

Dear Elder Board,

The purpose of this letter is to explain why I whole-heartedly recommend Jason Swanson to be the Senior Pastor for Rancho Baptist Church.

By the time Jason's candidacy began we had already gotten experience in evaluating applications, interviews and sermons. In fact, his candidacy was overshadowed originally as we had another candidate who was quite well liked by the team and had also gone through all the interviews, sermon reviews, and had received a visit from the team to hear him preach. We were in a strong position with this candidate when we first met Jason in Interview 1 then heard/watched his sermons over a 3-week period prior to his 2nd interview in late March.

In late March we were at a crossroads, Jason was a promising new candidate while a very strong teaching candidate had come up short in his references. Ultimately after a week of prayer, the team unanimously agreed to end the candidacy of the strong teacher and continue on with Jason. Since that time, we have received additional applications but we have set them aside as we continue with Jason's candidacy only.

In my recollection, each step of the process with Jason has been unique to all the other candidates, the group enthusiasm for him has steadily grown. In other instances, some were in favor of other candidates while other team members were less enthusiastic for the same.

Jason's application and resume stood out to the review committee first then to the team as they presented Jason to the entire PST. He presented a passion for God's Word and people which just hadn't been exhibited in that way or as strongly by anyone else. His background as an overseas church planting missionary made such a strong impression as we considered the Great Commission and how he had lived it in a fashion unique to his candidate peers. I think Jim's application review comments maybe set the tone, "Wow! Might be too good to be true." In light of the team already having been in the candidate review process for a few months, this really demonstrates how Jason's application and story really caught our attention.

What I liked about Jason from the beginning is the uniqueness of his experience relative to all the other candidates who applied. He had done a lot of teaching and work in the church under much different circumstances than the others. Moving and raising his family far from home, having to learn and teach in a tribal language in addition to learning functioning local language. His willingness to finish the work someone else had started. Staying when it would have been more than reasonable for he and his family to leave. His desire to continue to visit the Siawi and continue to minister to that body is very reminiscent of the characteristics described in the early church.

Jason is not without opportunity for improvement. He has exhibited a wandering nature in conversation, especially if asked a question. On more than one occasion I had to really keep track of what the original question was so I would either know the answer when he got to it or I would be able to ask it again if he too lost track. In his teaching, his stories can get long, though interesting, I missed his point in a couple of instances because of the length of the verbal journey. However, as I have grown to know Jason through his candidacy two things have begun to crop up. First, I am tracking with him better, his style has patterns which I am beginning to learn. Additionally, he is very receptive to direct feedback such as: "Jason, did you forget my question?" He has requested, been open too, and commits to acting on coaching/feedback as I have presented it.

Today, Jason is a fine teacher, not the best teacher we have heard but I am confident that with the opportunity to preach weekly (which he is extremely excited about) he has the potential to meet and exceed the others. I think his style will quickly develop within RBC as he acclimates to full-time preaching after four years away from it. I think too, the congregation of RBC will adapt to his style and soon come to appreciate his pace, method and passion for what it is, Godly expository preaching with plenty of application.

Of the important characteristics mentioned in the pastoral profile teaching gets emphasized because of the obvious weekly attention paid to it. However, Jason's attractive strength starting immediately is his desire to build relationships as a shepherd and in discipling others. He is a strong advocate of doctrine but delivered in a voice of grace, love, and care. These shepherd characteristics are Jason's core strengths and if a ranking took place, I think they would be placed at the top of the chart in terms of importance.

Finally, Jason; by every method we can see, is a man who loves God, sees himself as an imperfect vessel, and desires to know and love Jesus more. He stresses this in how he lives with his wife and family, how he desires to learn more about Jesus as he prepares to teach each week, and to simply be God's man in whatever circumstance the Lord places him. He has spent the last two-years commuting 3+ hours each way to school, doing a job he doesn't want to do, living in a place he would prefer not to live, in order to accomplish what he believes God called him to do at this time; go to seminary. He is very eager to move on to what he hopes is the opportunity to serve full time as pastor, to bring his wife and children into a church family, and to spend his time investing in a church family. Jason has not asked about salary or benefits beyond saying one time, "We have relied on the Lord for provision through our whole ministry, that won't change now." Jason's references spoke very highly of his strong character, we have only seen examples which are aligned with and support these reports.

Please know, to the best of my ability as a member of the RBC Pastoral Search Team, I believe that Jason Swanson has been appropriately questioned and vetted to be a qualified and worthy candidate for the position of Senior Pastor at Rancho Baptist Church. I would encourage the board to continue the process and I am confident it too will reach a similar conclusion regarding candidate Jason Swanson.

Reported for your information and review,

Howie Klein