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Dear Pastor Search Team:

I am looking for a church that desires to see life change happen on the individual, community, national and global level. My goal is to help equip and build up the church, and to lead them to grow and mature to the point that they are willing to say "Yes" to God even before they know what He is going to ask. That is how I try to live my life (sometimes imperfectly), and what I try to teach others around me both through formal channels and through the casual, everyday interactions I have with them. I am passionate about following God and leading others to follow Him with me. I believe that being a follower of Jesus is about complete life transformation, not simply praying a prayer and going through a few classes and filling in some blanks on a page. Transformation requires much more from us than that. Because I believe in transformation more than in checking boxes, people are my priority, not cookie-cutter programs.

As I have followed God, He has led me on an interesting journey through life that has brought me to where I am today. My parents were missionaries and I grew up mostly outside the U.S. I became a Christian at age nine, but when I was fourteen I had another life-changing moment when I understood more fully what following Christ meant. In college, I was heavily involved in the Christian Fellowship on campus, eventually becoming one of the student leaders of the group. After college I worked overseas for a multinational corporation, after a year and a half, God called me to be a missionary in East Asia for two years. After that, I went to seminary in California because of the multicultural community it offered. Seminary is where I met and married my wife, Shannon. Shannon and I returned to East Asia as missionaries for four years before God called us back to serve in America. Once we returned, we served for a short time at a Christian camp, but then I took a position as the Pastor of Administration and Youth at a Southern Baptist Church in Sacramento, California. After serving there five years, God called me to be the head pastor at NewLife Community Church (also an SBC church), where I served for the past four and a half years. I resigned that position in order to move closer to family in North Carolina this July of 2018.

After four and a half years at NewLife on the outskirts of Fresno, California, God is leading my family and I in a new direction. I arrived in December of 2013 as a rookie senior pastor with dreams of making an impact not just in our small Easton community (a rural town 4 miles outside of Fresno), but also in the greater Fresno area, and to the ends of the earth. This small rural church (average attendance of around 60-70 people) has given me the opportunity to grow in many aspects of my life and ministry. From the very first month of my tenure at NewLife, I was mentored by Mike McGuffee, a pastor to pastors who had led several successful churches before joining the California Southern Baptist Convention's Healthy Church Consulting Group. We met on a bi-weekly basis and his friendship and guidance have been invaluable in my growth and maturing as a pastor. During my time there I also worked on a Doctor of Ministry degree through Gateway Seminary of the SBC (formerly Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary). Through this program, God has helped me add to and expand the tools in my pastor's "tool belt" in ways that have stretched me and challenged me in my professional and spiritual growth more than anything else I've ever done. I am a better pastor, husband, father and friend thanks to the

many opportunities and challenges God has brought my way over the past four and a half years. I am looking forward to the next step in my life's journey as I seek to continue ministering to and equipping the local church as they strive to live out the plan God has for them and reach the potential God created them for.

God has given me a burden for the lost, including those who are ambivalent or even uninterested in church (many of whom have had negative experiences with church in the past). I believe that one of the greatest lessons we can learn from Jesus is how He approached others with an unlikely mix of two things we often think are incompatible: Truth and Grace. Jesus confronted people with difficult truth, whether it was the woman caught in adultery or the tax collector who changed his ways of cheating and stealing. At the same time, He extended Grace to them and brought them out of their sinful lifestyle into a life of following Him. As a pastor, my goal is to lead others on their spiritual journeys like Christ did: in the fullness of truth and grace.

As I teach God's Word, I desire to do so in a way that does not compromise the truths in the Bible, and that can be understood and applied by regular people in their day-to-day lives. My heart is to see the church built up so that it can reach out to those who are not believers in the community. I believe the church should be a place where an un-churched person can come, feel welcome and wanted, and leave thinking about how even though he or she may not be ready to accept everything that was said they are excited to come back the next week and learn more. It should be a place where people not only hear God's word preached each week in practical ways, but where they work together in community to flesh out how God's truths are applied in their everyday lives; where people don't just gain knowledge about God, but they experience Him living and active in their lives as they put Christ's teachings into practice.

I believe my broad experience in ministry over the past 22 years (plus) gives me a unique perspective and a wide range of tools that make me a good pastor. From leading small groups while in college, doing house church in East Asia, planning and leading youth programs, facilitating men's and mixed small groups in traditional churches, and even teaching children in VBS and on Sunday mornings, I have had experience leading people in practically all age groups. I have led teams made up of people from widely varying backgrounds (the East Asia team of missionaries I led was made up of 13 people from five different countries). I am used to leading people older and younger than I am, from a wide range of socio-economic and educational levels, and with vastly different personalities. As a highly compassionate and empathetic person, I feel I connect well with others. Because of this, I am able to communicate with, minister to, and lead groups made up of diverse people well. Most importantly, I am passionate about following God, and leading others to follow Him with me. I know that He will lead me as I embark on this journey once more, and I am excited to see where God leads me next.

May the grace of our Savior fill you with gratitude and wonder, and may His peace go before you as you follow and obey Him.

Sincerely,

Eric Mann