

Summary

2024 Thriving Congregations Listening Campaign

On Caldwell Pastoral Search

The Caldwell Thriving Congregations Team, as charged by our Session, has listened to our congregation and friends and humbly submits the following report. It captures what we heard regarding our upcoming pastoral search. Using the time-honored processes of House Meetings (including one held virtually) and Relational Meetings (1:1's), and supplemented with an online survey and Constant Contact for direct email, we invited all members and many friends of Caldwell to share their hopes, dreams and aspirations for Pastoral Leadership at Caldwell over the coming 5-10 years. We also asked what questions and concerns they have for the Session regarding this new call and pastor.

We were able to hear the thoughts of more than 80 participants in House Meetings and more than 20 in 1:1's and via our online survey. As a team we met and reviewed all 100+ responses. Those addressing the first question fell primarily into 2 categories for our new pastor: 1) desired characteristics/personal qualities, and 2) basic hopes for the job description.

As you may imagine, many themes were heard again and again. The 3 primary themes our congregation and friends identified were:

- 1) Diversity in leadership. Our pastor at the pulpit will reflect the diversity we have and hope for in our pews. Our pastor will be a visible indication of what we believe. There were many who spoke specifically of hopes for a person of color, a woman, and/or an LGBTQ+ person.
- 2) Dynamic preaching – passionate, compassionate, emotionally invested, based in scripture AND real life, motivating, challenging, uplifting and inspiring.
- 3) Commitment to continuity and stability in leadership. Someone who will stay on to lead and serve at Caldwell even after John retires. Someone who can support and complement John now.

Characteristics important to many were a strong faith and spiritual life, good people skills, a clear commitment to social justice, maturity and life experience, a good teacher, comfortable with children/youth, openness, flexibility and strong self-care practices/boundaries. Someone who will welcome us, know us, love us and challenge us.

Other mentionable characteristics include being approachable, non-judgmental, a motivator, a visionary, having a good sense of humor and imbued with a sense of wonder.

The second category for our new pastor was on hopes for the job description. These included:

- 1) “Co-pastor.” This was the most often noted hope. Someone who would support and complement John now; who would learn from John now and carry that forward to lead and serve when John retires.
- 2) Second most often noted was someone who would “balance” in-reach and out-reach, including : (in-reach) welcoming new members, providing congregational care and nurturing to members, offering Bible Study, Christian Education, helping lead our Women’s and All-Church Retreats, offering spiritual guidance, cultivating elders and member connections, and (out-reach) build and nurture connections to community social justice issues, anti-racism, affordable housing, Pride/LGBTQ+ community, and with other churches.
- 3) Experience with or good business sense, financial acumen and stewardship.
- 4) Good skills in conflict mediation and resolution.
- 5) Develop a role and strong connection with Easter’s Home.
- 6) Help Caldwell to grow, attracting people of color, families with young children, young adults, LGBTQ+ persons.

Our last question asked what questions and concerns folks have for our Session in this process and call.

- 1) Many wondered how we would/could afford a Co-pastor.
- 2) Folks wanted to be sure the issue of long-term commitment was addressed with those being considered for this call.
- 3) Some suggested we need to get moving on the process; others noted we need to take the time to get the right fit for Caldwell.
- 4) Some asked how the Session and Pastor Nominating Committee will keep the congregation informed of their progress during the search process.
- 5) Many asked how we, the congregation can support and help during this process and, most especially, once we call our new pastor.
- 6) One suggestion was for a Pastoral Support/Relations Committee that could support John and the new Pastor in navigating/negotiating their shared roles and responsibilities as they begin working together.

We ALL recognize, as was noted by many, that even Jesus might have a hard time living up to and into all of our hopes and dreams, but we have them anyway.

Lastly, we are so very grateful to be part of a church that took the time to ask these questions – something we heard many times as well.