



Jonathan Neufeld

My name is Jonathan Neufeld and I and my family are excited for the opportunity to meet you. We have been aware of the work and ministry of Maple Ridge Baptist for many years as we have watched from a distance the impact that you have had on Maple Ridge and the surrounding communities. I am honored to have the opportunity to put my name before you as a candidate to become your pastor. I have had wonderful conversations with both the Search Committee and the Board and they have asked me to introduce myself to you and so here is a brief introduction to who I am.

I was born and raised in a deeply Christian home where being involved in church was just a natural part of life. At the age of five, sitting on my parents' bed, my mother led me to faith in Christ and, though I was young, it was a genuine commitment that I made that day. In the following years I became increasingly involved in serving in the church and eventually became the leader of our little church youth group in my mid-teens. This was my first experience in leadership in the church and I loved the opportunity to lead my peers to know and follow Jesus with all of their lives.

After graduating from high school I attended university where I earned my Bachelor of Education degree after which I took a year to attend Capernwray Bible College in England. These were important years in my spiritual growth. While at university I struggled with questions of faith, during my year at Capernwray I came to love and admire Jesus like never before.

Returning to Canada I spent the next three years teaching high school social studies at Prairie High School (part of Prairie Bible Institute in Three Hills, AB). However, after three years I felt God calling me to leave there and return to Calgary. Over the next several years I worked at the Royal Bank, then as a salesman and later as a production manager in a printing company. However during those years God led me to join a great small group in my church. It was there that I experienced the incredible joy and power of being in community with a few others who were also following Jesus.

In my early 30's I felt God calling me to pursue full-time ministry and so I left my job to come to Regent College in Vancouver for my seminary training. It was during these years that I began attending Willingdon Church in Burnaby and it was there that I met Noula and we would get married in 2001.

Following graduation I was invited to serve on the pastoral staff at Willingdon Church, a large multi-ethnic church in Burnaby. This began 14 great years of ministry in which God both worked through me but was also working in me in all kinds of ways. I started out serving as the Pastor of Small Groups, helping people get connected into genuine relationships with a few others and over the years I watched as people grew in their faith, marriages were restored as couples walked with one another and people were cared for as they journeyed through some of the deepest and most difficult experiences of their lives. As that ministry grew I also had the opportunity to teach Adult Bible classes as part of Willingdon School of the Bible. This was a series of classes where we taught the members of our congregation to read and understand the Bible properly because not only is it the inerrant Word of God but it is the source of all that we need for faith and life. We taught systematically through the whole Bible, introducing those in our classes to all of the fullness of the Word of God.

After a number of years I also had the privilege to give leadership to our Intern Program where we invited young men who felt a call to full-time ministry to come and serve on our staff. Over the following years I had the privilege to mentor and train over 20 men who now serve in ministries as far away as Pakistan and Scotland as well as across Canada and throughout the lower mainland. In each case I witnessed the powerful effect and importance of intentionally investing in the next generation of leaders in the church.

By 2010 I was invited by the Team Leader for the Adult Ministries team which was tasked with the responsibility of overseeing the discipleship of the 4000+ people who called Willingdon Church their home. I worked with an amazing team of pastors and support staff and together we saw God work in the lives of our congregation as we led them to seek Jesus wholeheartedly. While there was much to do, we always understood that our role was not to try to do all of the ministry but rather, as Ephesians 4:12 teaches, to equip the members of the church to do the ministry according to the gifts that Christ has given them. This role also meant that I served on the executive leadership team of Willingdon Church to give overall leadership and direction to the church as God led us.

During my years at Willingdon I had the privilege to sit under the preaching of Pastor John Neufeld (no relation 😊) who now speaks daily on Back to the Bible. From him I learned how to handle the Scriptures properly as well as the importance of exegetical preaching (which is preaching through the Bible verse by verse) so as to allow the Bible to speak to us in all its fullness and not simply picking and choosing what we would like to preach about. In my last years at Willingdon Church, along with my other duties, I served as the 'secondary' preaching pastor, preaching the Word of God exegetically while always communicating how the Scriptures apply in our daily lives.

In 2016 both Noula and I felt God calling us to leave Willingdon Church and God then opened the door for us to serve at Village Church where we are currently serving. At Village Church I served first as the Site Pastor for their main campus and then in the area of discipleship, working with the prayer ministry and Community Groups as well as Alpha and a ministry called Freedom Sessions. Over the course of serving at Village I have been reminded not only of the importance of discipleship but also of the importance of reaching out to our community and inviting them to engage with the powerful and life-transforming person of Jesus. The church is called not only to grow in depth but also to be an effective and growing light in a world that needs His grace and His life more and more.

This past year through a series of events that seem to have the Lord's hand on them, I came to meet with your Search Committee and now I am happy to have the opportunity to introduce myself to you at this juncture in my story and the story of Maple Ridge Baptist Church.

A big part of my life is my family and so let me take a moment to introduce them to you. While I grew up in a Mennonite family in Calgary, my wife Noula grew up in a big, beautiful Greek family in Vancouver. She came to Christ when her cousin shared her faith with her in high school and after high school got her education degree. For the past 20 years she has been an elementary school teacher in various schools in both Vancouver and now Coquitlam and she is deeply loved by her grade 2/3 students as well as their parents. She is also a wonderful wife and mother to our three children. Julia, our oldest daughter, is in grade 9 and is crazy about track. She will compete in her first races this spring. Zach is 11 years old (grade 6) and plays on a soccer team for Coquitlam Metro Ford. Our youngest daughter, Sarah is 9 years old (grade 4) and she is passionate about gymnastics having taught herself so much from watching YouTube videos that we finally put her in a formal gymnastics class because it seems safer. We love Jesus but we are far from perfect and are always grateful for His grace in our lives.

Of course this is just a brief snapshot of who we are. I look forward to meeting you and I'm glad to answer any questions that you might have.

May the Lord bless you as you seek His leading,

Jonathan