



Greetings First Bradenton church family!

I have been here as your pastor for three months now, and I want to give you an update on where we are as a church and where we are going to be headed.

Reminder: My initial focus is threefold: Love our people, Learn the culture (of church and community), and to Lead us.

Loving our people:

I have been keeping pretty active in getting to know our church family. It's a joy to build new friendships and it's an honor to walk with our church families even through times of difficulty and loss.

I continue to meet with our deacons as a team and individually. We have a great team of deacons that are great examples of what it means to be a servant of Jesus.

I also meet weekly with our staff as a team and with Pastor Doug and Frank individually.

I believe our church will only ever be as strong as our relationship, starting with our pastors and deacons, and the rest of our church family.

Learning our culture:

I've been learning more about our community as well as our church history and culture. I've been trying to learn as much as possible about how our church is organized for ministry. That leads me to the third step, leadership.

Leadership:

With the counsel and support of pastor Doug and the deacon team, I want to share with you all our plan for gaining clarity both organizationally and spiritually.

Organizational Clarity.

Our church's governing documents are its constitution and by-laws. After that, there are staff job descriptions and ministry teams (committees) with purpose statements. These organizational documents assist us by giving clarity of operation as we seek to accomplish God's mission.

Over the years there have been some changes made to the constitution, by-laws, and staff/ministry team descriptions, and now we find ourselves in a situation where there is substantial need for clarification in some of our governing documents and the specific roles and responsibilities of staff, deacon team, and church teams (committees).

I believe that organizational clarity is imperative for us to move forward in the most effective and efficient way as we seek to serve Jesus together.



Here is the plan to gain organizational clarity: Pause with a Purpose. We're going to pause (organizationally) but pause with a purpose.

Goal: Clarify our organizational documentation.

Note: the purpose is NOT to rewrite or change the heart of our church constitution. The purpose is to clarify our organization and ensure that there are no contradictions nor confusion on how we are organized.

Steps:

- Consistent communication with our church family.
- Pause by temporarily suspending deacon and church committee nominations/additions.
- Form an Organizational Evaluation team comprised of church members.
- Assess current organizational documents.
- Make written recommendations for amendments to any documents.
- Seek outside counsel/consulting.
- Review of recommendation by pastors and deacons.
- Church vote on recommendation at a business meeting.

Timeline:

- Total process – 12 months. Recommendation completed and reviewed and ready to submit to church body at annual meeting in August 2022.

Note: I understand that each of these steps will need their own development. I will be working with Pastor Doug and the deacon team to develop the necessary details to move forward smoothly.

Spiritual Clarity.

As the organizational clarity effort moves ahead, I would like to give much time and attention to our spiritual clarity.

Currently, our church has lacked some spiritual vision and a unified understanding of what steps are to be taken to see the vision become reality. I don't believe this is any fault of current staff, deacons, or ministry leaders. I believe we lack some spiritual clarity due to significant changes of our church leadership over the past several years.

I plan to lead our church to greater spiritual focus by clarifying the following:

Purpose – why do we exist?

Vision – what does the future look like?

Mission – what are we trying to do? (Love First: Loving People, Sharing Jesus. This one is done :)

Values – what is the heartbeat/culture of our church?

Plan – what specific steps/methods are we going to take?

I will build on the work of the transition team and the principles they outlined. I believe that I, together with pastor Doug and the counsel/support of the deacons, can move forward to clarify our spiritual direction. This will happen even before our organizational documents are finished being clarified. This will require us to be in harmony in our relationships with one another as we move forward.

Timeline:

- It's my desire to have our spiritual clarity defined and communicated prior to Christmas.

What about right now? What should we be focused on?

1. Sunday small group studies 9:00.
2. Sunday large gathering 10:30.
3. Who's Your One? Pray for and pursue individuals around us with the love and message of Jesus.
4. Engage in current ministries and events (youth, children, women's group, VBS and things currently happening).

As we move forward, each and every day, in all we do, let's Love First: by loving people and sharing Jesus.