

A WORD BEFORE THE QUESTIONS

For more than three decades, Pastor Mark has given his life to building Church at Viera. What he began with a small group has grown into a thriving church family of thousands.

This transition is happening because Pastor Mark, of his own conviction and out of deep love for this church, has asked to hand the reins to the next Lead Pastor while our church is strong and unified. This is a planned, prayerful, and God-honoring step taken from a position of strength.

We have prepared this document to answer the questions you are likely asking. We are setting up a meeting to dialogue with those who have questions we did not cover. Honest questions are welcome here. Our prayer is that this gives you clarity and confidence as we walk this road together.

"Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith."

HEBREWS 13:4

More Questions?

Ask Pastor Mark at the
Pastoral Transition Q+A

JULY 12 | 2:30-3:30PM



THE BASICS: WHAT IS HAPPENING AND WHEN

What exactly is being announced?

Pastor Mark plans to transition from his role as Lead Pastor to the honorary role of Pastor Emeritus in October 2028. Our Administrative Leaders and a dedicated Succession Team are leading a careful, multi-year process to identify, call, and welcome our next Lead Pastor. Pastor Mark remains fully in place as Lead Pastor throughout this process.

When will this transition take place?

The transition unfolds over several years to protect stability. The goal is to have a successor identified and affirmed by approximately Spring of 2028, with Pastor Mark fully transitioning to Pastor Emeritus on October 1, 2028. This timeline gives the new pastor a meaningful season of overlap and mentoring.

Why are we hearing about this now, so far in advance?

Healthy transitions are planned early, not rushed at the last minute. Announcing now allows our church family to pray, ask questions, and walk through this together with open eyes.

Research on pastoral transitions consistently shows that planned, well-communicated successions produce far better outcomes than abrupt ones, and that congregations feel most positive when they have been kept informed throughout. Starting early also reflects the biblical pattern, where leaders such as Moses and Paul invested years preparing their successors before the handoff.

Why October 2028?

Mark feels that the church has strong momentum, a unified staff and wants to finish strong before handing on the baton of leadership. He realizes that will be a great time for someone else to carry the heavy load of Lead Pastor which he would have carried for 36 years.

PASTOR MARK'S ROLE, THE EMERITUS TITLE, & HIS FUTURE

What is Pastor Mark's role during the transition?

Pastor Mark remains our Lead Pastor with full authority and responsibility until the transition is complete. His preaching, leadership, and pastoral care continue. As we move closer to the handoff, he will intentionally invest in mentoring the incoming pastor so the leadership baton is passed cleanly and never dropped.

What does "Pastor Emeritus" actually mean for how our church is led?

Pastor Emeritus is a title of honor, not an office of authority. It recognizes Pastor Mark's faithful, long service and his ongoing relationship with our church family. It does not carry governing authority, and it does not place him over the new Lead Pastor. After the transition, any preaching or ministry by Pastor Mark would only come at the invitation of the new Lead Pastor. Pastor Mark will continue to work at CAV with assigned duties by the new Lead Pastor. This protects the new pastor's freedom to lead and honors Pastor Mark at the same time.

Will Pastor Mark still be part of our church family?

Yes, Pastor Mark and his wife Kelli have stated that they plan to spend the rest of their lives and ministry in Melbourne at Church at Viera.

How will we honor Pastor Mark's decades of ministry?

Honoring Pastor Mark's legacy is a priority of this process. Celebration and commissioning will be part of the transition. The greatest honor we can give is to carry forward the mission he has faithfully built and to receive the next pastor with the same love this church has always shown.

THE PROCESS, OUR POLITY, & HOW CANDIDATES ARE CHOSEN

Who is overseeing this transition?

Our Administrative Leaders (Elders) carry the governing responsibility for the succession. They have appointed a dedicated Succession Team to run the search and bring forward a recommended candidate. Together they are guided by Scripture, by our Constitution and Bylaws, and by a commitment to seek the Holy Spirit's direction at every step.

Who is on the Succession Team?

The Succession Team is led by Darrell Foster and includes Chris Rea, Deanne Sichler, Karen Trent, Tony Meggs, and Paul Carpenter. These are spiritually mature members chosen to represent our church family, to pray, and to seek God's man for this role without personal agenda.

Who actually chooses our next pastor?

The Administrative Leaders and Succession Team will prayerfully discern and recommend a candidate, and the church calls its Lead Pastor. After a candidate is affirmed by the Administrative Leaders and Servant Leaders, the congregation will have the opportunity to hear from him and then vote. Our governing documents call for written notice of at least two weeks, a meeting of at least one-third of resident members, and an affirmative vote of at least three-fourths of those present.

Is this process biblical?

Yes. Scripture shows leaders appointing leaders under God's guidance, with the wider community involved. Paul appointed elders in every church (Acts 14:23) and directed Titus to do the same (Titus 1:5). Our process mirrors that balance of leadership oversight and congregational affirmation.

How will candidates be examined and vetted?

Thoroughly. Each candidate will be assessed through his preaching, his doctrine, his references, his ministry history, and extended interviews with our leadership. Alignment with our Statement of Faith, our core values and our biblical beliefs is essential and will be tested carefully. The detailed internal evaluation criteria the team uses are kept confidential, both to protect the integrity of the process and to protect candidates who are currently serving other churches.

How will you balance keeping us informed with keeping the search confidential?

We are committed to telling you the truth about where the process stands. At the same time, we will not share candidates' names or private details until the right time. Many candidates will be serving other churches and protecting them and their families is part of doing this with integrity. You will always know the progress, and the process, even when you cannot yet know the people.

What if the search runs long, or a candidate is not affirmed?

We will not rush this. Finding the right Lead Pastor matters more than meeting a date. Pastor Mark remains our Lead Pastor until his successor is in place, so the church is never left without steady leadership. If the timeline shifts, our leaders will tell you why. The Search Team will be given all the resources needed to fulfill a successful search.

THE NEXT LEAD PASTOR

What kind of person are we looking for?

We are seeking the man God has prepared to shepherd Church at Viera into its next season. In keeping with Scripture, that means a man of proven character whose life is above reproach, as described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. It means a man with a clear and confirmed calling, a faithful track record in ministry, strong gifting to teach and preach the Word, the heart of a shepherd, and a deep commitment to the doctrine and mission that define our church.

Beyond those biblical essentials, the Succession Team is working from a fuller set of qualities and competencies developed with the Administrative Leaders. The specifics of that evaluation framework are kept internal to protect the integrity of the search. What we can tell you plainly is that character, calling, sound doctrine, and a genuine fit with the heart of this church are at the center of everything we are looking for.

Will the next pastor be a man, in keeping with our beliefs?

Yes. In alignment with our Constitution and our Statement of Faith, the Lead Pastor will be a biblically qualified man. This reflects our long-held conviction regarding the office of pastor and elder. We are seeking the leader God has for our next season, a man who honors our DNA while leading with his own gifts. What stays the same is our mission, our doctrine, and our convictions. What may develop over time are methods and style.

Could the next pastor change our theology or direction?

Continuity of doctrine is a non-negotiable in this search. The next Lead Pastor must uphold our conservative, biblically grounded convictions and our long held Core Values. Our theological identity is settled and will be protected through the selection process and the congregational vote.



Will the new pastor come from inside or outside our church?

The Holy Spirit has led our team to assess internal candidates as well as networking for external candidates to evaluate. The single goal is to find God's best leader for CAV, wherever he may presently be.

THE MULTIPLY DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY

Why announce this now during the Multiply Discipleship Journey?

We believe God is able to lead our church through a season of expanded ministry, a season of generosity and a season of leadership transition at the same time. Sharing this with the congregation early is an act of faith and respect. It protects our unity toward our shared vision. Mark has stated all along that God is leading this effort, not him. Let's keep our eyes focused on what God can do more than what we can dream or imagine (Eph. 3:20). Our Multiply initiatives are set to be completed in 2028 and Pastor Mark will still be Lead Pastor then bringing this Vision to fulfillment.

Is Pastor Mark still committed to the new Worship Auditorium in the Multiply vision?

Yes, fully. Pastor Mark is committed to seeing the new Worship Auditorium through to completion and the same for all of our Multiply ministry plans. He continues to lead the work in front of us to ensure the church he has built with God's guidance is positioned to thrive for decades to come.

HOW YOU CAN WALK WITH US

What is the most important thing I can do right now?

Pray. Pray for Pastor Mark and his family, for the Succession Team, for the Administrative Leaders, and for the man God is already preparing to be our next Lead Pastor. This transition will be carried more by prayer than by process.

How can I help our church stay healthy through this season?

▶ **STAY ENGAGED**

Keep serving, giving, and showing up. Your steady involvement is a gift to the whole body.

▶ **ASK DIRECTLY**

If something is unclear or concerning, bring it to one of our Administrative Leaders. Honest questions strengthen us.

▶ **WELCOME THE FUTURE**

Receive the next pastor & family with the same grace and love this church has always shown.

▶ **HONOR PASTOR MARK**

Celebrate his ministry and give him support as he leads us through this season of transition.

Who do I talk to if I have questions or concerns?

Please bring any question to one of our Administrative Leaders or Pastor Mark. There are no questions off limits. Our present Administrative Leaders are Jerry Sheldon (President), David Rye, Derek Sichler, Jeremy Frontz, and Tony Derbyshire.

Lean into your church family, lean into prayer, and remember that the same God who has carried Church at Viera for more than three decades is the One leading us into what is next.



A CLOSING WORD

Every great chapter of Church at Viera has been written by God's faithfulness, not by any one person. This next chapter is no different. We move forward with confidence, not because the path is without questions, but because the One who called us is faithful to lead us. Thank you for walking this road with us in faith, in unity, and in prayer.

*"And I am sure of this,
that he who began a good
work in you will bring it to
completion at the day of
Jesus Christ."*

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

