

Dear RBC Elder Board and Staff,

I would like to share my thoughts and feelings regarding Jason Swanson as our Senior Pastor Candidate. Most of this information will come from memory, however, I have read over my notes recently which refreshed my thoughts.

I was not on the panel that read and scored Jason's application and resume, but I had started reading it prior to our meeting that evening. I was very impressed by his writing, his experience as a missionary and his obvious heart for the Lord. As I went through this process, it was amazing to me how some candidates would leap off the page and declare who they were while others, most candidates, simply answered the questions on the application. Jason shared his experience and his love for the Lord in such a way that we all took an immediate interest.

The next step was our informal interview. Jason had requested to meet with us in person as he had to drive down the mountain to get good internet service for the Zoom interview anyway. But we did not want to break our format from other candidates we had interviewed, so we declined. Jason was Zooming in from Wildomar! He found that to be funny and he had not done a video interview like this before, so he seemed a bit awkward and nervous. I was part of the interview team and had also not done a video interview, so I was probably also awkward and nervous. Jason spoke fast and he responded to a couple of questions with odd responses. For example, when asked what drew him to Rancho Baptist Church, he responded that he did not care at all to live in the desert so he knew this must be the Lord leading him to apply. That was not at all an answer I was hoping to hear! Some of his answers, however, demonstrated a humility and reliance on the Lord that was refreshing. We took the time during our debrief to go over the Pastoral Profile and found that Jason matched most of the criteria. This was a helpful part of the process to confirm there were objective measures and not just subjective feelings.

In Jason's sermon review, I started by watching his short video about the Siawi tribe in Paupa New Guinea. I tried to imagine a life living in such a remote place, learning a language so very different from our own and learning it well enough to teach. I was glad that I watched this first before viewing the sermons as it gave insight into his dedication and commitment to sharing the Gospel. Overall I recognized a passion for the word that was inspiring. Jason has seen things and done things in his ministry, he has demonstrated a faith so deep and he has seen God move in mighty ways because of that faith. And that passion is what I want in my life and what I believe RBC would desire as a church body.

As a team, we decided to move forward with another interview. The second interview was held at Doug's home so we could meet Jason in person. Jason still seemed nervous and at times he did wander off topic. But we did learn more about his family and his leadership style. His response to how he would lead an experienced staff was admirable, he stated he would lead "humbly and with trepidation". I saw in him a man who recognizes his weakness but trusts in the Lord to lead and give him strength. I also appreciated his response to the question about measuring his success as a pastor. He described a church that is 4 miles wide and 1 inch deep. He would much rather see those in the church grow deeper in their relationship with the Lord before he sees the church increase in number. I think it is difficult for a pastoral candidate to express his true feelings in this regard because they know that most people view a growing church body as a successful church. But Jason has experienced the true change that can come about when people grow in the knowledge and truth of the Lord. We were impressed with Jason as we got to know him better in this personal interview and agreed to move forward.

The third interview was a behavioral interview and I felt it was Jason's strongest impression. I'm sure he was still nervous, but did come across as a bit more relaxed and less intense. He gave us some strong answers, in particular, about the importance of knowing his congregation and teaching and preaching according to the needs of the body. He displayed a heart for people and relationships that I believe is real and approachable. We were able to address the questions that we still had about Jason in this interview and in the debrief there was a sense of excitement about Jason as our candidate. Personally, I could see Jason as a pastor who will not only shepherd our congregation but our staff and elders, too.

The reference checks were another confirmation to my thoughts and feelings about Jason. Each reference talked about Jason being real, "what you see is what you get on Sunday morning or at home." The references also confirmed what we had learned about Jason's passion for the word and how he measures all things against the truth of the word. The most outstanding reference in my opinion came from Pastor Myron Drent. When asked if he would be excited to attend a church that Jason was pastoring, he said he would state it a little differently. He said that if he were no longer the pastor of his own church, he would want Jason to be the pastor. We were excited as we discussed all these references and realized the confirmation of our thoughts and beliefs about Jason.

The next meeting was a dinner at Jason's home. I was anxious to meet the Jason's wife and family to see if that chemistry existed. I could not have been more pleased. Shannon was warm and gracious. The children were friendly and talkative. I was so impressed with Jason's children as they sat with us the entire time, listening and engaging in conversation. We had such a pleasant time, it was obvious to all team members present that we were ready to make a commitment to Jason as our candidate. I had prayed for a clear word from the Lord and He, indeed, answered that prayer with this meeting with Jason and his family.

At this point, I was completely sure that I wanted to present Jason to the board as our Senior Pastor Candidate. I have been amazed by the work of the Lord throughout this process and I feel confident that we have sought His guidance and prayed for His will to be done. It is with this confidence that I respectfully ask you to consider Jason for the position of Senior Pastor.

May His will be done,

Jennifer Stroder