

The final special event of Candidate Week took place Thursday evening in the RBC Sanctuary with the RBC Women having a time of prayer, worship, and then sharing with Sr. Pastor Candidate Jason Swanson along with his wife Shannon. There were 58 women in attendance for the evening.

Jodi Goulet hosted the meeting and opened in prayer.

Joyce Braley led a time of worship with *Blessed Assurance* and *Glory Be to Our Great God*.



Mitzi Kemp, RBC Church Secretary, introduced Jason and Shannon Swanson. Her introduction included first her experience and then her impression of them. Her experience dates back to the week-end of May 18th when she first met Jason and also hosted a luncheon for Shannon with elders' and pastors' wives. "I am so glad the rest of the congregation is getting up to speed this week in meeting Jason and Shannon."

Mitzi reiterated that Jason has said repeatedly how he wishes to pour his life into the people of RBC, and Mitzi has seen this already. She describes both of them as genuine, real, kind, and they are who they say they are. "Their words are backed up by their actions."

Mitzi describes Shannon as quiet, easy to be with, an excellent listener. "I know that you all are going to love them." Tonight, their oldest daughter Kara attended the meeting too.

To start the night out, Shannon shared her testimony: it has previously been reported by Bree Lathrop, check out <http://ranchobaptistchurch.org/events/sr-pastor-candidate-week/> Candidate Event Reports – Tuesday Night to get the full detail.

Some highlights:

- Shannon was saved as a youngster, has a cautious, shy personality, and was a people pleaser.

- Her understanding and belief really developed as a 14-year-old after going on a mission trip which led off to even more mission trips through her high school career.
- Shannon went to Master's College to start an Elementary Education degree.
- During a mission fair she became aware of New Tribes Mission and spent 6 weeks in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and changed her major to Missions that fall.
- During her Junior year, she met Jason during a prayer meeting. They discovered their connection through PNG and began dating that fall. They were engaged in April, married in August, then off to New Tribes Mission which led to their time on the field in PNG.

Jason shared his testimony next. Full details are available in Doug's Report from Monday night <http://ranchobaptistchurch.org/events/sr-pastor-candidate-week/> Candidate Event Reports – Monday Night.

Key highlights:

- His parents divorced when he was 1 and he didn't know his dad.
- He was raised by his mom and sister. They were all close but not saved.
- Unchurched until Jr. High he began to attend youth group but was just interested in sports and social activity.
- As a high school freshman, he made a 2nd trip to Hume Lake and became acutely aware of what Jesus did for him on the cross. Despite his awareness, his life didn't really change right away but over time thanks to godly men pouring into him he began to be changed by God.
- By the time he was out of high school, the Lord had changed his heart and he was asked to lead the youth program at his home church.
- Through a series of events, the Lord led him to PNG for a year, he went to Master's College to finish schooling. This is where/when he met Shannon and they were married.
- Both Jason's mother and his sister are now believers and said that the changes they saw in Jason was a big part of it.

The following are questions from the ladies and subsequent responses. Some questions were specific to Jason others to Shannon, and a few to both of them. Not all the back and forth conversations or general statements were capture or included.

Q: In your free time what do you do as a couple for fun?

Shannon - We often go on walks and sometimes enjoy going to dinner when we go off the hill; just time together to talk.

Jason – We live in a beautiful place [at camp Alandale] and we do like taking walks with our two Huskies. Since coming back from PNG and with seminary, it has been hard to get away. Many times, in PNG we would be seen walking on the airstrip. During our time there we both needed to encourage one another when it was hard to continue serving.

Q: When you went to PNG, what was the scariest thing when you arrived? Same question about coming to RBC?

Shannon – I think taking the kids so far away, was really scary.

Regarding RBC, I was afraid that my life on the mission field may not be applicable and I wouldn't know how to function here. However, I have really enjoyed meeting many of you and my heart has changed. I am excited about coming here.

Jason – I agree, our kids. I don't mind being sick, having malaria, I am ok with me getting it but I didn't want my kids to suffer; I don't want my beautiful wife to suffer. We had no idea about cerebral malaria and that kids could die in 5 hours. We saw it happen, the reality was pretty scary. However, it also gave us so many opportunities to see God's faithfulness.

Coming to RBC, there are many things which are scary. Being a Sr. Pastor to a body this big is a heavy responsibility. Not only that but the heart He has given me to shepherd, can pull me the wrong direction too. I may get so busy doing all these things, good things, and forget about my family, and that scares me. I have a responsibility to my family; I have to be on guard for this. I have seen many families suffer both on the mission field and in the pastorate.

Q: What does relying on the Holy Spirit mean to you? What is the most impactful way you have seen Him move in ministry.

Jason: Sometimes we can do things so much on our own strength. You can preach a whole sermon and the Holy Spirit isn't involved at all. I could teach all week in the village all on my own. However, when being led, God uses the Holy Spirit to point to the Word and causes me to ask "What about me?" and how do I apply it to how I am living my life? I don't mean you shouldn't have godly disciplines but you cannot be legalistic and keep the Spirit from impacting your life. When we were in PNG, there were no other options; we had no resources, we simply had to pray.

I saw the Holy Spirit work many times. While going through Acts we were studying offerings. The people said, we don't have any money, what do we give? So, they prayed and studied. "Could we begin to give from our gardens?" Yes, that would be right. On Sunday, I would direct the 8 men who assisted with services to pray together seeking who the Holy Spirit would lead them to share the food with (three names a week). Each week they did this and had unity on the names, this was a great way to provide offerings and help others.

I believe that the Holy Spirit is working in my life, Shannon's life, and our kids' hearts too as we are preparing to come to RBC.

Q: What are your thoughts on women and the role of teaching in the church. Do you see places maybe even in training and marriage workshops?

Jason: Of course, that is how the body functions. I have said all through this I/we would like to be involved in biblical counseling, working with marriages, child-rearing, all walks of life.

Regarding training, there is already training taking place here for counseling. All that would be needed there would be more fuel for the fire to support Lew.

Q: What about adult Sunday School, where do I use these gifts.

Jason: I would think all over the place, in small groups like the Home Fellowship Group we attended. As far as teaching goes, if there are men present, then women should not be teaching men. I see plenty of opportunities with children, a lot of Titus situations where older women are teaching younger women. I would have to know more about specific church activities before I added more specific actions. In a body of this size, I believe there are many opportunities for women to serve all over the church.

Q: Do you see RBC as a reformed Calvinistic church and is it your intent to promote the doctrines of TULIP. What assurance would you give those who don't share those distinctives and don't want to be marginalized.

Jason: You would think I am a staunch Calvinist due to my background and where I studied. I am not a Calvinist but a Biblicist. I am not going to teach TULIP. But I can't teach Ephesians, Romans, or anything else and just skip over what is written. They are important doctrines to me but I won't live/die over them. Some of these terms are difficult and can be abrasive and divisive. It is not my intention to preach that way but I will preach The Word.

Q: Shannon, what is your ideal situation at RBC? What are you apprehensive about or what do you hope to see happen?

Shannon: I have been told many times that Jason is the candidate and not me. I appreciate it; however, I want to be used as needed. I love people, I love to serve, I am not a limelight person, I don't like being up here right now! Working with people, kids, telling people about the Lord. I want to take care of my family and if I have extra time I want to help.

Q: Do you have a vision for Women's Ministry now that our leader has resigned?

Jason: That is tough, I don't know what it looked like before so first I need to know what the ministry has been like up to now. For now, I would encourage and come along side what you are doing. Going forward, I don't want to upset the apple cart of what is going on. There are so many awesome things going on in this church. We don't even know it all yet. But I do want to work with you all and help cast a vision as we go forward.

Q: Have you thought about how you will plan to interact with the women of RBC whether in conversation, counseling? Will you have a planned way to do this?

Jason: I have a lot of things set up as well as with my wife. I am not going to counsel a woman alone or even a couple. First Shannon has so much she can add and also, I need to protect myself and all parties involved. I am going to be very pro-active. There is a lot at stake and I take it seriously. The accountability I am going to have with my wife will be as high as possible. Same with all the men and there will be protective measures all around. Even meeting with the three ladies directing women's ministry now, I will have another pastor join me. This started back as a youth pastor; a bad decision can ruin a life.

Q: We have been in a place where we are hurt and we have seen precautions fail. But I don't want to see us go so far the other way and have such a divide between men and women.

Jason: I read in the assessments I think that some ladies feel like they aren't heard. This tells me there is a communication breach. What I was trying to describe isn't communication paranoia but instead a wise way to be safe and a safe way for us to communicate. Without good communication, things go crazy. On the mission field, when communications broke down, people left. I don't want my tenacity or protection to mean that the two won't meet, I just want to be wise in how it is pursued, by God's grace, with my wife, other men, and you ladies. This isn't a one-way street, it takes all of us. Right now, you [RBC] are a family and we [the Swansons] are looking forward to coming in to it.

Q: We need to get back to a place where men can address women as sisters in Christ. Because the women's ministry is going to need assistance. How can you help the women learn to be receptive of brotherly love as well as come alongside the men in being able to display it?

Jason: First and foremost, we come at this with an attitude of humility and prayer. I know this issue isn't a little thing for you; it is huge. For me to wrap my head and arms around this will require me to spend more time in prayer. I don't say that as an excuse, but to seek the Lord. You are our sisters in the Lord; that needs to be a priority. When I said last night I love women, I meant I respect and value sisters in the Lord. This is where I come from being raised by a mom and sister. Ask my children how much I fight for my wife. This will be part of what I would include for our leaders as something we need in order to grow.

Q: You mentioned that you came here incognito and weren't greeted. That really bothered us, what did you observe that we could do to prevent that from occurring ever again.

Jason: The following week, it was similar for Shannon and Kara. I can't wave a magic wand to fix it. But I do know our Lord just loved everyone, it was very natural for Him. I believe that as the Word gets into our heart and mind, that the Holy Spirit will help us to act. In the tribe they would describe the Holy Spirit as arrows coming from the heart and forcing its way out. This is also something which needs to catch on. It will be through the Word of God impacting people's lives not just Sunday morning but soaking it up through the week; allowing His Word to transform us. Even if we don't feel like it we realize we need to honor Christ. We don't have all the answers but we do know who does and we need to point to Him.

Q: In the 8 years I have attended we have had just two couple's retreats. Since what happened, what can we do to change or allow people (men and women) to be comfortable interacting?

Jason: That is heavy – [*long pause*] – I think we should see this as concentric circles that we work in then branch out. What I mean is start with 10-15 people then you begin to let trust build.

Everyone seems to be looking back at Matt and saying "I don't want that" yet it is hindering the body. This is a wonderful opportunity to see how great our God is; His Grace is greater than all my sins. If we live by that, we will apply it to one another as He does. But there has to be some communication and some "one-anothering" between people. Activities such as small groups,

retreats, being transparent, sharing like you are here, spurring one another on. However, I will need more time than just now to figure out how to put that into action.

It starts with us as leaders and branches out from there. The Siawi would say it spreads like fire. Don't lose hope or give up, allow God to work among this body. My view of God is so huge, I just know He is going to work.

Q: What is your life verse and why?

Shannon – Philippians 4:6-8 because I am a bit of a worrier. I struggled with anxiety when living overseas, it allows me to focus on Him instead of the worries

Jason - Phil 1:21 – it has always meant a lot and challenged me.

Cari Orr closed the meeting after Jason prayed over the evening.

Conversations continued until after 9pm with Jason, Shannon, and the attendees.

Reported by Howie Klein