the future and questions about how such change will affect church dynamics.

We, the elders, want to assure you that we see this as an exciting time here at GCC. We feel this is a confirmation on what the Lord has been telling us to do as a church. We see the Lord's direction and His confirmation as we step through this. Proverbs 16:9 says, "The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps." As elders, we've been doing a lot of planning, but we see Him directing us, and this has given us much confidence. We come before you today based on the confidence we have in the Lord's leading for our church.

The elders began this process of planning for Lead Pastor Succession back in 2017 when Pastor R made known his wishes for retirement. The elders formed a Succession Committee which started meeting 18 months ago tasked with:

- Considering the big picture and the details of what needed to happen in the process.
- Initial lead pastor discernment.
- Making recommendations to the elders.

The following recommendations were made to the elders, and they voted unanimously to:

- Select an internal pastoral candidate.
  - Align with what the elders believe is our calling as a church to disciple and raise up leaders.
- Pursue Jon as lead pastor and continue the discernment process. In addition:
- The staff has been involved in the conversation and all staff personnel have openly endorsed Jon for lead pastor to the elders.
- The elders will vote on Jon for lead pastor when the church bylaws and elder defined processes and steps are complete.

We believe that this is not just a hiring process but a process that requires discernment of God's will and calling on Jon's life and family.

We would like the church body to be in prayer for this. GCC is in a good place, but we are in a spiritual battle and Satan would like nothing better than to get a foothold here

and destroy the good work God is doing here. To avoid that we ask that you please refrain from gossip and hear-say. If you have questions or concerns, please talk directly with the elders or the staff. Don't get your news from the pews as they don't know any more than you do currently.

A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) package is available for each person's consideration and prayer.

Friday, May 20, 2022

*The Elders and Staff were asked to write a paragraph or letter to share our thoughts on Pastor Jon Keeler stepping into the role of Lead Pastor.*

Four years I have worked with Jon Keeler and watched him work. He stepped into some administrative and financial challenges, and I watched him carefully and wisely get to the bottom of each situation bringing unity and clarity to all. I have coached him through his ordination process and helped him transition from corporate to church. I believe he has a definite call to the pastorate and meets the Biblical guidelines. Though I personally do not pick my successor, I will do everything I can to get Jon ready to lead the church after my retirement.

Pastor R., Lead Pastor

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When Jon came to Grace as the Executive Pastor, we were looking for him to take the lead on getting our finances under control. He not only did that; but he excelled in other areas especially administrative. I watched as his love and concern for our church grew over time. It became clear that God had brought him to Grace for more than just finances. Both he and Julie became more involved in our discipleship ministry. He felt God leading him to pursue an MDiv in Theology at Liberty. When Pastor R made his retirement plans known, it became clear that Jon was being called by the Lord to the lead pastor role. Besides being of stellar character I have found Jon to be very practical, personal and easy to work with.

Dante Lupinetti, Elder

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I am unreservedly endorsing Pastor Jon Keeler's candidacy to replace Pastor R. Greene when he retires. I believe that Jon has the organizational and spiritual gifting to be the next lead pastor for Grace Community Church. I have observed his growth over the last several years and believe that he has demonstrated a deep passion for serving God and this congregation.

Dan Haffey, Elder

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I had the privilege of being on the search committee when we were searching for an executive pastor 4 years ago. At that time Jon Keeler was my top pick for that position and as we went through the selection process, I felt God confirm this more and more. It impressed me that someone who was a pastor's kid who, had an intimate knowledge of what a pastor's position would entail, still feel God's calling to serve. I also liked the fact that he has experience outside of the church so he could relate with the average church member.

There was a saying by the New Guineans where I grew up "You need to kill the grass". This means you have to spend time in each other's lives so you are able to observe people under all of life situations, both the good and the bad, to see how people operate

under pressure and when they do not think they are being observed. I have observed Jon a lot and, since the time we hired Jon as the executive pastor, I have watched Jon grow and have a real desire to learn and improve in his role. I have seen his desires to grow but also consider a different calling from God on his life and walk towards it. His commitment to discipleship and disciple making is second to none. He lives what he speaks. He has taken Godly advice from wherever the Lord brings it and, to the best of his ability, has endeavored to allow the Holy Spirit to change him from the inside out. There have been many times where we have had hard conversations and I have challenged him in his walk and his views of the Christian walk and his approach to things and he has taken them to heart and went back to the Lord to seek his guidance in the matter, not mine.

I have watched God refine Jon in the last 4 years and mold him into the man that he is now. I have seen his heart change as the Lord has placed this desire and calling on his life to now pursue this position of lead pastor. I have seen him walk beside many people in the church as they struggle to point them to Jesus. Most of the time, no one is aware of Jon being involved because he has done this in a true spirit of humility and compassion for the people involved. I have seen him identify and build up leaders and help people identify their own calling in the body and walk in it. The staff and elders are in the strongest and healthiest position they have been in since I started coming to Grace and Jon has been a very strong proponent of these changes. He has been willing to do the hard things and have the hard conversations to allow for growth and maturity.

One of the major indicators to me on the integrity and character of a pastor is his interaction with his family. Too often I have seen pastors relegate their family, by decision or peer pressure from the congregation, to second or third place over the church when the Bible is so clear that our families are our first call not our last, and we are to consider family life as a strong indicator of a leader's qualification. Jon has established good boundaries to protect his family and has been extremely intentional to disciple his kids and be there for Julie as well. I enjoy hearing about how God is working in his life as he continues to pour into his family.

Over the years Jon and I have developed a close relationship as we have worked through many difficulties and challenged each to continue to hear the call of God on this church and attempt to move in this direction. His discretion and confidentiality in many matters, even when being attacked or it is not to his advantage has been something that has really impressed me. I am glad to call him my friend.

Based on the discussion listed above, and this is not an exhaustive list, I whole heartedly endorse Jon Keeler as the candidate for the position of lead pastor.

God Bless Scott Starick



Thursday, May 12, 2022

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To the Grace Community Church family:

This is a letter of endorsement for Pastor Jon Keeler to be considered as a candidate for the position of lead pastor at Grace Community Church. As the Chairman of the Elder Leadership Team, I highly recommend Pastor Jon's candidacy for this position. Over the past four years, I have had the privilege and pleasure of spending a lot of time with Jon, not only working together on various church matters but also as friends. I have spent countless hours in meetings with him and we have spent many hours in social settings as our families and children have become close friends. Through it all I have learned about his character, moral code, and personal core values. I fully believe he was called by God to be a pastor. I am aware of the high position and the large income that he sacrificed to leave the business world to enter full-time ministry. He never intended to leave the success he worked so hard to achieve in the corporate world, but God had other plans for him. When he was certain that God had called him into ministry, his wife, Julie fully supported him, as if she too was called by God to follow Jon in this drastic and difficult transition. Jon joined the Grace team as the Executive Pastor and spent the first year of his ministry learning all about our church, our vision, and our mission, getting to know the staff, and gaining an understanding of what makes us so great. He was humble and intelligent enough to not offer any changes until he fully knew and understood all that we stand for. Meanwhile, in that first year, he improved our church's finances by decreasing operating expenses and reducing debt. Since then, he has gained the trust and respect of every elder and staff member. He has demonstrated competency in leadership and stewardship of our resources. I have personally seen him work hard and long to serve the Lord and put the needs of the church ahead of his own.

The position of Lead Pastor is a difficult one to fill. The right person would need to accept the fact that he will be judged by God at the highest level. He would need to know that all eyes would be on him at all times and the members of our church will hold him under tight scrutiny. And, when he stands in the pulpit, he is standing at the intersection of three worlds: Earth, Heaven, and Hell. He will be attacked by Satan and all the spiritual forces of evil. He will need to be ready to stand firm in his faith and be strong in the Lord. This is no easy task! Yet, Jon is fully aware of the great responsibility, and he still wants it. That is the reason I believe he was called by God Himself to apply for candidacy in this position.

We must understand that Pastor Jon Keeler is not Pastor R Dallas Greene. Pastor R and I have also spent a great deal of time together over the years and he is exceptionally gifted in many things. Pastor R has certain God-given talents that no one else can possess. He has developed a certain set of skills over the past forty years that will take time for others to develop. However, I can certify that Pastor Jon also has a specific set of God-given gifts, talents, and skills that are unique to him and fully qualify him to lead our church. There are also many similarities between Jon and R, and over the years of working together, those similarities have grown stronger. They both greatly thirst for the Word of God and spend countless hours studying, learning, and meditating on scripture. They both demonstrate a powerful prayer life. They both love the lost and their hearts

ache for those who haven't yet met Jesus. They both also believe in the mission and vision of Grace Community Church and are fully dedicated to reaching the world for Jesus by raising up disciples who make disciples who live and love like Jesus.

I am confident that, with the support of the elders and staff, led by the Holy Spirit, and guided by scripture, Jon Keeler will make a great lead pastor and effectively lead us into a bright and beautiful future.

Sincerely,  
Amir A. Rashidian

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Dear Grace Community Church family:

God is a work at Grace Community. It is good to continually remember how God has faithfully led us in the past, how He is actively working in the present, and how He is preparing us for what He is doing next. The best is yet to come!

Pastor R has been the lead pastor at Grace for approaching 40 years. Do we realize what a blessing that has been? Many lives have been touched over those years and many family legacies have been changed. R and Debbie Greene have been faithful leaders at Grace and we so appreciate all they have done for the Kingdom. As we approach the time when R is planning to retire, we have much to be thankful for.

This makes the selection of a lead pastor at Grace Community a very unusual occurrence, and as part of the elder team, it is not one that we have taken lightly. This is not a mere hiring decision, but a matter of calling of an individual by God, and discernment of that call by people around that person. Which brings us to the consideration of Pastor Jon Keeler to become the next Lead Pastor at Grace Community.

As far a calling goes, we have already walked with Jon through the calling process when he came to Grace as our Executive Pastor. Jon had a clear sense of call to leave the secular world of finance, to use his gifts and talents to serve in the Kingdom of God through the local church. We have been blessed by that calling. Jon has faithfully served in that capacity and has led us into a very good place regarding staff, facilities, and financial stewardship. I believe his calling to Executive Pastor has been clearly confirmed over the past several years.

So, why would we now consider Jon for the role of Lead Pastor? Jon has a strong sense of calling to this role, though it was not his original plan when leaving his previous work. I actually appreciate that he is not pursuing this position out of a sense of ambition or obligation. It is not just a career decision for him. I have seen his heart and passion grow for the work of the church, especially in the areas of reaching the lost, discipleship, and raising up leaders for the Kingdom of God. He has a great love for the Word of God and has been growing in his ability to communicate well through opportunities he has had to teach and to preach.

I also see Jon as a man of integrity and courage. I have never seen him shy away from a difficult situation or hard conversation. God has really used Jon's leadership to help us navigate some rough waters in recent years. He has a strong confidence coupled with great humility. Those two traits do not often go together. He has strong beliefs, but is willing to listen and take feedback. This will be important in a Lead Pastor role.

Jon is a man of prayer and faith. Once he starts praying for a need, I find he often will follow up and ask how that situation is going. He often will comment about something that came up in his prayer time or in his time in the word. All of this is important to me in a Pastor. Someone who is seeking God daily, not because it is his job, but because he is first and foremost a follower of Christ. I see that in Jon.

There is much more I could say, but all of this to say that I gladly endorse Jon and am looking forward to continuing the discernment process for him becoming our next Lead Pastor.

Blessings, Tim Hampton, Elder

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I have been following the presentations made by the Pastor Transition team with great interest. I have always believed that God would provide the pastoral candidates from within our church body.

I was a bit apprehensive when I first heard that Jon had expressed interest in the lead pastor position. I know that Jon had brought fresh insight and badly needed organization and leadership to Grace, but I didn't see a way forward to the lead pastor role.

After seeing the Jon's responses given to him by the Pastor Transition team and hearing Jon's description about why he wants to serve in this position, I began to take this decision seriously. During the last Elder meeting, we heard about positive staff feedback and testimony affirming the choice from the Elders on the selection committee, I felt that it was time for me to add my approval to the other voices; and I would like to proceed with Jon as my first choice to be our lead pastor when Pastor R retires.

Bob Coss, Elder

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It is my personal belief that Jon is the right person for the role, and God has strategically placed him at Grace for this. I have had the privilege of working with Jon for nearly four years now. During that time he has pushed me to be better, challenged me to go outside of my comfort zone, and provided unique opportunities to use giftings he saw in me before I even recognized them. Jon has helped make me a better shepherd for others. I have seen God work in Jon's life and see his passions for shepherding and discipleship

shine. I believe he is ready for this role, and to help our church family be faithful servants for God and His kingdom.

Fletcher Abbott, High School Director

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I have had the privilege of working closely with Pastor Jon Keeler over the past several years in several capacities. Each situation unique, and each situation revealing character qualities in him that I admire and appreciate. He loves Christ, he loves the Church, he loves the Word of God. He is a man that conducts himself at the highest levels of integrity and has proven himself to be trustworthy. I look forward to working alongside him as we plan next steps, and I will offer my full support to ensure a successful transition.

Sharon McKinley, Worship Director

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When I consider Pastor Jon as lead Pastor at Grace there are two things that stand out to me as important. First, he is zealously committed to growth - especially growth in the context of discipleship. At his core, I believe that Jon desires to work hard to humbly become the best leader he can for the sake of serving this church and building up God's Kingdom. He is teachable and is wholeheartedly committed to teaching others by challenging and equipping them to grow in their pursuit of God. Second, he considers Grace Community Church, his family. This is incredibly important to me because Grace is my family. I have been a member for over a decade and on staff for nearly 5 years. Pastor Jon serves and leads our church family from a position of love and loyalty. He is faithfully committed to the people of Grace and the family of Christ. Serving on staff has provided me the opportunity see first-hand how God has been preparing Pastor Jon to take on this role. It has also provided me the opportunity to see both his strengths and weaknesses and to witness him navigate success and disappointment as well as conflict and stress. Additionally, I have gotten to observe on a regular basis how he speaks about, interacts with, and supports his family. Pastor Jon leads with integrity, humility, honesty, and faith and is a worthy candidate for Lead Pastor here at Grace.

Angie Dallavalle, Middle School Director

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I fully support Jon's nomination for our next Lead Pastor. If you had asked me 4 years ago if I thought Jon would make a good Lead Pastor at Grace, I would have been hesitant. In that timeframe, Jon has walked through some difficult roads with our staff and our church body. I see God's hand on Jon's calling and his growth into this role. He studies and holds God's Word with high reverence. He is open to being challenged and willing to talk through areas where we disagree. He has built trust. He asks great questions and pursues the "why" behind what we do as staff and ministry leaders. He is a prayer warrior. In the last few years, Jon has developed as a shepherd and where he



has weaknesses, he has asked for input and really made steps to grow. He has sought unity on our team. I have experienced Jon pursue wisdom from me and others, acknowledge his faults and grow from them, share his weaknesses and surround himself with others who have strengths in areas he may not. As a longtime team member of Grace, I'm excited to see where God is going to work in and through Jon and continue to build His church here!

Erin O'Hara, Director of Children's Ministry

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As a member of the search committee for our Executive Pastor, Jon Keeler truly stood out. Not because of his seminary degree and time spent in church leadership like some of the other candidates. At that time, we were primarily looking for someone with strong administrative and financial skills. He also needed to LOVE Jesus, of course. The committee could tell he had these skills by his resume. But in the interview Jon shared his love for the Lord, his discipline of spending time with God every day, and his prayer life. I knew we had the best candidate.

In the four years Jon has proven his administrative skills in how he has lead the church, the staff, and his small group. He has financially positioned this church to one of the healthiest places I have seen it since coming to Grace. This is evidenced in the balance sheet, but also in the renovated Worship Center and plans to finish the unfinished spaces. Jon listens, he prays, he listens some more and then he moves forward with the team. He is the happiest when the team is with him.

One of the pleasant surprises for us is his love for teaching and preaching the Word. This was not in our original plan, perhaps, but I believe it was in God's plan. His graduate degree from Liberty University only deepened his love for God and sharing that with others.

Transitioning from a corporate background to a church one had its challenges for Jon. For example, how you interact with people is different. Managing volunteers is different than managing paid employees. But Jon has learned how to push the team and others towards God and to do it with love. He deeply loves the people at Grace Community Church.

I am excited to see how God is at work at Grace and sincerely look forward to serving Him with Jon Keeler as our Lead Pastor.

Brenda Rota, Office Manager

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It has been my honor to serve under the leadership of Pastor Jon Keeler here at GCC. Jon values the opinions and hearts of the congregation and consistently follows the direction of God through prayer and scripture before making decisions. I have found Jon to be an honorable man who believes in the mission of the church and puts others

before himself. As such, I am in full support of Jon succeeding Pastor R upon R's retirement.

Zeke Arnold, Facilities Manager

# Get to Know Jon Keeler

## **Intro**

I'd like to thank the succession planning team, elders, and staff in compiling these questions to help in the process of moving forward with where God is leading us. I appreciate getting to know many of you who worship here at Grace and hope that these questions will be one of the ways we have in getting to know each other better. I am humbled by the opportunity to serve alongside of you and look forward to all that God is going to accomplish in the future.

## **Personal**

### **Calling - what inspired you to seek the position of lead pastor?**

#### **Describe your calling?**

- To be honest, my calling was a big surprise to me. Growing up in ministry as a pastor's child, I was convinced that it was not what God had for my life. I definitely didn't want to be a pastor, as I had seen the frustrations of ministry first-hand. I felt like I had my life all figured out and since God uses people in the secular world too, I was content to pursue a job in business. Things went well during my career and the Lord gave me ample opportunity to share my faith and lead people to the Lord. What I didn't realize was that God was building up my experience for something greater. He was giving me success at my job while I was being trained for what was to come. Eventually, God led me to a point where my heart was no longer in my career – something changed, and the passion seemed to dry up. I didn't realize it but my friends and family around me did – God was beginning the process of calling me to something new. He was preparing me to trust Him in something uncertain and scary, a new start that I didn't have already planned out. It took almost 2 years of God working through my wife, friends, and family to soften my stubborn heart. It's hard to summarize the extent of God's work in our lives in just a short answer. There were so many ways that He was showing us to trust Him in taking the next step forward. I remember one night when Julie and I were watching a gospel message presentation on TV. I felt my heart break and a burden to do something more for His kingdom. I realized I wasn't completely sold out for Him and that I was holding back. From that point forward, God increased a desire within us to use the gifts, experiences, and Bible knowledge that we had learned from years of following Him. We had always had a strong passion for discipling others, but the burden became greater. We wanted to find a way to help others experience the joy of their eternal life and have victory in their Christian life. After several months of searching, God led me to the posting for the executive pastor role at Grace Community Church. It was apparent that His hand was on this opportunity. It would take pages of writing to detail all the providential "coincidences" that God orchestrated from the time He began calling me until my arrival at Grace. Though it was not easy, and I had many doubts along the way, the Lord continues to confirm His calling of my family and I here at Grace.

#### **What is your qualification?**

- Only by the grace of God, can I say that I in any way can be qualified for His work. I have made many mistakes in life and have stubbornly gone my own way at times. Through the work of the Holy Spirit in my life, I am thankful to be a growing believer that is trying to conform to the image of Christ. From the first time that I became an elder over 15 years ago until today, I take the responsibility very seriously. By the gift of God's grace, I believe that God has given me with the spiritual gifts of

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leadership, pastor/teacher, and administration. Additionally, the Lord has given me a desire to be a shepherd, overseer, and steward of His local church family here at Grace. I believe that these gifts, along with meeting the elder qualifications in Titus 1:5-9, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, 1 Peter 5:1-4, qualify me for the position. I am a growing Christian that is in submission to Christ and continually seeking conformity to Him. Additionally, I was ordained for ministry by the Grace Brethren fellowship in 2019 and have a master's degree from seminary.

### **What changed that you would like to be considered for the role of lead pastor?**

- In continuation of the story of my initial calling to ministry, I initially thought I knew why God had called me to Grace as an executive pastor. For the first 2 years, I saw him use my skills and experience to help steward the church funds, deal with difficult situations, and lead various aspects of our work here. However, through the encouragement of pastor R, the elders, and the staff, I began to step into roles/opportunities outside of my comfort zone. In fact, I remember one discussion with Pastor R when he asked if I could preach on an upcoming Sunday. My initial reaction was "I'm not that kind of pastor." But to my surprise, God really showed me the joy of preparing and presenting a message out of what God is showing me in my life. Over the years, there were many things I had to unlearn from my previous experience in the business world – what worked there, didn't always work in a family of believers. The Lord began to change my heart, deepening my affection for our church family. He changed my perspective about my calling and my job and grew my desire to use long-buried skills and abilities. God also made me realize that the skills he used to bring me here are not the ones that give me the greatest joy. He continued to develop a shepherd's heart within me, giving me a greater desire to serve our church family. He has increased my experience in ministry leadership, teaching, bible knowledge, and education to equip me for the lead pastor role. I take very seriously the magnitude of responsibility and accountability that this role brings. It is out of a desire to serve the Lord, no matter how difficult the circumstances, that I aspire to co-lead our church family with the elders and staff, help cast the vision, serve our church family, enable our church to be a powerful disciple-making church, and preach and teach the Word.
- I believe that the Lord initially called my wife and I to Grace Community church for a specific purpose and has continued to grow us and knit our hearts together with this church family. As part of this local body, He will continue to equip us the plans that He has made.

### **What is your passion?**

- First and foremost, I am passionate about helping others grow in their relationship with God. There is nothing more exciting than to see believers really understand God better. To know how much He loves them, to know that He wants to have a close relationship with them, and to know that they are a chosen child of God. When people learn who they really are in Christ, it motivates them to pursue God more fully and serve Him more obediently. They begin to enjoy the abundant life now, while on this earth, and they can't help but share the good news with unbelievers and fellow Christians. It is great to teach someone a new skill but that does not compare to discipling believers toward life-changing spiritual growth.
- I also enjoy leading others and empowering a team to accomplish the great works that God has planned for us. It is rewarding to see everyone playing their part in the overall mission that God has for us. God is a relational God, and He wants us to be a relational family, one body, in pursuit of Him.

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- I also have a passion for preaching and teaching God's Word and defending the truth of Scripture. This is an area that I have continued to develop in various ways and through practice. It is important that we have a high view of the Bible and continue to emphasize and teach the absolute and unchanging truth of God's Word.
- I also am thankful for opportunities to be used in God's process of leading unbelievers to Christ. It is amazing and inspiring to see God change a human heart through the process of salvation. One of my favorite Sundays of church when we have baptisms. It is a time to celebrate the amazing stories of how God has brought another prodigal home.

### **What is Jon's heart and vision for the Church?**

- This question makes me think of Psalm 133:1 (NIV): "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" One of my greatest prayers and aspirations for our church family is that we would be unified in our mission of making fully equipped and mature disciples of our Lord - a church of disciple-makers, fulfilling Christ's Commission. At the heart of this is doing the hard work of equipping believers in the Word, developing a prayer-centeredness, building intentional relationships, and encouraging everyone to serve in their area of giftedness. I pray that each believer here at Grace will reach their fullest potential and find the joy of serving the Lord and living a victorious Christian life. Our focus needs to be on a cohesive discipleship process for the entire family, growing us together into effective disciple-makers in our church and community. As we send our people out each week, fully equipped for the work, we will see God broaden our impact and reach in Frederick County as He changes lives and brings lost sheep home.
- As we prosper in His work, we need to be prepared to use the facilities, resources, and members that He has given us to live up to our calling. That includes thoughtfully planning and renovating our facilities for the needs we anticipate, being good financial stewards of what God has given us and ensuring that we are a church of active ministry partners. God's calling for each one of us full-time ministry. We need to be a church that empowers all our people so that there is no distinction between elder, staff, or "volunteer." When we all co-labor in the work of disciple making and evangelism, God will accomplish amazing things!

### **What do you see in GCC that you would never change?**

- I pray that the core of our culture here at GCC will never change and only grow stronger. From the very first time we visited GCC; we knew that this church was alive and that the Spirit was active. Our greatest strength is the relational environment we have here – truly seeing each other as family. It is evident in the welcoming environment, heartfelt relationships, unity, and generosity of our people. I am also encouraged by the passion our people must serve each other and our community. All these qualities are centered on our focus on knowing and obeying God's Word in our pursuit of disciple making. I see a true desire in our people to grow deeper in their relationship with God and their understanding of His Word. I pray that God will continue to strengthen the core of who we are - a relational, prayerful, Word-focused church that joyfully serves each other and God.

### **What do you see in GCC that you would like to change?**

- We have such a uniquely genuine culture of discipleship that I pray that God will increase our reach and impact in our community. That we would begin to broaden our focus outward as the Lord leads us to greater opportunities. I would love to see an even greater focus on prayer as we meet the

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challenging and changing culture that surrounds us, preparing our children, youth and adults with a biblical world view. I pray that we can continue to raise up strong leaders to teach and equip our people in the Word through deep discipleship. We must also increase our efforts on disciple making so that each member is involved in a discipleship relationship, serving in their giftedness, and growing closer to God.

**How did your education have an impact on who and where you are today? What kind of education was this?**

- I was disciplined by my dad throughout my entire life. I also served as the discipleship program leader, a small group leader, elder, Sunday School teacher, leader of men's ministry, and other areas of service
- I was ordained by Grace Brethren fellowship in Feb 2019
- I received a master's degree from Liberty University seminary in Theological Studies – Graduated Oct 2021.
- Both my ordination and seminary experience were extremely valuable and have greatly shaped me as a disciple of Christ. The experience has strengthened what I believe, challenged me in my walk, and taught me how to better articulate the truth. It has increased my understanding of the Word of God and has given me a larger passion for sharing the depths of the truth within. My whole life I have been training in the Word and studied it on my own. But having a formal education has taken my walk with the Lord to a new level. A good example of the impact is if you learned to play an instrument by ear on your own and then later went on to study music professionally. It deepens your appreciation for all the wonders that you have taken for granted. In the same way, my education has helped me better understand the context, background, and application of the Bible. It has given me a greater appreciation of how great our God is and some of His wonders that I have taken for granted. I highly recommend that all believers should continue to challenge themselves to be continuous students of the Word – there is no end to the depths and riches you will find.

**Who do you use as a role model?**

- First and always – Jesus is the model for all our lives. Our goal is to allow Him to conform us to His image through a pursuit of Him, giving up the things of this world, and allowing Him to change our lives as we live in obedience to His Word.
- My favorite inspired author within the Bible is the apostle Paul. I have extensively studied the letters he wrote as powerful examples and instructions for personal and corporate life. I always was impressed by Paul's boldness and commitment to the Lord in dealing with any circumstance. And yet he humbly asked his fellow believers for prayer that he would have boldness and courage to finish the race well.
- My father and mother have been the best earthly role models that I have had. They taught and modeled how to live a victorious Christian life. They never stopped pouring into me and showing me how to live with genuine faith. They both served the Lord for over 40 years in ministry and had an unwavering commitment, even when things were tough. They were the best disciple-makers I have ever seen in action. As most children, I did not realize the gift that God gave me in having the parents that I had. I took for granted, and at times resented, their teaching and discipline. Once Julie and I started to have children, the Lord quickly opened my eyes at how difficult it is to be a godly

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husband and father. I never realized how much I truly learned from my upbringing but now admit that my parents were right when they said, “you’ll thank us later in life.”

### **Please tell us about your upbringing - Relationship with you parents.**

- Relationship with mom – very close relationship. She is my prayer warrior and a constant encouragement. I praise God for her godly example, love, and sacrifice.
- Relationship with dad – (also see above under role models). I have a very close relationship with my dad as well. He has been my role model, teacher, and encourager. He has been a great example of a father, husband, and servant of Christ.
- I spend a lot of time with my parents, and they now have an equally impactful relationship with each of my children. I am thankful for the multi-generational impact they have had.

### **Defining moments in your life.**

- The most important defining moment of my life was when I accepted Christ as my Savior at an early age, creating in me a desire to live and serve Him. I also was significantly impacted by the two long-term summer missions trips I took in my teenage years. These experiences helped to create a servant’s heart and give me experience sharing my faith and seeing the power of a group of teens on mission for Christ. The next defining moment was when I was married to my wife. God has used our relationship to bring us closer to Him and give us a unified vision of serving Him in all that we do. Becoming a parent was the next significant event. It gave me a greater appreciation for God’s love for us as His children and created an even more significant motivation to live as an example to my family. Another significant event was when I first became an elder at my dad’s church. It was a very sobering and humbling experience, allowing me to learn how to serve, lead, and disciple the flock. The latest defining moment was when God called my wife, family, and I to full-time ministry at Grace. It has been a blessing to be able to have a chance to serve Him in this new opportunity.

### **How do you describe a flourishing church? Provide the biblical context.**

- I believe there are several components necessary for a church to flourish. We must be pursuing the global mission of God’s calling for His church to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I [Jesus] have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20, ESV). That means equipping our people for the “work of ministry” (Eph 4:12) so that they are disciple-makers in their families, work, and community. That also means that there is “unity of the faith” (Eph 4:13) within the church family as we are collectively built up to our ultimate goal of maturity “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). We must also help each church member discover and use their spiritual gifts to serve the body (Rom 12:3-8). To measure success is not in numbers but spiritual growth. A strong church family also exhibits meaningful, purposeful relationship as seen in the early church in Act 2, devoting “themselves to the apostle’s teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). The church can then stand in the community as a “household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15), upholding and defending the truth of the gospel and Scripture against an antagonistic culture. Additionally, I believe every local church is called to discover and pursue the unique calling that God has given them. To focus on what makes them unique and effective, not trying to be all things to all people.

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## **Essential Skills and Gifts - Qualifications**

### **What unique gifts and skills do you have that would help grow the church?**

- See also question 1.i.2. I believe the Lord has gifted me with specific spiritual gifts to help (as a member of the body) to build the church up in our mission. I believe that God will use the gifts of leadership, pastor/teacher, administration, and discernment to help lead, shepherd, protect, and grow our church family. I believe that my skills and experience in leading organizations and people will help ensure that we properly steward the various resources the Lord has given us for His glory and our growth. I have also been discipled to be a disciple-maker my entire Christian life and have learned from the best examples. I have personally made disciple-making a priority in my walk, to help others understand their identity in Christ and live victoriously.

### **What past experiences and accomplishments do you think qualify you for leadership at this level?**

- I have had experience leading and serving in several churches that I have attended throughout my life. I have served in roles of elder, discipleship program leader, men's ministry leader, small group leader, Bible teacher, etc. I have been ordained and trained through my master's degree in theological studies. I have extensive organizational leadership experience from my former career in a large company and can relate to those who work in the secular field. As mentioned earlier, I have been a part of disciple-making programs at my former church and place a high priority on equipping each believer for their unique and collective purpose in God's calling. I also believe that I have partnered effectively with the elders, staff, and ministry leaders here at Grace over the past four years to help us reach the potential that God has for us.

### **What weaknesses do you have that might hinder the growth of the church?**

- I sometimes find it difficult to trust others. Being in ministry my entire life as a pastor's son, I have been hurt, let down, and disappointed too many times to count. I have seen a lot of legalism and hypocrisy that has led me to keep myself guarded. I also learned to keep guarded in the years of working at my former company, where office politics were challenging. If I'm not careful, this weakness can lead to me coming across as cold, tough, or lacking heart. I believe the Lord has been working on this area of my life with greater success since coming to Grace. One of my prayers is for God to continue to "remove the heart of stone from [my] flesh and give [me] a heart of flesh" (Ez 36:26). I have already seen the Lord working in deepening my love for this church family and increasing a desire to shepherd well.
- It is obvious that my administrative background makes me regimented and structured. Whether nature or nurture, it is how I have operated all my life. In my flesh, this can manifest itself in the weakness of being inflexible or impatient. It also causes me to be impersonal when I'm busy, when things aren't going as planned, or when things are moving too slowly. I am used to taking charge and making decisions and at times need to be reminded to slow down, ask question, and listen more. God has really shown me that a mature man of God lives in moment-by-moment dependency on Him. He has also increased my appreciation for spending lots of time in prayer, slowing down in order to hear the Lord's voice, and remaining humble. I am working to ask more questions and listen more.
- One area at home, in business, and in the church that can be a challenge for me is being too frugal. I grew up with a lot of practice in this skill and my former career valued stewardship as well.



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However, I find that sometimes I need to loosen the reins and be reminded that it is all God's resources, and He is faithful to provide. I know that I am not in control but am only a steward of God's resources.

**Describe your philosophy of sermon preparation and preaching.**

**What is expository preaching to you? What does it mean to exegete scripture?**

- I personally believe that expository preaching is the best method to feed the church body. Scripture itself is profitable and sufficient to meet the needs of all believers so that they "may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:17). We must have a high view of Scripture because it is the very inspired Words of God, always culturally relevant. With expository preaching, the teacher's goal is to discover the original inspired author's intended theological meaning first. This process allows the underlying text to speak again through the sermon with the same theological meaning. The meaning of the text is found through a careful exegetical analysis of the text, including all the nuances and particulars of the text. This is the process of looking carefully at every detail and clue to the text's original, intended meaning. The teacher also needs to look at the contexts in which the text was originally written (verses within chapter, within the book, within the NT, etc). The structure and genre of the passage must also be taken into consideration as elements necessary to discover the original meaning. Once the original meaning is determined, it is important to find the modern-day application before preparing a persuasive sermon that aims for a response of faith and obedience to the biblical truth on the part of the audience. I follow a basic plan that I learned in seminary to properly prepare an expository message, aided by the work of the Holy Spirit.

**In your opinion, what makes an exceptional teacher of the Word?**

- I think it is important for a teacher of the Word to have a very high view of the Bible. To handle it properly as the Word of God. To approach the study humbly and prayerfully to allow God to change your heart and that of those that you lead. An obedient prayer life and walking consistently in the Spirit are also important so that you are prepared to hear the Lord's leading on a message. You must always allow the Lord to lead up until the time the sermon is presented, listening for His leading. It is important to diligently study Scripture and allow the actual meaning to drive the message. It is important to think of those whom you are teaching so that you are relatable, personal, and able to understand the needs of the church family.

**Was there doctrine at Liberty that you disagree with. What would you change if you could?**

- None. Thankfully, Liberty majored on the essentials and then presented other areas with sufficient room for personal interpretation, providing the pros and cons of each view.

**Which best describes you? Will you do whatever it takes OR Will do my best. Why?**

- I would say that I am a person that will always try to do my best. I believe that God uniquely created and equipped each of us with various gifts, skills, talents, and opportunities. His only expectation is that we each do our best with what He has given us. Like the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30), His expectation is that we put forth the effort in obedience. Fortunately, God takes care of the results. We only need to be a willing vessel for His greatness. Ephesians 2:10 explains this best: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand,

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that we should walk in them." God created the good works and prepared them beforehand, all we have to do is obediently walk in them.

### **Responsibilities**

#### **What are Jon's current roles in the church currently (summary)?**

- I have an opportunity to serve a one of elders in leading our church to fulfill our vision and mission. We pray and care for our congregation, shepherd and lead our people, and protect and defend sound doctrine and teaching. In addition to this role, I serve as the pastor responsible for oversight, leadership, and development of our staff and ministries. In this part of my role, I serve as a liaison between the elders, staff, and church. I also oversee the administrative functions of the church, such as facilities management, renovations, project management, legal and regulatory, contributions and budgets, finance, payroll, and human resources. I am a member of the executive committee in charge of the day-to-day decision-making for our church. Additionally, I have the opportunity to share in the preaching and teaching of the Word and support of our mission to be a disciple-making church.

#### **What do you see as the key role(s) of a lead pastor?**

- From the biblical requirements, some of the key responsibilities of a lead pastor are overseeing, teaching, shepherding, praying, discerning and defending the truth. The lead pastor must also champion the vision/mission of the church, lead staff and ministry personnel, be a unified member of the elder team, be an effective team player, and be a strong disciple-maker. They must be a committed, growing, and obedient believer with a vibrant prayer life, active study of the Word, generous giver, hospitable steward, and other spiritual disciplines.

#### **What is the purpose of the ELT regarding the lead pastor?**

- At Grace, we follow the biblical model for the pastor/elder role. The lead pastor is one of the elders, working in a unified way to lead, feed, shepherd, care for, and protect the local church family. As an equal member of the elder board, they work collectively to discern the Lord's will for the local church.

#### **What will you be using as criteria to make leadership decisions in the church? What is your decision-making process?**

- For major decisions, I believe that unanimous agreement within the elder team is necessary, allowing God to lead the team to hear His voice. For day-to-day decisions and administration, I believe in staff and ministry partner empowerment and collective decision-making. It is important for leaders to listen more than they speak and understand the value of the many parts of the body. This also helps in building up new leaders to positions of greater responsibility.

#### **How do you meet the needs of the staff and leaders?**

- I seek to serve our team, encourage others in their giftedness, and be willing to help wherever needed. I try to use my experience to add a perspective that will help the team reach the goals God has for us. I pray for the team and seek to motivate and inspire them in their area of service. I

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protect, defend, and support the team, knowing that ministry is a difficult calling. I seek to unify our team and work together on joint decision-making, looking to the needs of the entire church family.

### **Relationships**

#### **How were you disciplined?**

- I was mainly disciplined by my father and a few key elders at his church. I was trained in the Word, prayer, and various spiritual exercises and was helped to discover and use my unique spiritual gifts. I learned how to study, apply, and teach Scripture. I graduated through a series of curriculum, served as an apprentice, took on leadership opportunities, and was coached throughout.

#### **Who have you disciplined?**

- I have disciplined many people through my adult life. Most recently, I have disciplined my small group apprentices, my triad guys, a group of men in my local pastor's network, the men's ministry leadership team, the staff, my children.

#### **Who have they been discipling?**

- Throughout the years of disciple-making, I have been blessed to see many rise up and become disciple-makers themselves. They have gone on to lead small groups and triads, teach classes, and some have gone into ministry. Many of my triad guys have been discipling other men at church and at work. One of the men in a former group has moved and been discipling a group of men at his new church. Each of the men from my pastor's network have gone on to disciple a small group of men at their church.

#### **Who have you had an impact on? How, What, Why**

- I believe that God has used me to have a lasting impact on each church that I have ministered at, as it is His design that we are relationally connected to each other in our pursuit of Him. Through serving, leading, discipling, teaching, giving, encouraging, and empowering others, God has allowed me to take part in His work. I have served in the roles of elder, staff, men's ministry leader, discipleship program leader, small group leader, and disciple-maker. I have consistently taught the truth and sound doctrine of the Word, protected the flock, faithfully stewarded the church's resources, and brought focus to our mission. I believe that I have also made a lasting impact on those I worked with at my former company and in my previous neighborhoods. I believe that when we are sold out to Christ, He will use us as part of His plan to plant, water, and reap His harvest.

#### **What leaders do you look up to? What leaders do you consider to be effective?**

- Former seminary professors, Chuck Swindoll, Bill Gillham, Tony Evans, Renald Showers, Ken Ham, Millard Erickson, Gordon Fee, Gary Habermas, Richard Longenecker

#### **Why?**

- There are few Christian leaders that continue to stand the test of time with strong character and uncompromising perseverance in prayer, the Word, discipling, and serving. I look up to those who run the race with a heart to serve Christ, practice what they teach, actively disciple others, and uphold and defend the truth of Scripture.

