

**Summary of Ryan Dolibois' Remarks at the November 22, 2020
Congregational Meeting at Christ the King**

As we prepare for the week of Thanksgiving and the start of Advent season, I am filled with gratitude for this church, its staff and for the community we all share. This is a special moment in the life of our church and I want to take just a few minutes to frame where we are and a bit more about how we got here:

Our church (and the broader American Church) is facing an extraordinary challenge as we continue to work through the COVID-19 pandemic and also contemplate what life will be like when we emerge from this crisis. Clay and our session have been forward thinking about this, and we believe all elements of our institutional existence—from our financial sustainability, to how we care for our congregation, to how we fulfill our very mission as a church—all of these will be impacted through these challenging times. The motion you will be voting on today (and I'll read in just a minute) represents a unanimous recommendation by the 26 ruling elders of our session for an approach that we believe best positions us to not just survive, but actually grow and thrive in the coming months and years. At the core of our strategy is the fundamental belief that the response to the pandemic requires a comprehensive and particular set of gifts from our pastoral leadership. Through God's provision and his timing, we believe he has provided this context through the opportunity that is in front of us now. This vision calls for us to have Clay move into an Associate Pastor role and hire John Trapp to be our new Senior Pastor. Along with the rest of our incredible staff (and they are incredible!), this will bring together the continuity, institutional knowledge, and stability that comes with Clay's 20 years of ministry at Christ the King, and the energy, fresh eyes, and relational gifts that John Trapp has displayed both during his previous time at Christ the King, and in his current role as the RUF minister at the University of Texas. Their skill sets and experiences are complimentary, and ideally designed for the work that will be required. And we get to hit the ground running. Clay continues in his current role until July 1, at which point John transitions to Christ the King and takes on the role of Senior Pastor, with Clay transitioning to Associate Pastor. We can enter into this next season and immediately begin shaping and forming the vision for this next chapter in the life of Christ the King. This is an extraordinary opportunity for us at an extraordinary time in the life of our church.

I want to add just one more thing about Clay and John Trapp here—I know that God is at work. First through Clay's amazing humility, leadership and vision that has gotten us to this point. While I know this feels like it happened overnight, this is a process that actually began nearly six months ago when Clay and Shannon began contemplating his continued call as Christ the King's Senior Pastor. He stayed in close contact with members of the Session through this whole period and that's what culminated in the letter we all received several weeks ago. He loves this church so much that he's willing to look at his own set of gifts in the context of what he believes is the best direction forward for Christ the King. I think I speak for the Session here to say that we deeply admire and appreciate what this means for him and his family to take this step—it was risky and bold, and it is clear that he has put the needs of our church first. I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that. Second, a word about John. I know that many of us know him personally from his previous time at Christ the King or through his ministry in Austin. We can speak about the lives he has touched, his giftedness as a preacher and communicator and the warm way he brings people together. I should note here too, that he is 12 years into his ministry—when Clay began his senior pastor role at Christ the King, he had been in ministry for ten years. And what we need to remember, is what we're really getting is 32 years of ministry between them—this is a combo deal! We believe John is ideally suited for this leadership plan.

Now at least 50% of the congregation have no idea who John Trapp is or what we've been going on about. And even for those of us who know him, this is a big step for our church and it can't just be a foregone conclusion that this is the right path. And that's why we're here this morning and have the motion before us. We are actually voting on two things today—first the transition process that I have been laying out, and second, the Pulpit Committee that will actually discern if John Trapp is the right person for the strategy that we are proposing. By design we are not doing a traditional search process. That process could take a year or more and creates a lot of uncertainty at a time when we are already really vulnerable. Also, in that kind of process, the general congregation has a very small window into the decision-making. The pulpit search committee does much of their work confidentially and we only get access to the finalists when we hear them preach on a Sunday morning or at the point of voting for them. We are taking a very different approach here. From today, we will have eight weeks to get to know John. The Committee will do a thorough vetting and is charged by us to do a full discernment process to make sure that the Session's vision is aligned with the Holy Spirit's leading and the needs of our congregation. During that time, we will also have the opportunity to get to know John—he will be onsite, and we will be able to ask him questions both directly and through the Pulpit Committee. And I'm assuming if you want to, you can even Zoom-bomb John's weekly large group gatherings to see him in action at UT. We will know who the pulpit committee is looking at and their timeframe. This will be much more transparent because we are examining and assessing a single candidate through the lens of his potential fit for our broader strategy. This is not a rubber stamp process; we have selected this Pulpit Committee with the clear charge that was outlined in the email we all received at the end of this week. By the end of this process, it will be the culmination of nearly eight months of prayer, planning and discernment.

So—extraordinary times call for an extraordinary approach. That's what's in front of us this morning. I am going to now read the motion and then we will have time for discussion, and then we'll invite Clay to come back in as the moderator and explain the voting process. Here is the motion:

The Session of Christ the King Presbyterian Church moves that the congregation elect Jana Fay Bacarisse; Jason Bennett; Chris Dewhurst; Anne Goss; Steven Hogan; Julie L. Perry, and George Shannon as a Pulpit Committee with the mandate to evaluate Reverend John Trapp as a candidate to assume the position of Senior Pastor of Christ the King, in accord with the Session's recommended leadership transition process, and to respond to the congregation in January 2021.