

4/17/11

Dear Redeemer Montclair,

This past week I had the privilege of attending a conference in Chicago called “The Gospel Coalition.” With about 6000 people in attendance, this conference brought together a diverse group of people: there was geographic diversity, diversity of age, diversity of ethnicity, diversity of denominational affiliation, diversity of teaching styles, and diversity of vocations (church leaders and laypeople). And yet there was tremendous unity. The unity flowed from the common faith. We were there as those who know the love of the Father, demonstrated in the Son, and applied by the Spirit. We were there as those who believe the gospel, the good news. Nowhere was the unity amidst diversity more evident than during the times of worship. As we sang of the redemption Christ accomplished through his death and resurrection, you could palpably feel the emotional energy rising in the room. God’s love for his people was proclaimed through the preaching of the word. The joy and adoration for our Savior were overwhelming. At times I was brought to tears. The conference was like a love letter from God to his people.

As I reflect back on the conference, I am reminded of Redeemer Montclair. We represent much diversity, but a diversity in which we have a deep unity. We know and acknowledge only one God. We have one Lord. We are led by one Spirit. In the midst of all the change and transition taking place at Redeemer Montclair, it is easy to be defined by change. If we allow change to define us, we will be defined by either fear or by our attempts at control. Instead, we are free to live, serve, worship, and work in the trust that our Lord will lead in the days ahead. Our hope is in the Lord.

Hope in the Lord does not mean that we fail to plan. As the church continues to plan, I’d like to briefly address three questions that affect how the church plans. These are questions that I have been asked, in various formats, by many of you. First, will I be applying for the position of “Senior Pastor?” Second, am I going to leave? Third, what is my role in the coming months?

First, will I be applying for the position of “Senior Pastor?” I am humbled and honored by how many of you have not only asked me that but have encouraged me in that direction.


Thank you. You do not realize how much that has encouraged me. Although I am grateful to those who have been so affirming, the simple answer is “No.” I do not intend to apply for the position. My reason is that I believe that, given my particular gifts and my sense of calling to the needs here at Redeemer Montclair, I am not the right fit for the position. I am grateful to serve in my calling as pastor of youth and families, and I desire to continue to represent our Lord in that area. Know that it is not because of my age that I am not applying – in the providence of God the next senior pastor may be younger than me – ; it is because of my sense of my giftedness and my sense of God’s call. I look forward to partnering with whomever the church calls to this position. My prayer is that the depth of unity and partnership that Randy and I have shared will, over time, develop with whomever the Lord brings next to this church as Senior Pastor.

Second, am I going to leave? No. I have no plans to leave. I have not been approached by, nor am I looking for, a church with an opening. I am committed to Redeemer Montclair in this next season of the church’s life. While I cannot look down the corridor of time and tell what all future years may bring, know that I am committed to caring and pastoring here at Redeemer Montclair for the foreseeable future. I love you, Redeemer Montclair, and I thank God that He has called me to serve here.

Third, what is my role in the coming months? Many of these details still will be worked out with the elders. In partnership with all the elders, I am committed to pastoring the whole church during this season while the church searches for a new Senior Pastor. I do not know all the ways in which my role will fluctuate; I just know that it will. I am thankful, though, for the session’s desire to see me called as an associate pastor. I am humbled by this honor.

In Jeremiah 23, God promises that he himself will shepherd his people. This is what the Lord Jesus is doing even now. In the context of promising that he would care for his people, God continues with this promise: “I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the LORD.” By His grace, may this be so of Redeemer Montclair’s pastors and elders, current and future.

In His service,



Erik Swanson