



A Town Hall meeting was held in the sanctuary on Wednesday evening with approximately 120 people in attendance. The varied age range was a good representation of the RBC body. Brad Braley opened the evening in prayer and shared the format for the town hall meeting. Questions had been submitted by the body prior to the meeting and some of those questions would be asked along with questions from the audience.

Brad also noted that both Jason and Shannon have shared their personal testimonies at the two previous meetings and notes on both meetings have been share with the congregation via the website and email. Please take time to read these meeting notes if you were not able to attend. There will be an additional Q&A email provided at the end of the week for more of the questions which weren't addressed during the Town Hall

Here are the questions and answers as best we could capture them from the town hall meeting.

Q: With all the information that has been provided so far, what do you want us to know that has not been asked?

I will try to give you a glimpse into my heart, I say first and foremost, I am a very normal guy. I do not see myself as someone who has accomplished something amazing. I cannot boast in what took place in PNG, I boast in Christ, in the power of His spirit and His word. This entire deal scares me to death, as much as going to PNG and learning a new language and starting a church plant did. This is intimidating. But because of what we have seen in PNG, the transformation in people who were trapped in darkness, I have incredible confidence in this book, the Bible. My confidence is in God, not in myself or my training. I recognize that this is going to be different and I am scared and excited.

Q: What is your philosophy of ministry?

My philosophy of ministry is entirely shaped by my time in PNG. First, it is the authority of God's Word, that is what I relied on time and time again. Everything proceeds from this and is centered upon it. Next, Christ himself is the cornerstone. He is the one who is building the church, we are his bride. Proclaiming Christ is how we strengthen the body of believers. You cannot count one over the other.

Follow up: One of your primary ministries will be preaching the word. What else will you emphasize?

I attended Masters and they are very strong in Bible exposition, I don't know if I could teach any other way. You cannot spend 16 years on the mission field without developing a shepherd's heart. I cannot see a pastorate as preaching on Sunday and then hiding away from all of you. We want to invest in as many of you as we can, staying after church to get to know you. We want to invite people over for a meal. I also want to shepherd the staff. I loved the elders that were raised up in PNG. It developed over time in prayer and praise together. I would want to do the same thing here. Loving my family is also a priority. That is what the Bible calls me to do. That is a lot to juggle which takes me back to what I said earlier, I am scared to death.

Q: You described in another meeting about how you ministered to the men and women in PNG regarding their marriages. We need the same care for our marriages here at RBC. Would you be willing/able to work in this area?

Yes! That would be a good idea. I am thinking more along the lines of Biblical Counseling. I am also trusting that as I go this way people will rise up and they will take this on.

Q: It is important for me to know that you feel called here. Have you had any experiences that you can point to that help you know you are called to RBC?

I know I will run into hard times and it will be in those moments that we look back to God's calling and that holds us here. This calling has been evident to me, my wife and my children, like no other time.

First, I saw the vastness of the candidacy, interviews and more interviews. As we interacted, more and more, I learned what the leadership is like, what happened with Pastor Matt, how leadership handled it, that you called an interim pastor and did the assessments. I even sought advice from friends and pastors and they agreed this is a special church. That gave me more confidence. I had been praying the entire time that my family would be positive and in agreement with me.

I was a candidate with a church in NJ, they wanted me to fly out. I walked away from this opportunity because I felt the Lord leading me toward RBC. That was even before the search team came to my home and made a commitment to me. My children thought that was crazy, what if it didn't work out with RBC?

There was a time when Shannon could not see herself as a pastor's wife because of our experiences at our church. But our current church is a loving and gracious body and that has opened Shannon to the possibility of being a pastor's wife.

The first time we came to RBC, we were strangers here. No one said hello to us. It was in part discouraging, but also encouraging because I thought, we can make a difference here.

In PNG, I was always working to hand everything over to the men. That was not our home. But this is different, this will be my church home. I am committed.

Q: What first steps do you have in mind to lead and nurture the under-shepherds?

Serious intentionality, serious time in the Word. I want to help them be the most Godly men they can be. Prayer is important. There will be collaboration, time in prayer, searching the scriptures together. The men in PNG would take what they learned and pour into their families. It is what the Lord does with his Word. I have seen this work, I have high expectations.

Q: We had a lot of people leave because there was broken trust with leadership. As a shepherd, how do you see yourself coming alongside elders and staff to rebuild trust.

I recognize this is not a perfect place and that there needs to be some healing, stabilizing and rebuilding of trust. That happens through what I was talking about in philosophy of ministry. Teaching God's Word. Stabilizing comes from being more unified. The reality is that one of the leaders was broken and there are ramifications from that. Leadership will be a priority. It will take time, energy and effort. I have gotten to know these guys and they really love the Lord. I cannot say with a magic wand that it will all be better in 6 months, but I am committed to work on it.

Q: In the assessment that was done, there was a feeling the church devalues women. What is your view of women in the church.

I love women! But, I love my wife more. I worked with a wonderful woman in PNG, she was a translator. She became like a grandmother to my children. Women can be involved in many ways in the church, Biblical counseling, teaching other women and children. The limit is the Biblical one, women cannot pastor or be an elder. Women are often very gifted in areas that men are not.

Q: From the assessment, many felt that RBC had become too legalistic and this led to arrogance and cliques. How would you work towards not allowing that to happen? Those that cling to it, how would you help them see the Word in its truth and not legalism?

Theology and doctrine are important to me. Those two alone without love, spins out of control. It turns into a separatist, elitist form of Christianity...not anything like Christ. Prayer! That might be a good place for all of us to start, Lord please reveal to us those areas. It starts with leadership, fervently committed to smashing the idea of cliques. My wife and daughter are the opposite of that. They look for those on the outside who are alone. They help me in that regard.

Follow up: In terms of the church as isolationists, how does that look in the community?

You might see what I just said as ecumenical. We are very different from the Catholic beliefs. We can get together with like-minded churches. I might have to rely on the leadership to help me at first, let me know who we have collaborated with in the past. We must be careful because heresy can infiltrate the church. I would be leery of opening up to just anyone.

Q: Based on the assessment, is there anything you see that you think you could institute or add to what the church is already doing?

In other words, do you see any weaknesses in the leadership? The answer is no. Does that mean that there isn't anything wrong, No. I am very pleased with what I have seen. Their humility, how they have tried to work through the assessment. If I am going to be the pastor here, I need these guys.

Q: What are some things you have done with your kids to live out your faith at home?

I love children, scripture says they are a blessing from the Lord. We don't plan on stopping at 4. It doesn't always mean I act like I love my children. It is scary as a dad when your child's actions portray you. "Dad, I learned my road rage from you." That is humbling and convicting. But when my daughter says, "I want to marry someone just like you" there is no greater joy.

Follow up: What are some of the things you have done to lead your household well?

We engage over spiritual matters. On the mission field, we talked of death because it happened all around us. We shared the Gospel. The last 4 years have been difficult. We spend time in prayer everyday but our devotions have been more sporadic while I was in seminary. I am excited to have our family time back again. I am excited to have Shane pouring into Wesley and Erik pouring into Kara and Blake. Even though we are saying the same things, the kids will hear it from them!

Q: What are the strengths and weaknesses of short term mission trips versus long term?

The goals are totally different. Short term—keep in mind my perspective. Would I have loved for a group to come to PNG for a short-term mission trip? YES! They would not know the language to share the gospel but they could help build or work on the air strip. They could play soccer with the kids in the tribe. I cannot even quantify the benefits, it rubs off on the missionaries and those they touch and reach. It expands their faith. Yes, I am totally on board with short term mission trips.

Follow up: What are the challenges?

How short it is. You get people going that don't know or care about the culture. They can be incredibly offensive. Challenges in long term missions: trying to do all the work (not giving over any of the responsibilities to the people group) and then when you leave, it all collapses; not putting enough emphasis on God's word; only meeting physical needs and not sharing the gospel.

Q: How will you encourage us to use the gifts God has given us? The work is not spread out enough because some do not want to commit to it.

That is always a hard dynamic in a church body. Many times, it is 10% of the people doing much of the work of the church. It will rely on one-anothering. Seeing those gifts in action and encouraging people to use those gifts.

Q: At a meeting after the assessment, Pastor Rick showed a graphic of the life cycle of a church. When asked where he sees us, he stated we were at a plateau and this is

typically caused by pride. Having interacted with the elders and staff so far, where do you see us?

When you think of pride, you think of manifestations like “I want it my way”. I have not seen that in leadership and staff at all. But I wasn’t here 2 or 3 years ago. I have seen pride manifested in the emphasis of strong theology and doctrine in other places. Pride is something we all struggle with. It can happen as a corporate body as well. I do not put God in a box. I worked in a tribe that others had written off but God turned it all around. Who is to say that this isn’t a point from which God will launch us?

Q: When you become senior pastor, will you be willing to be hard on us to help us be stronger in our faith?

It is hard to answer, you may need it or God may do an amazing work and it may not be needed. I am going to be patient because God is patient with us as we seek to honor the Lord together.

Q: What is your personal view of apologetics?

I would be a Pre-Suppositionalist meaning I would use the Bible to defend my faith. Some like to use science to defend the faith, I tend to be more simplistic.

Q: There seems to be a ceiling/limit to our worship, what are some ways you have found to help the church body express joy in what God is doing?

I would say worship, but you were talking about this in the context of worship. We all get stuck in our little way of how we worship. I have really enjoyed the worship here. It is diverse, some raise hands and some do not. It is a broad view, where you are free to worship in ways that are comfortable to you. But worship is everything we do, it’s God’s word being proclaimed. When God is more real to us, then worship is more real to us.

Q: Besides the Bible and Jesus, what are some books or people who have influenced your Christian walk?

I have read too many books over the past 4 years in seminary. I would have to go back to something providential, Shepherding a Child’s Heart. Probably not all that impressive to you.

Also, Instruments in the Hands of the Redeemer. Biblical counseling books have shaped me and challenged me.

Men who have challenged me: Sam was the head of our singles group at church and he was an evangelist. Anytime we hung out, Sam would challenge me to share the gospel with people. Sometimes it was very uncomfortable to be with Sam. But he encouraged me.

Keith Essex, a friend and professor at the Masters, it was his Bible teaching. Because of him, while I was in PNG, I would start a book of the Bible and I had to teach it all the way through.

Q: Do you see a need for transparency and how would you encourage that?

Yes, yes and yes! It is probably one of my most annoying traits. I believe so strongly in this, I don't want to present myself as some God-sent man with no problems. So what I would bring is to be as transparent as I can. If I am transparent up here, you can be more transparent with one another. We need each other, that is how the body functions. We are all sinners saved by grace. I welcome transparency and I would try to model it.

The meeting was closed in prayer at 8pm with the Jason and Shannon visiting with a wide range of individuals and couples for another 45 minutes or so.

For a review of the Men's meeting on Monday or Youth Meeting on Tuesday check out the Candidate Event Reports available on the RBC Website or use the link below:

<http://www.ranchobaptistchurch.org/events/sr-pastor-candidate-week/>

Thursday night RBC Women meet in the sanctuary at 6:30

Reported by Jennifer Stroder