

Sovereign Grace Churches State of the Union 2024
Enduring Faith for Our Future

Introduction

Scripture

- Hebrews 11:1-7

Faith for the Future

"Be of good heart, brother, for God will either assuage the fury of the flame or else strengthen us to abide it." Nicolas Ridley

"Be of good comfort, Mr. Ridley, and play the man! We shall see this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust never shall be put out." Hugh Latimer

- During a time of God given global expansion, moving from a small denomination to a mid-size denomination, we are beginning a phase of generational transfer of primary leadership of our churches in a culture that is shifting further away from God's Word making gospel ministry and gospel mission more challenging.
- That extended sentence contains both God-given blessings, and God-ordained challenges which reveal our need to lead our churches with an enduring faith so that our future is what we hope for by the grace of God and for the glory of God.
- To lead our churches well, we need to lead with an enduring faith in God as we do good gospel work for God all for the purpose of pleasing God.

5 ways we must lead with enduring faith.

1. Enduring Faith for Future Pastors

- 27% or 56 of our pastors are in their 60's.
- 20% or 40 of our pastors are in their 50's

- 47% or 96 of our pastors are in their 50's and 60's meaning that over the next 10+ years about half of our pastors will transition or begin to transition primary leadership of our churches to the next generation.
- First, recruit, evaluate, and send men to the Pastors College.
 - Summer Internship Grant Program
 - "Pastoral Development and Deployment Grant Program"
- Second, I want to cultivate in SG a "culture of interdependent cooperation."

2. Enduring Faith for a God-glorifying Generational Transfer of Leadership

"It is noteworthy that in the list of Hebrews 11 attention is given not only to the faith of the OT examples but also and particularly to the salvation-historical events themselves. The examples are set in historical sequence so as to provide an outline of the redemptive purpose of God, advancing through the age of promise until at last in Jesus, faith's 'pioneer and perfecter', the age of fulfilment is inaugurated."¹

- Laid into redemptive history, SG is a small denomination playing its small part of advancing the redemptive purpose of God in this age of promise while we look to the age of fulfillment.
- In 10 years, approximately half of our churches will be led by the next generation of pastors.
- In 10 years, the next generation will be leading Sovereign Grace regionally, nationally, and globally.

¹ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, PNTC, Wm. B. Eerdmans 2010, pg. 395
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- In 10 years, someone else will be the Executive Director, and the composition of the Leadership Team will be different than we have now.
- 13 of our Sr. Pastors are in their 60's, and 22 of our Sr. Pastors are in their 50's
- That's 35 Sr. Pastor transitions over the next 10+ years.
- Those numbers speak to the opportunity we have over the next decade to model a biblically informed, God-glorifying transition of primary leadership on a local, regional, national, and global level that serves our churches, brings God glory, and allows us to continue to advance the gospel for generations to come.

3. Enduring Faith for Theological Fidelity

- Three vulnerabilities:
 1. Our global expansion
 2. An unbiblical kindness/niceness that keeps us from having hard conversations
 3. Polity technicalities.

Global Expansion

- Given our current rate of expansion: in 10 years, we will potentially increase the number of partner churches in SG from 95 now to approximately 280 by 2034.
- If you study denominations, you find that when some expanded over time, factions formed, meaning conservative factions, and liberally progressive factions formed threatening their theological fidelity, consistency, and unity.
- "Factions occur when you see either denominational leadership that is disconnected from seminaries, and/or denominational leadership that goes astray theologically."²

An unbiblical kindness/niceness that keeps us from having hard conversations

² Jeff Purswell, June 2024 Leadership Team Retreat
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- Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22)
- Pastors are to be “kind to everyone” and we are to “correct our opponents with gentleness” (2 Timothy 2:24-25)
- Kindness characterizes the correction; kindness doesn’t remove the obligation to have the hard conversations that correct.

Polity technicalities.

- Church Building Grant or Loan Program.

4. Enduring Faith for Church Planting

- Over the next 2-3 years, we hope to plant 15 churches
- 6 Church Plants in the United States
 - North Knoxville, TN
 - Columbia/Spring Hill, TN
 - Tampa, FL
 - Galloway, NJ
 - Manchester, IN
 - Coatesville, PA
- 9 Church Plants Globally
 - Oaxaca, Mexico
 - Reynosa, Mexico
 - Torino, Italy
 - Nairobi, Kenya
 - Windhoek, Namibia
 - Thailand
 - Tanza City, Philippines
 - Trece Martirez City, Philippines
 - Ho Chi Min, Vietnam
- Two vulnerabilities:
 1. Too tentative to plant more churches
 2. Funding future church plants

Too tentative to plant more churches

“those who sow bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Cor. 9:6)

Funding future church plants

5. Enduring Faith for Joyful Generosity

- First, lead by example. Be a generous pastor.
- Second, Sr. Pastors, lead your pastoral team and church to be a generous church with the aim of giving 10% to SG
- Third, consider having a Journey of Generosity Retreat (JOG's) in your church or in your Region where members of several SG churches can participate.
- Fourth, give copies of the SG book, “Joyful Generosity” to the people in your church

Conclusion

“He [the author] brings before his audience a long series of exemplary witnesses to an enduring faith...The catalogue shows that throughout redemptive history attestation from God has been based upon the evidence of a living faith that acts in terms of God’s promise, even when the realization of the promise is not in sight. Such a faith is able to move beyond disappointment and the sufferings of this world and to bear vibrant testimony to future generations regarding the reality of the promised blessings.”³

- May our enduring faith in God for great gospel work for God all for the purpose of pleasing God leave a vibrant testimony for future generations in our family of churches.

³ William Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, WBC vol.47b, Word Books 1991, pg. 315
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