

The Church, Pt. 3—The Practical
Pastor Larry Kroon
Wasilla Bible Church
May 02, 2010

First time I've ever done this. First service today I had the congregation vote at a certain point as to whether I would keep on going or not...and they voted yes, overwhelmingly. And we went way over, ok? I'm taking their vote as binding on everybody. Actually, it's one of those weeks when I get into one of my passions, one of the things that really matters a lot to me, in detail and I can really get goin' on this. It's like an engineer that's gonna describe how a bridge is put together, and all you wanna know is 'Can I get across it?' And so I'm gonna try to cover it fairly efficiently and try to keep it a little under what we did the first hour. I thought about how we could scale it back a bit. And the reason I'm still gonna do it is I gotta keep you on the same pace with them. And secondly, it's a subject I think is really important to us to at least get a general grip on.

We can explore it in more detail, but the issue is the church. And we spent three weeks on it; we've talked about our attitude toward the church. It is so important in God's plan...the church universal, across all time in history; but the church local, congregations like ours, are so important in God's overall plan of extending grace. And so we spent our first week looking at our attitude...how do we evaluate, how do we see the church, and with God's heart. And then, second, we went back and looked at the unique...that was last week...we looked at the unique thing about the church, that it's energized, it's indwelt by God's Spirit, and there's something special about it that is unlike any other organization. And this week we're kinda going in the nuts and bolts, the kinda the practical element. And we're gonna be answering a question...what are the essential elements of a functional church? What are the things that have to be there for a church to really be functioning as a church? And the interesting thing about it is it's really very simple. There's only three things. Now, we can get really complex with it, and because of its simplicity you'll see it in so many ways applied. But ultimately it always comes back to just three simple things that are crucial elements in a functional church. And by the time we're done today my goal is you'll recognize all three of those, and you'll appreciate the simplicity of the church, and you will also see how they work out in our congregation. So that's where we're headed.

Gonna use a particular passage of Scripture, actually we're gonna use a particular book of Scripture. It's 1 Timothy; and I'll ask you to turn there with me to 1 Timothy 3, and it'll give you an idea as to why we've chosen this particular book. It's a letter the Apostle Paul wrote late in his life to a younger pastor, a man who was probably in his mid-thirties, Timothy. And that's the name of the book. And Paul is writing to him as Paul is nearing the end of his ministry. There'll be yet one more letter that he writes to Timothy. And as he writes this letter he covers a number of things. One of the things he does is he highlights, and he makes it very clear why he wrote this letter—the purpose of it—which tells us why we would bring this letter up when we talk about the church, and how do you 'do' church. In chapter 3, verses 14 through 16, is the passage...is the part we're going to read today, and it's the part that identifies why Paul wrote this letter. And it's interesting, he makes the purpose statement in the middle of the book, not at the beginning, not at the end where you would expect it. He writes the purpose statement here in the middle of the book, and this is what he says as he is describing why he wrote this letter. He says, "*I hope to come to you*"...this is Paul writing to Timothy...

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to conduct or ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and a support of the truth.

And then he goes on to identify what that truth is that the church supports, and is a pillar of, and holds up. He says

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

*He [Jesus] was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.*

The thesis statement for the book, the purpose statement for the book, is that Paul was writing this so that Timothy, as he worked with the church at Ephesus, would know how to arrange and order and conduct church life. And he uses three terms in here related to the church that I think are helpful to highlight and identify. One...he refers to the church as a 'household of God'. And that simply means that the church is God's family. Whether you think of it as the church universal throughout all time and all places, or you think of the church as this local congregation right here, this is God's family. Ok? And you make sure you understand that when we talk of God's family we are talking about the church. That's why the next phrase goes on and makes sure that when we say the family, the household of God, we're talking about the church of the living God. And then the last statement gives us a sense of what the church is about, its purpose, its mission; and he describes it as the pillar and the support of the church, that of the truth, that which holds up the great wonder, and glory, and mystery of the reality of Jesus Christ for the world to know. It's important to remember that about the church...its mission, it's calling, its purpose in God's plan.

The church is not designed by God to simply be a community center where you meet people of like mind, and share hobbies with, and become friends with, and your kids marry each other. Secondly, it's not a relief agency designed to wipe out poverty in this generation. The church is not a political action committee designed to reform the nation and make it all vote a certain way. Neither is it a counseling clinic devoted exclusively to dealing with people with troubled issues. And secondly [lastly], it's not a religious seminary; it's not a place designed to teach all things theological and turn out a generation of scholars. The church's mission and its purpose is simply to give witness to the reality of Jesus Christ. That is our calling, that is our purpose. A lot of these other things...you'll see them going on in church life—helping, counseling, shepherding, connecting—all those sorts of things. But the purpose, the mission, is to give witness to the reality of Jesus, the truth of all that He is.

But the letter doesn't just simply talk about the church. In fact, the focus is not giving us a definition and a description of the church. The focus of the letter is to focus on and dwell on how we're supposed to conduct ourselves in the church, what it is we're supposed to do. Now this letter...I mean this note, this verse, as I said, comes in the midpoint of the text or the book, and you can divide it pretty easily. The first part of the book, the first three chapters deal with what we should be doing as a congregation, what are the congregational things that should be going on in a functional church. The last half of the book deals more with pastoral issues. It's more personal between Paul and Timothy, telling him as a pastor, 'Hey, here's how you have to handle different people and different situations. Here's how you, as a pastor, need to meet the challenge of false teachers. Here is how you, as a pastor, need to be able to talk with people with touchy issues, like about money.' And he walks through these issues with this young pastor, this younger pastor, and gives him instruction on a pastoral level.

For today's purposes we're gonna do is focus on what he speaks of the congregation, what are the things that should be going on in congregational life, what are the elements of a functional church. There's three of 'em. The first two are so...we speak of 'em often, we're not gonna spend much time other than to identify 'em and recognize 'Ok, yeah, they should be going on.' We're all pretty familiar with them; we talk about 'em a lot as a congregation. Number one is there should be biblical truth. The church should communicate the truth as it's found in God's word. Now that's put in the opening lead instruction of 1 Timothy where Paul writes this younger pastor, and he actually puts it in a negative way at first. He says, 'Instruct certain men not to teach strange or different doctrines', things different than what God has presented through the Scriptures and through His apostolic messengers. He says, 'Don't go with different teachings. Stay with the truth of God, biblical truth and authority.' And as the book develops it will be put in more different ways and expanded upon, that truth has been entrusted to us and we need to teach it from Scripture.

The second thing that you'll find that is a critical element in congregational life is prioritized prayer. Chapter 1 focuses on the speaking of truth; chapter 2 focuses on the importance of prayer. And the instruction that opens that particular chapter is this lead one in chapter 2 verse 1. Paul will say to Timothy, 'First of all, entreaties, and prayers, and petitions, and thanksgivings need to be offered for all men, and especially those in positions of authority.' And he goes on to expand on that. The church is to be a people that pray.

Now, both these things I've said we talk about a lot. They're on our core commitment list. They're things we examine and say 'We need to be on that.' The priority of prayer and the authority of Scripture...it's why every time we gather we teach Scripture. It's why when we go through a Sunday like this that we stop; and if you notice...if you watch the songs that Joel picks for us, many of them are prayer songs. They're songs where we verbalize what we're thinking and feeling to our God. And then we stop with things like Mark praying over...giving thanks over the past ministry year. And then we have that song that the worship team sang...that was a prayer. That was not a concert song for your enjoyment. That was a prayer. And we'll end this service in prayer.

We're familiar with those, and we're constantly saying 'Let's stay on those. Let's make sure we're giving it the right priority. Let's make sure we're always going back to biblical truth.' So I'm not gonna spend a lot of time on these because the third element in this list that I find people are actually most confused about. They have a sense of it, but they're not exactly sure how it all works, and they see it applied in different ways in different places, and they're kinda wondering, 'Ok, how does that work?' The third element in a functional church...there's biblical truth, there's prioritized prayer...the third element is qualified leadership, individuals who have responsibility over the congregation and are accountable to God in how they exercise that responsibility; individuals who are responsible for leading the congregation and accountable to God as to how they do that. Critical element in a functional church. If you don't have that you may have a home Bible study, you may have a study group, you may have a neat home group...whatever. You do not have a functional church. A functional church would be one where you have biblical truth, you have prioritized prayer, and you'll have qualified leadership. It's pretty simple...it's pretty simple.

But let's see how Paul presents that when he talks about qualified leadership, because this is where people can get a bit confused. When we move into chapter 3 he's gonna talk about that. And the first thing he does is he talks about individuals who he calls overseers. Those...and he says, he describes it as a noble task, it's a desirable thing to be and to do. And he starts talking about these people called overseers. The term is 'episcopas' and it simply meant 'overseer'. It has the idea...or in some places it's translated or spoken of as 'bishop'. It simply meant the idea of somebody who watches over something, that gives it direction, and is somewhat of a guardian and a protector of it. You'll find in other passages, when Paul is talking about it among Jewish readers and Jewish churches, churches that were primarily of Jewish heritage, he would use a different term and it's the term 'elder'. And they immediately, when they heard that, they knew what he meant...he meant a leader. When he was dealing with churches primarily of Gentile heritage he would use the term overseer, 'episcopas', and they knew what he meant...a leader. The terms are interchangeable in the New Testament. The concept is the same. You're talking about leaders.

Now he'll go on and he'll have another term, another position, another leadership-type position that he'll speak of, and it's a little different. It's found in verse 8, and it's...he talks about 'deacons'. And we read that and we say, 'What's that?' Well, the Greek word is 'deakonas'. And so what they've done is they really haven't translated that term, they've just put it into English. They've taken the Greek term 'deakonas' and made it 'deacon'. And we look at that and say, 'Ok, that doesn't help me a whole lot. What is a deacon?' Well, we oftentimes translate it as 'minister'. We kinda like that term. But I don't think it's the best term. You'll hear it often used, but I think the best translation, because it is exactly what the term meant, is 'servant'. That's all it meant. And I really think we're best off just simply using the term 'servant' without any great theological overtones.

What Paul's basically saying is in a church what it needs to be functional are leaders and servants. If we want to expand on leadership and the elders and say, 'Ok, exactly what are they and how do they work?', if we were to put an expanded definition we'd have to go outside of this text to do it, because this passage doesn't give us a whole lot of detail. In fact, there's no passage that gives us a whole lot of detail on it. But the best kind of overall summary statement we can say is that elders, or overseers, are simply leaders in the congregational life, are qualified leaders who manage congregational life as a father manages his household, or a shepherd tends his flock. It's important, because these are not like a board of a corporation. Leaders in the church are called to be...they're to tend that church, they're to manage that household as if it's their family. That's the idea of an elder, a leader in the congregational setting. The deacon, the minister, the servant...and these oftentimes were simply brought along to help the elders, but the idea here is they're qualified individuals who are assigned to serve the congregation in specific roles. They're given specific tasks to do on behalf of the congregation. And think of that household analogy once again. If you have a household there's children...and back in that culture large households would have children, and they would have servants that would maybe take care of the kids, cook the meals, or tend the fields, or in some cases even manage the owner's business, and those sorts of things. And so, in a sense what we're sayin' is you know, there's the leader of the household, and then there's servants. Those are what we might call the deacons. The analogy breaks down a bit, because in the church the servants are also children; they're part of the family, they belong to that household. But that's kind of the basic description.

The thing is, there's not a whole lot of detail to it here. The main emphasis in both definitions is that we're talking about *qualified* individuals, 'cause when you go through this chapter that's the emphasis. We are not given a list of their tasks. We're not given a list of their specific responsibilities. We are not given a formal organizational chart. We're simply told 'Make sure their character is right.'

Look, for example, at chapter 3 verse 1. I'm gonna read these verses where the Apostle Paul describes what an elder, what an overseer, should be like. Beginning at verse 2 he says

...[he] must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive [or in order], for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

That's the description. Notice we're not told who is to choose these individuals. We're not told how they are to be appointed. And you won't find it any other place...how to choose them or how to appoint them. We're not told their specific task list. We're not told how many there should be in any given congregation. And you go down and you read the deacon's section and it's the same way. In fact, this is the only passage, by the way, where you'll find the term 'deacon' described at all. It appears in one other passage simply as a greeting. So we're not given a whole lot of information here. What we are told is make sure whether they're leaders or servants, they're qualified...they're people of character, competent people of character. That's the essential element in a functional church.

Because this is so simple, because it's not complicated, because it's so basic that a functional church simply is a church that is marked by biblical truth, the priority of prayer, and qualified leaders, you'll find it takes a lot of different shapes across church history and even today. There's varied...you'll find a big difference between a small house church that may only have one elder, one overseer, and no official deacons or servants, to the huge, huge mega-churches with thousands of people attending on a Sunday, or the huge denominations that have leaders on the local level, the regional level, the national level and the international level...I mean, it can be very, very complicated with many, many layers of assignment and duties and task. Or it can be very simple.

You'll find some churches that may have a team of elders and no servants, because the elders are able to keep up with everything. You may have other churches that will have one elder and a large number of deacons, servants. You'll find churches that'll use the terminology differently. Some churches will never talk about deacons; they just simply talk about ministers, or servants, or ministry people. Other churches will simply call the leadership 'the board', the leaders. And some will be very emphatic about using the term 'elder'. The forms, the structures, are not important. The key is they are competent people of character...that's the key thing. In our congregation we happen to have a team of elders, and we feel from the biblical scheme of things, when you read through mentions of elders you'll find that they tended to be teams within a congregation. Seldom...in fact, I don't think in the New Testament you find an example of a church with just one elder, one overseer. Usually they'll be a team. In our church we have a team of individuals that function as leaders, as elders. And when it comes to the question of deacons we don't use the term, really, here. Our people that fill the different service positions and places in our congregation are pretty much identified by what their task is that we've assigned 'em to. It could be a children's ministry director; it could be our resource manager; it could be our contact pastor. All of those are servants of the church that have been assigned specific roles and tasks. And so we use the term very broad, just the term 'servant', and then identify the specific ministries and tasks that they have.

Some people get frustrated with how many variations there are, and how from church to church it can change. Really, that doesn't bother me. I'm actually excited about it. I think it's the way God has designed the church very simple so it can adapt to a lot of different situations and circumstances, both to be effective and both to be resilient and be able to handle situations where form and structure can get in the way. Just really simple...Scripture, prayer, and qualified leadership, and you have a functional church.

Now two questions arise, and at this point this is exactly where we had a vote last meeting, and they all voted to go ahead. Ok? So I'm going to go ahead, but I also found out I tried to cram too much in. And so I'm going to go ahead and I'm just going to give you general direction. There's some stuff you're gonna see here in the next ten minutes, you're gonna say, 'Uh, can you explain that further? Can you give me more detail on that?' And you're going to have to handle that either by email or in one of our classes raise a question with me, or something like that. Grab me after service. But right now I'm gonna handle two questions and give you a general direction with respect to 'em. Ok?

Number one, the question...can women be elders? Can women be elders? Now you can see why they voted 'Yes, Larry, keep going.' Ok. You know, this is one that's just been hammered. And the debate gets heated, and you know, what I have to do is respond with where I go with Scripture. And I'll just give you the basic approach that I understand. And I recognize that there is debate on this. But there is a passage in 1 Timothy where the Apostle Paul is writing to Timothy about how to order the church. It's chapter 2. He will speak to this question. And what he will say...he makes this statement in chapter 2 verse 12 he says

I don't allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man...

...is his statement in the text. There's a lot more to this. I've spent hours, and more than hours, dealing with this text and the context, and related passages, but that's his central idea. The thing to understand is he's not talking about women's role in business, in the community, in politics, or anything else. He's just simply talking about women in congregational life. Ok? That's the first thing to remember. The second thing to remember is the idea of 'teach' here is not simply the idea of passing on information. The idea in this context and in this setting, and in congregational life, is to give spiritual direction. There's an authority function to the teaching talked about here. And that's why it's linked with the idea of exercise and authority. We're not talking about simply giving information. We're talking about giving spiritual direction, authoritative direction, a 'you should do this', even a 'you must do this'. And Paul says, 'I'm not gonna let that happen in a congregational setting.'

Now people can respond to that and say 'Ok, that's Paul's opinion in a specific situation...the church at Ephesus.' My response, wrestling with the text and the other parallel passages, is no, Paul is giving this as a directive for the church throughout time. It's not just his opinion for the Ephesus setting. I believe it's a directive he gave for the church throughout time. The passage indicates the context; we'll develop that a bit and you'll see, if you look at the verses around here, that the issues he gives have nothing to do with the cultural situation in Ephesus. They're facts of history. You'll also notice it has nothing to do with inferiority or superiority of either sex, has nothing to do with relative worth, a difference of worth between the different sexes, has nothing to do with that. It isn't an issue of 'women can't handle it', it isn't an issue of 'men are stronger', or any of those things. And so, when I apply this passage, I recognize, wow! There's things that I think women could really bring into a leadership situation at the congregational level as leaders. There's also things that men can bring in. And I say, 'Ok, what do we do on this?' I don't make this decision based on my opinion. I simply respond to the interpretation, the text, that I wrestle with, that I come to and arrive at, with integrity. That's where we are on that. So as a congregation here, our practice is that we do not have women on our elder board. That isn't an issue of whether they're superior or inferior, or anything like that. It's just simply applying this passage. And secondly, we don't have them filling our pastoral preaching role either, in other words teaching from the pulpit on Sunday mornings. That's the way we've chosen to apply this passage.

Another question, not nearly as controversial but one that comes up, and it gives you a general direction of how we handle this question...the other question that comes up often...and it's not verbalized...I run into more confusion, and I hear the confusion and I see the confusion, and I wanna try to straighten it out and help people to see things a little clearer, and so I'm gonna take this opportunity right now to kinda briefly give you a picture of something here. And that's an answer to the question...where do pastors fit in this? If you notice, that overseer/elder/leader...the word 'pastor' isn't there. Deacon/minister/servant...the word 'pastor' is not there. In fact, throughout this entire time I've probably used the word pastor maybe three times at most. And you're kinda wondering 'Larry, what are you?' 'A pastor.' 'Well, what is that? Aren't you the leader?'

Follow this closely. Pastors are individuals gifted in pastoring, or caring for souls. Sometimes a very heavy part of this is being teachers, pastor/teachers. But pastors are individuals gifted in pastoring; and they can fit as either leaders or servants in the congregational structure. They can fit in either position. There are some pastors that can fit as shepherds of souls that should never be in a leadership position because they're gonna struggle to manage a large group. There are some pastors that can function in that leadership role, but it's not because they're a pastor. That passage that Paul gives in 1 Timothy does not say 'Make your elder be a pastor.' That's not one of the criteria for being a leader. The criteria is what is your character. Pastors simply have a gift that hopefully they develop with integrity, and they can fit in either position...servant or leader.

I emphasize that because I'm absolutely convinced one of the beauties of the way God has designed the church is that He has not put leadership in the hands of a professional clergy. He has not. He's put the leadership of the church in the hands of people of character, who know what it is to raise a family, who know what it is to balance a budget in tough economic times at home. They know what it is to either run a business or be an employee, or work in political field. They are a people who know what it is to deal with angry neighbors when your dogs get in fights and your kids are angry, and their kid breaks your window. They're people that know what it is to go through all the give and take in a community, and maintain a good reputation. In fact, they just don't know how to do that...they *do* do that. They're not living in some isolation. They are people who are rooted in the community and the congregation. They're not tracking on some clerical career path. I wanna emphasize that, so much so that I want you to understand...when we think of church leaders we think of guys in robes, and clerical collars, and everything else, and that is not the way to think of it!

And so I'm gonna walk you through the leaders we have in this congregation that are presently serving on our elder board. And I just want you to understand these are the type of leaders that God brings up and raises up. There's this one, Kevin Crozier. I'm a little disappointed in his picture, it looks way too casual, so we're gonna put a tie on Kevin [marks a tie with the PowerPoint]. Ok? Kevin's raised three kids in this community, in this church, and he loves Jesus. Of all the elders, he's the one who thinks most outside the box. He's the one that, when he says something, I'll find myself 'Whoa, where did that come from?' Ok? That's Kevin.

This is Don Ford. He is a director, a regional director, for an organization called National Outdoor Leadership Schools. They train leaders. His whole career has been devoted to training leaders. It's an organization that has regional, and national, and international headquarters; and he's up here in Alaska. They take individuals out into the wilderness and they teach 'em leadership. He works with everything from teenagers just coming out of high school and headed into college to NASA astronauts, taking them into the field and teaching them leadership. And Don serves in our church. And I still remember the day he was baptized.

Mark Doner...wait, we're supposed to treat elders with respect, so I wanna be a little careful here. [Flips the slide of Mark with a drawn-in goatee and glasses to one of Mark and Merry where Merry has the goatee and glasses.] I don't know...I can't look at Merry that way very long. [Makes slide normal, no drawings.] Mark Doner retired from teaching after twenty years. He's raised three kids in our community. Just took his daughter, his youngest daughter, to Greece, put her on a sailboat with instructions to find somebody to marry [much laughter]. And he just came back. And anyway, he's a retired school teacher, just spent his first year as a retiree and he runs a commercial fish set site down in Clam Gulch during the summers. And he's one of our elders.

And then we've got this one. This is Joe Kirkwood. I call him the elder of the elders. This is a guy that, man, you just wanna be around. You just wanna soak up all that he knows and all he's learned from walking with Jesus. He's a retired real estate agent in our community.

This is Wes Keller. Wes actually serves in the legislature. And it was a real issue when he was appointed to the legislature; we, as an elder board, spent time in prayer about it. He really wrestled with it. And he says, 'Man, I'm goin' into that public arena where people get angry, and it's hard to maintain a reputation, and everything else.' And he says, 'Man, I don't want my functioning as a legislator to reflect badly on the church at all.' And he actually said, 'Maybe I ought to stop being an elder while I'm in the legislature.' And we prayed about it, and we thought about it, and we said, 'Ok, Wes, let's keep goin' until you vote on something we don't like.' Ok? [more laughter]

Then there's Marlene and I. We've been here thirty-two years, we raised four kids, this is our congregational place and heritage. We've also been on a diet recently. Ok?

Got Tom Ryan...oh, that's not Tom, this is Tom...no, that's not...here's Tom. Tom's our eldest, youngest elder. And he kinda looked like this when he first started. But now he's here, he's an airline pilot with Alaska Airlines. He's raised five kids...six kids...no, eight kids...I don't...he's got a bunch of kids, but he's now got one granddaughter. Ok?

And then we've got Wes Tegeler. He's the one I've known the longest. He's an accountant. And I've known him since we shot squirrels together as, like, eight-year-old boys or nine-year-old boys. He is an accountant, but he's not like an accountant. He's an accountant with the soul of a philosopher. He rides a BMW motorcycle. Picks up, jumps on it, and rides all the way down to Canada and back. And you'll also notice that his wife...there's a reason she looks like she's being pinched right there. Ok? But that's Wes Tegeler.

And then we've got...I can't mention the name. Ok, it's taken me a long time to figure this guy out. He lives in an isolated place out in the woods with a little airstrip, and a private hanger. In that private hanger he has a helicopter and an airplane. And he has a name for it called 'Airborne Tech', and they take pictures of everything. And I'm absolutely convinced that he is some kind of Black Ops CIA agent [laughter as everyone looks at pictures of Tim Veenstra]. And I have asked him that question repeatedly, and he has never directly, categorically denied it.

We purposely did this, and I extended this a little longer, and I appreciate that, but there's a reason I want to do this. You need to understand God did not place the church in the hands of the professional clergy. He raises up people from among us, rooted in the community, rooted in the congregation. And when they encourage you to pray it's not because they have time that they're paid to pray. They know what it's like to find time in a busy schedule to pray. When they call you to spend time in the Scriptures, they do it as individuals who are not paid to study and to preach and to teach. When they call you to serve, these are individuals who are trying to keep their business running, raise up their family, and be engaged in the community...they know what that's like...and to still find time to serve in

the church. And when they form a church budget, and they are the ones who form it, they do not benefit from it. They're the ones who sustain it. I'm the only one who's also a pastor. I'm unique in that group, and that's just 'cause they put me there. The rest are people who go through life, and God has raised up among us, to shepherd this congregation. I can trust 'em. I can trust 'em.

I'll ask you to stand.

[Congregation sings the prayer song.]

I'm gonna encourage you to go in that truth and enjoy that grace. If you see somebody from first service and you wanna say, 'Why did you vote to go longer?', it's ok. I appreciate your patience today. Thank you.