

Public Announcement
to the Members and Congregation of Hillside Wesleyan Church
October 2020
(see abbreviated timeline at end of full text)

In our Hillside Church history, we have seen God come through, time and again. He has been there in the Mountaintop Moments and He was surely there in the Valley. We owe Him a lot, a debt that can't be paid, and declare – Without a doubt, God's hand has been on this church!

As you may know, Pastor Bill will conclude his time as our lead pastor next July. This is no small matter. You see, at a time when we had been rocked-and-socked by the much-too-early home-going of our pastor, David Mercer, Jehovah God saw fit to choose Pastor Bill Kinnan to come here. God's man for the job at-hand. We are so thankful for His provision! And now, if you can imagine, Pastor Bill is planning to retire!

For some time now, our church board has been looking at a process for finding our next pastor, because we knew of Pastor Bill's departure date. We began about two years ago with a consultation with GLR (Great Lakes Region of the Wesleyan Church) Representative Richard Meeks regarding a timeline and procedures. At that time, we were told we may need to consider several candidates. We expressed our desire to have Pastor Nate Neihof as the primary candidate. This was the natural next step in a decade long process for us.

You see, about 9 or 10 years ago, Pastor Dave Mercer told us he wanted to find and bring on, a youth pastor who'd also be able to fill the role of the future Lead Pastor down the line, about 8 or 10 years or so, when maybe, Pastor Dave projected his time at Hillside may be done. He wanted to set up this church for the long-term, with just the right kind of man to take the helm from him. Soon, the Lord brought Pastor Nate here.

Little did we know it would be just months before we'd lose Pastor Dave. At that grievous time, we honestly wrestled with the possibility of moving Pastor Nate immediately to Lead Pastor. We were convinced he was capable, and willing. But we held back on that. We realized we would be putting Pastor Nate in a tough spot, pushing too fast, having been here just months, and less than two years in full-time ministry.

Two years ago, after we told the GLR folks our desire to have Pastor Nate as our candidate, they did their own vetting process on Pastor Nate which included several meetings with GLR representative Jack Lynn, a background check and credit check, and a personality profile.

This past June, Jack Lynn from the Region met with our board and informed us of the GLR's approval, with a high degree of confidence, to have Pastor Nate be our primary candidate.

Jack Lynn also walked us through the Denominational candidating process. The process in the Wesleyan Denomination is to have one candidate at a time, not comparing multiple candidates simultaneously. If a church determines at some point in the process that the candidate is not to move on to the next step, then you can start again with a different candidate.

Following this, we formally invited Pastor Nate to consider being a candidate to succeed Pastor Bill. He accepted that invitation.

Our next step was to announce Pastor Nate's candidacy to the whole congregation on Sunday October 4. And to ask for the congregation to bathe this process in prayer. Whatever happens, the final decision will be made by the congregation in a pastoral vote at the appropriate time.

Now we are planning a formal interview by our church board with Pastor Nate, and his wife Melissa, at our October 13 board meeting.

If that interview goes well, the board will prayerfully consider recommending Pastor Nate to the congregation for a congregational vote. The Board will inform the congregation of their decision on Sunday October 18.

If the Board recommends Pastor Nate to the congregation. November 7 and 8 will be a formal candidating weekend. There will be a church wide meet and greet with Pastor Nate and Melissa on Saturday night and a trial sermon on Sunday.

Neither the board nor Pastor Nate has presumed the outcome of this. Rather we are all collectively seeking God's will.

The Board has been mindful to submit to the Wesleyan denominational leadership, and the denominational process

The Wesleyan denomination designates the second Sunday of July as the official time for a pastor to depart. So usually new pastor searches are initiated in February with interviews in the spring, leading up to a pastoral transition in the summer.

So why are we doing this earlier? There are several reasons:

1. If chosen, it would allow Pastor Nate more time to prepare and focus his vision. This may involve a short Sabbatical.
2. To carefully prepare for transitions in youth ministry. We know that this may be a difficult transition for our students who have *only* known Pastor Nate as their pastor. (How blessed they've been!) Beginning in January,

Pastor Nate would gradually do less with youth ministry and gradually assume more lead responsibilities, essentially beginning to Co-Pastor with Pastor Bill.

3. Also, to take advantage of Pastor Bill's additional mentoring in the gradual process from January to July.

Candidating Timeline

February 26, 2019	Initial meeting with GLR representative Richard Meeks regarding coming pastoral transition
Winter/Spring 2020	GLR vetting process of Pastor Nate Neihof
June 7, 2020	GLR representative Jack Lynn met with LBA. Granted approval of Pastor Nate Neihof as candidate. Reviewed ongoing expectations and process.
October 4	Announcement to congregation of candidating process and Pastor Nate as primary candidate
October 13	Formal LBA interview of Pastor Nate and Melissa Neihof
November 7	Congregational Meet & Greet with the Neihofs
November 8	Trial sermon and congregational vote