

WHY I BELIEVE I AM CALLED TO BE THE EXECUTIVE PASTOR AT MIMICO BAPTIST CHURCH (MBC)

Through the proposal submitted to the MBC board of directors on December 3, 2024 and presented to the membership on January 12, 2025, I am submitting my candidacy for MBC to consider me for the position of Executive Pastor.

In this document, I include an overview of God's call in my life (conversion, call to ministry, pathway to ordination), my core theological beliefs and my perspective on MBC's next steps.

I recognize this document is a working document i.e. it is not fully complete. I understand God continues to shape and transform me from my imperfect and incomplete self to, one day, be fully transformed by the Spirit. I welcome on-going conversation about my own understandings of God and his kingdom operations and hold loosely of I believe I understand for his correction from others; I trust others will have that posture in those conversations.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Alvin Lau

Conversion and Christian Experience

God has been working in my life from early on, though I may not have been aware of Him. My immediate family members are not Christians. My first taste of Christianity, as my mother told me, occurred when a family friend invited me to a VBS in Waterloo. After, we moved to Brampton, and soon my parents sent me to KRT Christian Schools (now called Brampton Christian Schools). Their reason was to provide me with a higher quality of education; hindsight suggests that it was God's providential leading. That was the first time in my memory that I heard about Jesus and the traditional/typical gospel message. At first, I blindly accepted it without really knowing what I was doing. I learned more about Christianity, not necessarily because I was interested, but rather I treated it as another subject in school. I attended Sunday school briefly during my middle-school years. At 13 years old, I was invited to a youth group at Brampton Chinese Baptist Church (now Brampton Community Baptist Church - BCBC). A couple of years later, I began attending Sunday services. Somewhere between grade 9 and 10, I identified myself as a Christ-follower and was baptized on December 19, 1993. God has and continues to lead me along my faith journey, teaching me about himself, about myself, and revealing his vision for me.

Call to Christian Ministry

In high school, I wanted to be a psychiatrist (after considering various careers). Throughout my high school days, I helped many friends through various problems. As such, I wanted to devote my life in continuing to help others deal with their situations and be restored. However, during my first year of university, I realized medical school was not my direction in life; biology was no longer my strong suit as first-year university clearly showed me. I asked God what exactly He wanted me to do. During my prayer time over several months, I reviewed what gifts He gave me. As I analysed what options there were, He delivered an answer: youth ministry. God has developed a passion within me to see students build up their faith and personhood, and to see them change the world as Jesus saw his disciples change the world; after all, from scriptural inferences, it is believed that only Peter was over the age of 20 years¹ i.e. the rest were teenagers. Over the years, I believe my role in the Kingdom is to help each person take one step closer to Jesus primarily through preaching and coaching; I still have an affinity for youth (defined as those ages 11 to 25ish).

¹ Matthew 17:24-27

PATHWAY TO ORDINATION

My previous home church (BCBC) attested to my call towards Christian ministry. They initiated the accreditation process and funded much of my Master of Divinity program without any strings attached. As I continued in the accreditation process, I ran into a roadblock – BCBC's constitution only allowed them to ordain church staff who were employed full-time at the church for a minimum of 3 years.

During this time, when Natalie and I married and moved to the Mimico area, we sensed a call to transfer our membership from BCBC to a more local church i.e. MBC. Rev. Jim Sanderson was familiar with my work at CBOQ since he was also part of the CBOQ credentials committee and was aware of my accreditation status.

In one of our earlier meetings, he mentioned that MBC did not have the same requirements for ordination as BCBC, and the church might be willing to call my ordination. After discussions with Church Council and membership, MBC was willing to call for my ordination council and eventually ordained me for Christian Ministry on March 28, 2004.

I am also grateful and honoured that MBC was willing to ordain me for Christian Ministry on March 28, 2004.

Overview of Ministry Experiences

Since my decision to follow Jesus, I have been involved in numerous volunteer and professional ministry opportunities. These include:

- Student leader in my high school youth group
- Student leadership in university campus ministry (at Western University with Asian Christian Fellowship)
- Street ministries (Youth for Christ-London)
- Denominational leadership (CBOQ² Youth)
- Co-chaplain for Raptors 905
- Online digital mentor (The Mentoring Ministries tmm.io)
- Online ministry for sex workers (Fight for Freedom)

² CBOQ is Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec. It is the association of churches to whom MBC belongs.

- Speaker (plenary and workshop) at various youth and church conferences
- Coach for several youth ministries
- General Manager for several youth ministry events

At MBC, I have served/currently serving as:

- Sunday school teacher
- Youth group leader
- Council Rep for Christian Education
- Council Chair / Chair of Board of Directors
- Audio/visual Manager
- Communications Manager (including social media)
- IT Manager (including website, data management)

Core Christian Doctrine

In the beginning, THE LORD, who is one god³ but exists as three persons⁴, looked at a formless mass, and he had a vision. As God the Father, the Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, His vision was to establish a kingdom where he could share everything he had, including himself. After all, love and joy is meant to be shared, not held to oneself. The Trinity exemplifies this outpour of love beyond himself. He began to form and create what we now know as the earth⁵. Within this creation, he made humans, his most prized possession, for they were made in his image⁶. He wanted to involve people in caring for creation⁷. However, God chose not to create beings who blindly and blatantly loved him. Rather, because he loved them, he gave them choice: the ability to either accept or reject the notion that God knows best and is worth trusting wholeheartedly⁸. He warned them though that choosing to live life their own way vs. God's way would mean a separation (i.e. death)⁹ between them and God, who is ultimately our life-source.

Humanity, through Adam and Eve, chose to reject God (i.e. to sin)¹⁰. Because of that choice, humanity was effectively separated from God, symbolized by the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden¹¹. As well, they felt emotions not previously experienced: fear¹², shame¹³ and soon after despair¹⁴. Humanity, because of Adam and Eve's disobedience, was now naturally separate from God, and if left unresolved would remain separated from God forever. However, because of God's grace and desire to want to be with his created people, he had a plan to help restore the relationship between himself and humans¹⁵. Throughout history, God has reminded people of his desire to redeem and restore through various covenants with specific people (e.g. Noah¹⁶, Abraham¹⁷, David¹⁸, etc.)

Part of God's plan was choosing a group of people to carry out this redemption process, beginning from Abraham¹⁹ and to eventually all humanity. He specifically chose to reveal his individual self to all nations through the Jewish race by giving his name: YHWH

³ James 2:19

⁴ 2 Corinthians 13:14, Matthew 28:18,19

⁵ Genesis 1:1ff

⁶ Genesis 1:26

⁷ Genesis 1:28

⁸ e.g. Genesis 2:16-17

⁹ Romans 6:23a

¹⁰ Genesis 3:6-7

¹¹ Genesis 3:24

¹² Genesis 3:10

¹³ Genesis 3:7

¹⁴ John Ortberg, "If Jesus Ran the Chicago Cubs" preached on October 30-31, 2002.

¹⁵ Genesis 3:15

¹⁶ Genesis 9:9-17

¹⁷ Genesis 15

¹⁸ 2 Chronicles 13:5

¹⁹ Genesis 15

(normally translated the LORD)²⁰. As such, God invited Israel to live life his way (which he gave through the Torah), and to be a part of God's redemptive work. In fact, Israel saw God's commandments not as a list of rules, but as a love letter since YHWH, Lord of all creation, was willing to come personally to them to reveal how life could be experienced to the fullest²¹. God desires that we be holy²² in order to experience the fullness of his presence. As such, God is jealous since he does not want anyone ahead of him (because no one in fact is above him)²³.

His redemptive work through the Israelites included the administration of justice, and also the redemption of creation. However, Israel consistently chose to sin against God. God, because of his grace, promised that he would come and establish his kingdom that would "break out" into the broken world, which would be the restoration of creation²⁴. This was the hope that the faithful had: God would return, redeem and restore creation and humanity to his original intent²⁵. Though there were some heroes who gave hope to people, the ultimate hope-giver came in Jesus Christ.

Jesus, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary²⁶, came to earth as the eternal Son of God²⁷. In his incarnation, he united to his divine nature a true human nature, and so continues to be both God and man, in two distinct natures, but one person, forever²⁸. However, he did not choose to always use both faculties²⁹. Part of Jesus' incarnation was to connect with humanity experientially, including temptations; yet he perfectly obeyed the law of God³⁰. His main mission was to redeem people back into a right, loving relationship with God, and to involve them into his mission of restoration i.e. establishing God's kingdom³¹, which has already come and initialized by his sacrificial death on the cross. He wanted to give people hope in knowing that God would once again redeem and restore creation to himself. He wanted to "save" people so they would have full access to the Father once again. Jesus made that possibility a reality³² by objectively atoning vicariously and victoriously for our sins by sacrificing himself on the cross³³ and rising bodily on the third day³⁴. In other words, Jesus knew that because of our sinful nature and separation from God (i.e. death), humanity was not

²⁰ Exodus 3:15

²¹ Rob Bell, "Covered in the Dust of the Rabbi" preached on June 26-27, 2002

²² Leviticus 19:2

²³ Exodus 34:14

²⁴ Micah 2:12-13

²⁵ Psalm 25:21, Psalm 33, Psalm 37:9, Jeremiah 29:11, Micah 7:7, Romans 8:20-21

²⁶ Luke 1:26-35

²⁷ Matthew 26:63-64

²⁸ Hebrews 2:14-18

²⁹ example Philippians 2:5-8

³⁰ Hebrews 2:18

³¹ Mark 1:15

³² symbolized by the tearing of the veil in Matthew 27:51

³³ Romans 8:3

³⁴ Jeremiah 23:5-6, Acts 4:12, 2 Corinthians 5:21

able to be restored in relationship to God on their own merit. Jesus, through his death, was able to bear that consequence and judgement of sin, and open a way for humanity to be restored once and for all to God. With the resurrection, he demonstrated his ultimate power and authority over everything, including death³⁵. Forty days following his resurrection, Jesus returned to his Father's right hand where He now reigns and intercedes for His redeemed³⁶. Jesus will one day return to complete the establishment of God's kingdom³⁷, which will finalize the salvific process of those who chose to follow him.

Jesus' message is clear: the Kingdom of God is near; repent and believe the Good News³⁸. In other words, Jesus invites others to follow him to extend his kingdom of hope through love. Repentance involves a conscious changing of the mind i.e. acknowledging how one's own way of living is incorrect, and turning to God to follow him and his intended way of life. This possibility was ultimately made effective through Jesus' death and resurrection. By believing (i.e. accepting this promise and reality of the grace of God through the work of Jesus Christ and not by one's own work), anyone could become part of this. Jesus challenges his followers to establish God's kingdom by seeking it³⁹, and actualizing God's will on earth as it is in heaven⁴⁰ (e.g. helping those who are less fortunate⁴¹). A Christian is challenged to live "in the big picture" i.e. living for eternal purposes, not just temporal purposes⁴². All Christians are called by God to serve in ministry for his kingdom⁴³ through the spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit⁴⁴.

The Markers of a Christian Life

By definition, a Christian is a person who believes in Jesus' good news that he/she can be restored into a right, loving relationship with God, who repents from his/her sinful tendencies, and decides to follow Jesus and his directions in extending his kingdom on earth. God teaches through many venues to grow as a Christian, including the following four:

- Holy Spirit: Jesus sent the Holy Spirit (the third Person of the Triune God), who convicts of sin, of righteousness and of judgement, who regenerates, sanctifies,

³⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:57

³⁶ Luke 1:30-35, Romans 3:22-26, Hebrews 10:5-14, 2 Timothy 2:5

³⁷ Matthew 25:31-46, Philippians 3:20-21

³⁸ Mark 1:15

³⁹ Matthew 6:33

⁴⁰ Matthew 6:10

⁴¹ James 1:27

⁴² Colossians 3:2

⁴³ 1 Peter 2:19

⁴⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

illuminates and comforts those who follow Jesus Christ⁴⁵. The Holy Spirit is involved in the continuation of one's salvation since it is a process, not a one-time deal. Salvation has a past i.e. point where one's identity in Christ is realized (typically considered one's conversion)⁴⁶, present i.e. the process of being restored towards full Christ-likeness⁴⁷ (known as sanctification), and future i.e. when Christians will fully restored and redeemed⁴⁸ (known as glorification). The Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf in our communication with God⁴⁹. With the power of the Holy Spirit, we are driven to join in God's ministry to the world, including works of service and giving.

- the Bible: A tool in our faith journey is the Bible. Scripture is God-breathed (i.e. it says what God wants to say), written through inspiration by His appointed authors through the personality, writing style, and historical context of each author⁵⁰. The Bible contains life lessons and some specific directives from God to specific groups of people, in which we can learn principles that apply to our faith journeys. Although all of the Bible is truth, the Bible does not contain all truth (e.g. the Bible does not include lessons on all mathematic formulas).
- in community: Since humans are relational creatures, a person needs a community of believers, called the church⁵¹, for support and mobilization. These people are established in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It is the mission of the local church to teach and preach Jesus' teachings and message, and to extend and invite others into his kingdom⁵², typically to their own geographical context. God doesn't just love his church⁵³, but also every person intrinsically⁵⁴, which is why the church is God's agent in reaching everyone. The church continues to remind the people of Christ their Saviour and purpose through believer's baptism⁵⁵ (i.e. an individual who chooses for him/herself in response to salvation, and testifies of Christ's death, burial and resurrection) and the Lord's Supper⁵⁶ (which reminds people of Jesus' body given for us and blood that was shed to take away our sins). Historically and contemporarily, the church, as a fluid, invisible movement and not necessarily as an institution, continues to reach its local and global mission field in ways relevant to its missional context.
- through prayer: Prayer is communication with God directly because of the way opened by Jesus' death. Through those conversations, one can be totally open and honest with God in everything, and a way for God to converse with us at a

⁴⁵ John 16:4-15

⁴⁶ Romans 10:9-10

⁴⁷ 2 Corinthians 1:10, 10:15b

⁴⁸ Phil 3:21

⁴⁹ Romans 8:27

⁵⁰ 2 Timothy 3:16,17

⁵¹ Romans 12:5, Ephesians 1:20-23

⁵² Matthew 28:18-20

⁵³ 1 John 3:1

⁵⁴ 1 John 3:16

⁵⁵ Colossians 2:12

⁵⁶ Matthew 26:26-30

supernatural level. Ultimately, the purpose of prayer is to discern and understand (as best as we can) the mind of God⁵⁷. Just as we would converse with a friend to become acquainted, to understand, and to grow closer that person, we pray to understand and grow closer to God.

The good news is that the Father's kingdom of hope through love, discovered in and through faith, is accessible to anyone who wants to be a part of it. Jesus made the way possible. The Holy Spirit helps us to fully experience it.

I also believe that there are key markers in a Christian life to help us evaluate how the Holy Spirit is transforming us. While this is not a comprehensive list, I do believe these are key markers:

- Follows and trusts God first⁵⁸
- Spends individual time with God⁵⁹
- Gathers regularly with other believers for prayer, worship, encouragement and admonishment⁶⁰
- Serves one another in the church family⁶¹
- Serves those outside the church family⁶²
- Gives generously of time, attention and resources⁶³
- Personally invests in/mentors the upcoming generation⁶⁴

These markers are not "checklists" that are completed just once. They are regular reminders and tools of evaluation in how God deepens our faith and our works through him.

The Markers of a Christian Church

God instituted the local church to be a specific expression of his kingdom. While there may be a variety of different churches within a geographical area, each one has a unique call from God to share his gospel to those within their spheres of influence. Because of this, a local church is called to work in tandem with other churches for the sake of his kingdom, not in competition.

⁵⁷ Matthew 6:10

⁵⁸ Exodus 20:3

⁵⁹ Psalm 1:1-2

⁶⁰ Hebrews 10:24-25

⁶¹ Acts 6:1-4

⁶² Mark 7:24,31

⁶³ Luke 3:11

⁶⁴ Psalm 78:4

His continuous challenge and inspiration stem from the pulpit which informs and influences the other ministries of the church and its people. This does not mean every ministry can only utilize the sermon without any other resources. Rather, through the pulpit, we discern God's call and prayerfully discern how best to move forward with his directives.

Key markers of a church include (but are not limited to):

- A clear understanding of its mandate from God within its membership
- An identifiable pathway for persons at various points of their faith journey with Jesus to develop a deeper and more personal faith in Christ which can include a profession of faith in Jesus, baptism, membership and call to some form of Christian ministry (volunteer or vocational)
- Honest and encouraging communication between one another
- A role/opportunity for each member to serve within the church family, utilizing one's gifts and skills
- Encouragement and support to extend the impact and influence of Jesus into each individual's sphere of influence
- Faithful stewardship of its resources (prayer, financial, personnel) for the purpose of fulfilling its God-directed mandate
- Opportunities for regular gathering of its members, both in smaller groups and as a large church family

How My Theology Informs My Ministry

Understanding who God is and how he operates is the ultimate template for how I should live my life and conduct my ministry. If God is gracious to people, I need to be gracious to people. If God is patient, I must be patient. If God is love, I need to love. If God's desire is to redeem and restore his kingdom on earth, then I must work towards that objective. Otherwise, my life and ministry is really purposeless. Thus, the more I understand who God is and what his vision is, the clearer I know what my mission is and how I can go about fulfilling his call for my life.

Since God invites and draws people into his kingdom, I too must follow such a model. I need to continue in inviting and assisting people in their faith journeys, no matter what stage they are at. God's ministry through me allows that to happen in many different facets, whether it's directly speaking God's word to a group of people, or assisting in creating an environment where God's word is more accessible to those who need to hear it. That can involve my personal journey with a person, or making God's word

clearer and understandable to another. After all, it is through us that the Kingdom of Hope through Love can be announced and explored with the Holy Spirit.

WHAT DO I SEE AT MIMICO BAPTIST CHURCH

Since Natalie and I started attending MBC in April 2002, it was evident what MBC's vision and mandate were: to be a community of Christ sharing Christ with the community (later revised to "communities" since serve beyond the immediate geographical neighbourhood). This was a compelling and clear vision tying both the desire to grow as individuals and church family, and to invite others to share that desire with us.

There have been many changes in our church family including:

- The plant of a Mandarin ministry
- The arrival and departure of many people through our congregation for a variety of reasons
- Changes in our governance (including the utilization of council reps, facilitators and ministry teams to the current incorporation structure)
- The retirement of our long-serving pastor

While the desire to continue to live out our mandate may be there, I have noticed we have an inconsistent understanding as a church family of what that means and how we attempt to fulfill it both individually and corporately. For a variety of reasons (including the onset of the pandemic and how we responded to it) and with changes in our membership, we have not consistently lived it out. We also do not have a consistent system and structure to help us gather and understand information about ourselves and our communities.

I also wonder if our resources are disproportionately focused internally. The late Rev. Dr. Timothy Tang (English Pastor at East Toronto Chinese Baptist Church and Director of the Tyndale Intercultural Centre) offered this analogy: the church is a like a wave. It recedes and it moves forward. A church's rhythm is similar; there are times for us to recede together for worship, encouragement, prayer and teaching (i.e. Sunday service, Bible study, etc.). However, that should move us to move forward individually and corporately like a wave to share the impact and message of Christ beyond our church family. I fear at times we place too much emphasis on the gathering moments and not enough energy when the "wave" moves out.

I believe my gifts of preaching and administration will be helpful in re-establishing what it means for us to fulfill this mandate.

I believe with my history with MBC, my experiences in various churches (both within CBOQ and non-CBOQ) and my strength in connecting what we do back to our God-directed mandate, I (along with our other church leaders) can provide a more comprehensive approach for faith formation that we can intentionally invite others into.

WHY DO I BELIEVE AN EXECUTIVE PASTOR/ASSOCIATE PASTOR SOLUTION IS MORE EFFECTIVE THAN A SENIOR PASTOR

On November 10, 2024 at our Annual General Meeting, we completed an exercise to determine from a full-time pastor what characteristics/skills to have and specific tasks to fulfill. After reflecting on what was shared, my opinion was that it could not be fulfilled well by one person alone.

The role of a pastor is to equip the saints for the work of ministry⁶⁵, not to be the primary worker. This does not mean the pastor is not involved in any of the work, but the work is shared widely with all of the church family. This work is not limited to the programs and collective work done under the oversight of MBC; it includes the individual efforts God directs each person in, whether through their vocation, family, friends and other volunteer opportunities. There are also some responsibilities we have delegated to the pastor that is really the work of the church as a whole; I have been inconsistent in sometimes deferring or expecting the pastor to do something when I should be doing it myself.

Traditionally, we have depended on one primary person to spearhead that equipping. Thankfully, we do have other staff (i.e. the Mandarin Ministries Pastor and Music Director) who are also involved in that; we did have a Children's Ministry Director for a brief time.

In our current context, I believe we can utilize our resources that were held for 1 person (i.e. a full-time senior pastor who technically would work a 40-hour week) and expand that work with the same resources by 20+% (i.e. 1 full-time Associate Pastor at 40-hour/week and 1 part-time Executive Pastor at 15-hour/week).

I also believe I have the aptitude and skills to manage/care for staff, senior leadership and ministry leads, and to build and implement structures to help us be more effective in the work already happening.

⁶⁵ Ephesians 4:11-16

AS WE MOVE FORWARD

I realize this document remains incomplete. There are unanswered questions. I have attempted to answer questions have either asked or may be wondering through the FAQ section of <https://mimicobaptist.ca/executive-pastor-proposal> (pw: january12).

I believe this arrangement may be our best step forward “for a time such as this.” This arrangement is not meant to be carved in stone. Like so much of what has happened at MBC, we hopefully are constantly and consistently listening to God’s voice as the Spirit directs us in where he wants us to go.

It is my prayer that we continue to thrive in the mandate he has given us, to be a community of Christ that effectively and clearly shares Christ with our communities, both as a church family and as faithful followers.