

Operational Changes Announcement (8/5/2012) – Steve Santa Ana

Good morning. I always enjoy the opportunity to speak you – especially when I have good news.

You know, sometimes when change takes place over a long period of time it's hard to see how all of the changes fit together. This morning I just want to take a few minutes to share with you how some of our changes over the past two years fit together and talk a little about where we are headed as a church.

Two years ago, the elders began a comprehensive and ongoing review of our church. Nothing is off limits in the review and we have even taken a hard look at ourselves as elders. We are doing this because we simply want to get better in every way possible. Along the way, we have found some things we like and some we don't, but one general theme seemed to stick out - the need for more balance.

- First, we need more balance between our internal and external focus. Sometimes we do a good job of nurturing our church family and quite honestly sometimes we don't. Either way, we generally spend much more time and resourced taking care for our church family than we do bringing others to Christ. We need to be more balanced, effectively nurturing and growing our church family as we reach out and grow God's kingdom.
- Second we found that we need better balance in our roles as elders. We have taken a long look at ourselves relative to what scripture says about our roles. Scripture teaches that elders have three primary responsibilities 1) To be doctrine protectors; 2) To care of the congregation physically and spiritually; and 3) To oversee the affairs of the church. While we think we've done well with doctrine protection, we feel we've been out of balance in caring for the congregation and oversight. Several years ago, the elders made a conscious decision to focus more on caring and shepherding. While we think we've made improvement there, we've concluded that we did so at the expense of oversight. To balance our 3 responsibilities, we must do a better job with oversight.
- Finally, we also found a lack of balance and unity in direction, purpose and execution. We have had a lot of people do great things here, but at times, we failed to coordinate, integrate and focus those efforts. We as your elders take responsibility for that. We must build better coordination, integration and overall direction throughout everything we do.

Driven by our review, we are making some adjustments and initiating changes achieve better balance. As we begin to see how these changes are coming together – it's exciting!

- We began 20 months ago with a vision and a symbol. The vision was to ***become a Christ trusting, grace sharing, relationship building, community serving, world engaging, difference making church*** and we adopted the symbol of the empty chair. The vision has become a guide by which we measure everything we do and the empty chair symbolizes our desire to introduce people to Christ and grow God's kingdom.
- Next we decided that in order to reach more people for Christ, we would need to break down some barriers. So we introduced an instrumental worship service and expanded the role of

women in the church. We felt that that scripture allowed it, and by doing so, we could reach more people over time for whom these elements are important.

- We then turned our attention to our 40 year old building and needed to face two realities. Our building was not only dated and unappealing but it was also old and had a lot of problems. The building needed many fixes beyond carpet, and paint in order to make it both presentable and truly functional. So we embarked on our Faith for the Future initiative. Thanks to your generosity and God's blessing, in less than a month we will be in our newly renovated space. Faith for the Future has helped us secure our foundation and will help us to reach out to our community.
- Finally, this fall, we are launching a 31 week walk through the bible called *The Story*. This is specifically an effort to spend extended time in God's word through a format that is conducive to bringing friends and effective for introducing newcomers to Christ.

We know some of the changes have been harder and more disruptive than others. The instruments and women's roles in particular took a toll on all of us when some of our family and friends chose to leave to work and worship elsewhere. That was difficult for all of us and it was certainly not what we wanted. We know that some of you embraced the changes and some of you even now still struggle with those changes. However, the elders want you to know that we are very grateful to all of you for sticking with us and working through the changes as a family.

We are now turning our attention to creating more balance in our roles as elders and the first step is to change the way we operate as a group. We have more details work through, but in an effort to be as transparent as possible we want to go ahead and share a high level look at these changes today.

Going forward, we will divide the elders into two committees – an Oversight Committee and a Shepherding Committee. The entire eldership will continue to work closely together on some matters, and all of the elders will still have some oversight and shepherding responsibilities. However, our primary responsibilities will now be within our respective committees.

- The Oversight Committee will consist of four elders (Ken Brushaber, Blair Bryan, Charlie Long, and me). We will oversee areas like (strategy, planning, execution, staff, budgeting and budget reviews, ministry direction, discipleship and mentoring, etc.).
- The Shepherding Committee will consist of 7 elders (Charles Dowdy, Hal Gross, Steve Klemm, Tom Latimer, Craig Mundy, Joseph Suttle, and Bill White). This group will oversee areas such as (relationships, encouragement, visitation internally and externally, communication, pastoral care, small groups, discipleship and mentoring, etc.)

Last but not least we also need to have more balance around spiritual growth so going forward, you will see us put much more emphasis on discipleship training, mentoring, and leadership development.

To help us operate as effectively as possible, we also feel it's important to make sure that our staff and elders are in roles where they can maximize their God-given talents. So just as we have aligned our elder committees towards their strengths, we are now aligning the staff in the same way.

A few years ago, due to a variety of different reasons including our efforts to improve our care for the congregation, we asked Jeff Walling to take on many additional responsibilities around administration, management and operations. However, when we did that, we believe we put him out of balance. I think we would all agree that Jeff has many amazing gifts but he is especially gifted at evangelism and teaching – can I get an Oh Yea! But by covering him up with a lot of other responsibilities, we weren't being fair to him, to you, or to those newcomers who we want to reach with God's word. Jeff is our best evangelistic tool and he is just too strong a communicator to cover him up with a lot of other responsibilities. Therefore, going forward, we are asking Jeff to devote 100% of his time to preaching and teaching. In the same way, Lee Thrasher who is highly gifted at administration will be aligned to his gifts. These changes will play out over the next few months, but going forward, the elders will be much more involved in trying to match gifts and roles in an effort to put everyone in the best possible position to maximize the use of their gifts.

Over the past two years we've admittedly had a lot of ups and downs but that's common when you go through major transitions – just ask the Israelites. Highs of Faith for the Future success and new commitments to Christ have been tempered by lows of budget difficulties and member turnover. However, through it all, we know that God is still in control. We are confident that He will help us weather the storm if we will simply follow His will, and praise Him every step of the way.

I've covered a lot of ground this morning, but there are a few things we want to make sure you take away from this message:

- First, you have an eldership that is deeply committed to God's work here at PR. We are far from perfect, but we are committed to making PR a vibrant place where people can find connection, belonging, family spiritual challenge and spiritual growth while serving and worshipping God.
- Second, we know we have been out of balance in several different ways and we are 100% committed to correcting that. In particular, we will be much more involved in the oversight of all aspects of this church
- Third, we have a vision and a plan in place to take this congregation to new heights in our service and obedience to God and we want each of you to join us on that journey and we want each of you to bring someone else with you and we will challenge you to do so.
- Fourth, in spite of our challenges, we are excited about the future here at PR. We are praying for a harvest of souls for God's kingdom. In addition, we believe that God has lead us to these changes and that He will use these changes to bring the harvest we have been praying for

Of course there will be more to follow as we work through our new committee arrangements, but if you have any questions about this message or our direction, just grab any one of the elders and they will be glad to talk to you about it any time.

In closing, thank you for your attention this morning. Thank you as well for your support of the elders, your commitment to PR and most importantly, your commitment to God.