

November 23, 2014

Eastside family,

We have all been in prayer together for some time now concerning the eastside church we believe Jesus wants to build through us, and also specifically for God to bring forward the lead teaching pastor that he desires for that church.

We prayed he would provide a humble servant leader with a deep passion for Jesus and the gospel. We prayed God would provide us a fellow elder who shares our love for God's Word, our doctrinal convictions, and a gift for helping people grow as disciples of Christ. We prayed he would share a commitment to leading as a plurality of elders, to transparency in decision making and to being an active participant in the life of this church family. We prayed this would not cause a painful transition at another church---and we prayed God would bring us that man soon.

We believe God has answered *all* those prayers and has gone far beyond what we asked or imagined.

This morning at our services in Bellevue and Sammamish we will introduce you to [Jeff Vanderstelt](#). We believe God has called Jeff to serve as our lead teaching pastor. ***We are now asking you to join us in prayer over this important decision.***

We began the search process in prayerful consideration about the type of leader who could best lead us through this transition, and through the launch of our new church. During that time we reached out to many people for advice and prayer and one name came up multiple times: Jeff Vanderstelt. The Lord has clearly blessed Jeff's ministry. Many of the leaders across the church know Jeff and have great respect for his humble heart and his passion for seeing people grow in Jesus. He is well known by many of us, and is a recognized and highly esteemed leader across the Acts 29 Network, and in greater evangelicalism.

Jeff has a deep passion to see people meet Jesus, and a clear gift for leading the church to live out their faith in every area of their life. He believes strongly that the church should be a family of committed disciples worshipping Jesus not only on Sunday, but also at work, at home, and and in all that we do.

Early in ministry, Jeff served as the director of student ministry at Willow Creek Church in the Chicago area. As one of the largest churches in the country this ministry area included a large staff and a few hundred volunteers serving over 1,000 students. At the invitation of Bill Clem, Jeff and his wife Jayne moved to the Seattle area in 2003 with a shared vision to see churches across the Puget Sound partnering together to spread the gospel. This led to the founding of Doxa Church by Bill Clem and Soma Tacoma by Jeff. Since then twenty three other independent churches across North America were planted with a shared vision and passion for the spread of the gospel. This family of churches is called Soma. Jeff presently serves on the Soma board and provides leadership for the Soma Family of Churches. We believe Jeff's experience in both church planting and in leading a large national ministry will be a great help to us as we shape a strong and vibrant church together.

A year ago, Jeff transitioned out of the role as the lead pastor of Soma Tacoma. Before this he first raised up another leader to take his place as a leader of that church. After that transition, and for over a year now, Jeff has remained an elder serving at the church and mentoring the new lead pastor. During this past year Jeff has traveled all over the world helping other churches and coaching other pastors.

One question that has come up that we want to clarify from the outset is that we are not merging with another church. Jeff is being sent with the blessing of the elders of Soma Tacoma to help us plant a new and independent church. Soma represents Jeff's vision of the body of Christ working together across many independent churches to see the gospel of Jesus reach as many people as possible. We want to partner with any church that loves Jesus and want to see as many people as possible come to know and love our Savior.

While Jeff is a gifted communicator, the first words people used to describe him were about his character. He is known for having a humble heart and a leadership style that builds a shared vision. He believes strongly in working collaboratively with a team of elders all seeking God's will for the church together and going forward together as a team of shepherds caring for the flock Jesus calls us to serve together. His prayer is that all people on the Eastside would have daily encounters with Jesus in word and deed through his people.

Jeff has written for [Desiring God](#) and [The Gospel Coalition](#) and spoken at their national conferences, he has served with [Acts 29](#) for many years as a coach, teacher, Vice President and today as a regional board member. His first book, which will be released by [Crossway publishing](#) next year, is written to help Christians see every part of their lives saturated with the gospel and set apart for worship. Jeff began his seminary training at Fuller Theological Seminary and continues to study with Western Seminary. He and his wife Jayne have three children.

The elders have prayerfully considered this decision with Jeff's current elders as well, and we have come to the conclusion together that this is the man God would have to lead our new church. We are asking you to join us in prayer over this important decision and to give us any feedback you would like to share. While we believe the Lord is leading us in this decision, we believe he will confirm this in your hearts as well if it is indeed his plan for how we go forward together as a new church family.

In Christ,

Dave Cox  
Alex Ghioni  
Roger Molvar  
Tim Patton  
Matt Rogers  
Jason Skelton