

Mars Hill Growth Strategy

Succession Plan

As we look towards becoming a congregation of 20,000 and our long-term goals for Mars Hill Church, we plan in faith that Pastor Mark Driscoll will remain able and qualified for effective ministry for another three to four decades.

In the event that the unforeseeable were to occur, however, we need our Board of Advisors and Accountability to establish a succession and/or response plan for the good of the church and the forward progress of the mission. We must be prepared in order to avoid making a hasty decision in the midst of an emotionally distressful situation.

Pastor Mark has stated publicly on the Mars Hill website¹:

If an emergency were to occur whereby I could not continue in my current role, the succession plan is simple: All of the campus pastors are already members of the Acts 29 church-planting network, and if necessary, they (or another Mars Hill elder) would simply start preaching live the majority of the time and we would discontinue the use of video.

This plan was never officially ratified by Mars Hill Church leadership, however, and it would be prudent to establish a definitive course of action in writing. In doing so, the Board of Advisors and Accountability should evaluate the three succession plans Pastor Mark presented more recently from the pulpit²:

1. Identify another elder or team of elders from within Mars Hill Church to assume the role of preaching pastor, and continue centralized distribution of the weekly sermon.
2. Identify a replacement from outside of Mars Hill Church to assume the role of preaching pastor, and continue centralized distribution of the weekly sermon.
3. Transition oversight and ownership of the local churches from centralized leadership to local elder teams, and ensure that each location is equipped with a qualified preaching pastor.

The Board of Advisors and Accountability should decide which of these options is most desirable, and subsequently communicate with Pastor Mark every 6–12 months to determine any change in his wishes or recommendations.

In addition, a contingency plan that could be implemented in the moment is necessary in order to allow time and space for adequate long-term succession to take place. For example:

- Pastor Dave Bruskas assumes the role of interim lead pastor for up to six months.
- Board of Advisors convenes to determine which succession option is most viable under the circumstances.
- Full Council of Elders meet to pray and discuss the succession process. In the event of Pastor Mark's death, the Full Council meeting would take place the day after the funeral. In the event of Pastor Mark were to be disqualified as an elder, the Full Council meeting would take place within ten days of his removal from leadership.
- Board of Advisors has full authority to make the decision of the whether to hire another preaching pastor, allow the churches to preach themselves, or have a team preaching option. The roll out and implementation of this succession will be 100% the decision of the Board of Advisors and Accountability.

¹ "A Letter from Pastor Mark," by Mark Driscoll. November 2, 2010. <http://marshall.com/2010/11/02/letter-from-pastor-mark>.

² "Jesus Loves His Church, Part 5: Jesus Preached the Gospel," by Mark Driscoll. July 22, 2012. <http://marshall.com/media/jesus-loves-his-church/jesus-preached-the-gospel>.

By God's grace, Pastor Mark's transition will take place at the end of a lifetime of faithful service. That is our hope, our prayer, our expectation, and in part our responsibility as the Board of Advisors and Accountability.