

## Lead Pastor - Frequently Asked Questions

November 13, 2015

### **Affirmation Process**

*I still have some questions about whether P.J. is the right guy. What should I do?*

Attend one of the upcoming [Q&A meetings](#) or [contact an elder](#) as soon as possible to discuss your questions or concerns. We would love to hear from you.

*When will we vote on whether to affirm P.J.?*

On Sunday, December 13, we will have a brief meeting after the Sunday service to vote. Online voting will also be available through December 17.

*Who can participate in the vote?*

Adult members of Covenant Life who have completed the formal membership process.

*What will we actually be voting on?*

The exact wording might vary just a bit, but the ballot will look something like this: "I affirm calling P.J. Smyth to be the Lead Pastor of Covenant Life Church. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_"

*Will the elders see how I voted?*

No, the elders will not see the ballots.

*What percentage is required for P.J. to be affirmed?*

At least 75% of the members who vote must vote "yes" for a Lead Pastor to be affirmed. We are using the guidelines for affirmation found in our draft constitution.

*What if I'm "50/50"?*

If you can't decide which way to vote because you have some reservations, first we encourage you to discuss your concerns with an elder or Search Team member. If your concerns aren't resolved after discussing them, but also don't rise to the level of compelling you to vote "no" we encourage you to vote "yes."

P.J. has been carefully considered by eight members of the congregation (Search Team) and all 18 elders, both staff and non staff. Both groups have concluded that P.J. is the man for the job. Therefore, if you are unsure, we encourage you to rely on the judgment of your

fellow members and leaders who have spent considerable time, effort and prayerful reflection and have presented P.J. as the man for the role.

## **P.J.'s Involvement in Church Networks**

*I've heard P.J. is involved in something called Advance. What is Advance?*

Advance is a network of churches partnering together to advance the gospel through planting and strengthening churches. Most of the churches are in Africa and Europe, with a few beginning to band together in North America. Advance churches unite around similar doctrine, shared mission, genuine relationship and recognized leadership.

*What is P.J.'s role with Advance?*

P.J. is one of the founders and leaders of Advance.

*If P.J. were our Lead Pastor, how could he do that and do what he does with Advance? How would he use his time?*

P.J. will have a full time job description here at Covenant Life. However, he would continue to be involved with Advance, taking around 25 days or less per year to be involved in Advance activity and travel. Because Advance is a web of churches working together and not a large centralized organization, this is doable while being a Lead Pastor, whereas leadership in other types of organizations may not be. For more on this, check out P.J.'s answer in [this video](#) (go to 55:50).

*What do the elders think about Advance?*

Given our unique history, considering a Lead Pastor with a leadership role in a church network was a big deal, so we sought to be especially careful about this. We asked a lot of questions – of P.J., other Advance leaders and others who have worked with Advance. We asked about theology, mission, authority, accountability and a number of other topics. We also sent seven people to an Advance conference.

In the end, we saw that we are very aligned with Advance in theology and values. We were comforted by their commitment to the authority of local churches, provoked by their commitment and fruitfulness in mission, and blessed by their genuine love and commitment to relationships. Advance is a young and growing movement we could eagerly support P.J.'s involvement in if he were our Lead Pastor and could consider partnership with in the future.

For more on this, see Don DeVries' report from the October 11 Members Meeting ([video here](#); go to 47:00).

### *Is Covenant Life joining Advance?*

Formal association with church networks requires congregational affirmation according to our draft constitution, so any decision about joining Advance would necessitate its own process and vote. Calling P.J. is not contingent upon us joining Advance. However, we recognize that calling a Lead Pastor with a significant leadership role in a church network means it's very likely we will be considering partnership with Advance in the future. This is why we've tried to be especially careful to evaluate Advance through this process.

### *If we joined Advance, would they have authority in our church? Could they take our building or assets?*

Covenant Life Church is the sole owner of our facility and assets. We are an independent legal entity with our own articles of incorporation, bylaws and authority. Legal authority resides with the Board of Elders, which consists only of our current elders. The authority of this church cannot be submitted to another organization, nor would Advance ever seek such authority, according to their doctrine and policies.

## **Immigration**

### *If we called P.J., how would he be able to come as a non-U.S. citizen?*

We have retained an immigration attorney who is helping us file for a Religious Worker Visa for P.J. and his family if P.J. is affirmed. In the future, they could apply for more permanent status.

### *How long will it take?*

We are told it can take 6 to 10 months, which would likely mean the Smyths, if affirmed, could actually arrive here in the summer of 2016. But we're praying for a miracle and a sooner date!

### *Is it certain that he would be able to get the Visa he needs to come here?*

It is highly likely his visa request will be approved, but not 100%. This is definitely something we should devote to prayer. Beyond the responsibilities of United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USICS), it is in the Lord's hands.

### *What will the Smyths be doing if they are affirmed but can't come until the summer?*

P.J. will continue his work with Advance, and the family will begin preparing for a significant move. Please keep them in your prayers for what would be a significant transition!

*What will Covenant Life do if the Smyths can't come until summer?*

We would hope to have them here for a few visits between now and then. Though P.J. would not actually start the job until they move, we would hope to invite his input and influence as best we can in the interim through visits as well as other communications.