

## SENIOR PASTOR CANDIDATE

### HOW DID GOD LEAD US TO CHOOSING HANIBAL?

The Elders established a Search Committee last May, supported by a coalition of lay leaders, a national search organization, and interaction with the congregation. In October, the Search Committee recommended proceeding with three finalists, including Hanibal. Feeling led by the Holy Spirit, the Committee recommended we call a Senior Pastor from another church who they felt would beautifully complement the giftedness of Hanibal and our staff. But God closed that door in January. After a season of prayer and careful consideration of God's call on Hanibal's life and where He is leading our church, the Search Committee, and the Elders are of one mind, one heart, and one voice in recommending we call Hanibal Rodriguez as our next Senior Pastor.



*Pastor Hanibal Rodriguez*

### WHY DID WE CHOOSE HANIBAL?

From the very beginning, the Search Committee has fervently prayed for and sought the Holy Spirit's guidance in this journey. Our desire was to remain of "one heart and one mind" and allow God to lead us to our next Senior Pastor. We wholeheartedly believe God answered those prayers with Hanibal Rodriguez.

As part of the thorough Senior Pastor Search process, the Search Committee—as well as the Board of Elder—spent extensive time examining Hanibal's experience and giftedness in the key areas of Preaching/Teaching, Shepherding, and Leadership. First and foremost, Hanibal is a man of God's Word, a doctrinally solid, gifted teacher who believes the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be the foundation of everything we do. He loves God, he loves our church, and he loves our neighbors.

In addition to these gifts, Hanibal is keenly aware of the past and present-day Wheaton Bible Church, both its strengths and weaknesses. We see this as a great asset. He has grown and learned alongside us. He knows us, loves us deeply, and has great vision to help us grow in our walk with Christ and more fully display the glory of God to the world around us.

### HOW DID GOD PREPARE HANIBAL FOR THIS CALLING?

Hanibal and his wife, Heidi, have seen God's blessing in our church, reflecting the work of the Holy Spirit through them.

God's preparation in Hanibal's life include:

- Serving for the past 10 years as the Lead Pastor of Iglesia del Pueblo (IdP).
- Preaching God's word in all of our services.
- Leadership of the preaching team for the campuses of WBC.
- Serving on the Executive Leadership Team.
- Overseeing many of our ministries.
- Supporting our global and local missions  
(commitment to reaching the lost and serving the underserved)
- Active discipleship and shepherding in our church body

## WHAT IS OUR MISSION AS A CHURCH? DOES THIS FIT WITH GOD'S CALL ON HANIBAL'S LIFE?

God has given Hanibal a calling that fully aligns with our Beliefs, our Mission, and our Values. This includes our desire to share the love of Christ with all peoples. We have a strong commitment to being a multi-ethnic, multi-site, and multi-worship style church—unified in our mission to Love God, Grow Together, and Reach the World. Hanibal desires to see each of us more fully live out this mission and to display the glory of God to the world around us.

## HOW WILL THIS IMPACT THE MINISTRY OF IGLESIA DEL PUEBLO?

Hanibal would continue to be the primary preacher for Iglesia. Sergio Villanueva, IDP Campus Pastor, will be the other regular preacher as he has been this past year.

Leadership and the shepherding of Iglesia del Pueblo will be provided by other IdP pastors and leaders in the church.

## WILL HANIBAL BE OUR ONLY TEACHING PASTOR WHEN ROB RETIRES?

It is our hope that following our recovery from the pandemic we will return to the schedule of seven worship services every Sunday. In the future, we hope to add an eighth, with the addition of a third campus. Since some of those services run concurrently, the need for multiple preaching pastors is essential. We will see Hanibal in the pulpit frequently, along with other pastors on our staff.

# THE PROCESS

## WHO INITIATED THE SUCCESSION PROCESS AND WHEN DID IT START?

In 2015, Pastor Rob initiated a succession conversation with the Elders. In 2016, the Elder Board created a three-phase Succession Plan and they have been executing that plan over the last four years.

## WHY HAVEN'T WE HEARD ABOUT THIS EARLIER?

The process of replacing a senior pastor, who has served longer than any other pastor at WBC, is unprecedented in our church's history. When the process began, the Bughs needed time to pray and process and so did WBC leadership. We wanted to move with thoughtfulness and due diligence; neither too fast nor too slow. We decided to wait until we had a timeline from Rob and felt this would be the most effective way to help manage and guide the emotional, spiritual, and structural journey of this succession.

## WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR FINDING OUR NEXT SENIOR PASTOR?

Per the WBC constitution, the Board of Elders appointed a Search Committee a year ago. The Search Committee will make a recommendation to the Elders, who will make a recommendation to the Church. Members of the Church will vote by written ballot on the Senior Pastor Candidate recommended by the Elders. This vote requires a quorum (10% of the membership) and an affirmative vote of 75 percent or more to extend a call to the Senior Pastor Candidate. Absentee ballots will be available but do not count toward the fulfillment of a quorum.

## WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR THE TRANSITION?

We launched the Search Committee and hired Vanderbloemen executive search firm in 2020. Ideally, the Board of Elders would present a Senior Pastor Candidate during Q1 of 2021 that has been selected by the Search Committee. The Church would vote on the Senior Pastor Candidate in Q2 of 2021. We would celebrate Rob and Rhonda's ministry and install the new Senior Pastor in Q3 of 2021. This will allow for a good transition.

## HOW WILL THIS CHANGE AFFECT CURRENT STAFF?

It will affect each staff person differently. A care plan will be developed that will address this significant transition and some Elders and staff will be assigned responsibilities as part of this plan. We also believe members of the church family will care for staff whom they know. It is normal for there to be some possible staff transitions when a senior pastor leaves and a new one comes on board. This is a natural part of a senior pastor transition. Some staff transitions would happen without a change in leadership.

## HOW WILL THE CONGREGATION BE INVOLVED IN THE SEARCH AND SELECTION PROCESS?

The most important and impactful thing you can do is pray, pray, pray. We are asking you to consider fasting and praying alongside the Committee so that we are united in the Lord's leading.

In addition to prayer, our Search Committee and Search Coalition coordinated and facilitated interactive discussions with various groups throughout the Church (Summer 2020). The desire for these gatherings was to engage together in prayer, to provide updates on the progress of our pastoral search, and to seek the leading of the Holy Spirit within our church body.

Finally, only church members will vote on the Senior Pastor Candidate. If you are not a church member and want to have a vote, we strongly encourage you to visit <https://wheatonbible.org/next-steps/wheaton-bible-church/growth-track/> and sign up to go through the membership process.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to us if you would like a personal conversation with either an Elder or a member of the Search Committee. You can contact us by following this link <https://wheatonbible.org/senior-pastor-search/>

## WHAT IS ROB'S ROLE IN THE PROCESS?

As Rob stated, he will not pick his successor. He went on to say, "That is not my role per the constitution of WBC. Rather, it is the responsibility of the leadership and membership of WBC. I will not be involved in the search process. The members of WBC are the ones who have the responsibility to vote on our next Senior Pastor. We must all remember that the most important name in this church is Jesus Christ. He is the head of WBC, not me. He will lead us, He will guide us. He loves this church. But His is the only Name that matters."

## WILL PASTOR ROB OVERLAP WITH THE NEW SENIOR PASTOR?

The plan is to have some overlap of Pastor Rob with the Senior Pastor Elect. The duration of this will be dependent upon several factors, including the hire date of our new Senior Pastor. We believe that, if possible, a two-month overlap would be optimal.

## WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME, AS A MEMBER OR REGULAR ATTENDEE OF WBC, DURING THIS TRANSITION PROCESS?

We trust that you will:

- (a) take personal ownership of maintaining the unity of our body;
- (b) express to the Elder Board your input in a spirit of love;
- (c) commit to pray individually and corporately that we will discover and embrace God's provision for our next Senior Pastor; and
- (d) give generously to enable us to continue to pursue our mission and be in a strong financial position before the arrival of our next Senior Pastor.

## WILL THE CONGREGATION BE ABLE TO INTERACT WITH AND HEAR THE SENIOR PASTOR CANDIDATE PREACH BEFORE THE MEMBERSHIP VOTE?

Yes. We plan to have the Board-approved Candidate speak at Wheaton Bible Church in services on Sunday morning. We desire to hold in-person small group interactions to get to know the candidate as well.

# THE SEARCH COMMITTEE

## HOW WAS THE SEARCH COMMITTEE FORMED?

The Search Committee was formed by the Board of Elders. Congregational nominations were received through March 31, 2020.

## WHO IS ON THE SEARCH COMMITTEE?

The Search Committee is made up of members of the church. The Elders desired to have a good cross-section of the congregation represented. The Elders have elected Elder Jim Goetz to serve as Chairman of the Search Committee. Other members include Gary Dausey, Manny Fa-vela, Anne Garnett, Charity Lane, Ryan Linenger, Lois Linnane, Adam Mitchell, and Kelley Severance. John Walker, Elder Board Chairman, and Scott Landon, Executive Pastor of Administration, will serve as non-voting, ex officio members.

## WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS AND COMMITMENTS OF A MEMBER OF THE SEARCH COMMITTEE?

### **PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS:**

- (a) Holds to the mission, vision, and values of WBC as evidenced in their leadership and actions.
- (b) Gives evidence of holding the best interests of WBC in the future regardless of their personal preferences, gifted in building harmony and unity in the body.
- (c) Is optimistic about what God will do in the future of WBC and those possibilities more than the past of WBC.
- (d) Is seen as a leader in their circle of influence at WBC, reaching the church's rich mix of ministries, backgrounds, age, gender, ethnicities, and giftedness.

### **COMMITTED TO:**

- (a) Praying daily for God's will and wisdom in the process, for themselves, for the committee, for the church, and for the candidates.
- (b) Developing and supporting the search specification.
- (c) Attending biweekly meetings by phone or in person.
- (d) Identifying and interviewing candidates.
- (e) Communicating with and on behalf of their body of believers.
- (f) Selecting and then supporting God's provision for our next Senior Pastor, including ongoing prayer, assistance in transition, and personal support (e.g. Have the pastor to your house for dinner!).

## WHAT IS THE SEARCH COALITION AND HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM THE SEARCH COMMITTEE?

The Search Coalition is a group of lay leaders appointed by the Elders, with nominations from the congregation, staff, and Elders. They are an advisory group, not a voting group. The Search Coalition will regularly meet with the search committee to give feedback and support at various points in the search process. They are tasked with connecting the many ministry groups within our church more closely with the process.

Both the Search Coalition and Search Committee work hand in hand to pray, formulate candidate characteristics, review candidates, and communicate with the church family. Only the Search Committee, by the constitution, will take a vote to give the “final” recommendation to the board

## IS PASTOR HANIBAL APPLYING FOR THE POSITION OF SENIOR PASTOR AT WHEATON BIBLE CHURCH?

After much prayer, Pastor Hanibal chose to apply for the senior pastor position. He asked the Lord for three confirmations in this decision. First, he asked that the elders confirm the Spirit’s leading by reaching out to him to apply. Second, he asked that the Lord confirm the decision by bringing his wife along in agreement. Third, he asked that the church do a nationwide search for the next senior pastor of WBC in which he would be one of the applicants. The Lord confirmed in all three areas.

## WILL WE BE USING A SEARCH FIRM?

Yes, we are using Vanderbloemen executive search firm. They have extensive experience in serving large evangelical churches. It has been over 25 years since we’ve hired a senior pastor. The firm brings its experience and best practices along with an objective set of eyes to the executive search process, finding candidates that we wouldn’t find on our own. We believe this will be the best process to cast the net wide in considering who God would have serve as our next Senior Pastor. Retaining a search firm means that firm would work exclusively for us to assess both internal and external candidates. The search firm will develop a keen understanding of our search criteria through discussions with the Search Committee and Elders. The firm will identify potential candidates from their extensive database and networks as well as names submitted by the Search Committee.

They will work side by side with the Search Committee and Search Coalition to evaluate candidates for their strengths and weaknesses as well as overall fit. They will be involved by listening to sermons, performing social media checks, reviewing websites, and interviewing the candidates (and, if married, their wives). If you know of a potential candidate for Senior Pastor, you are encouraged to submit that name directly to the Search Committee by emailing [dstone@wheatonbible.org](mailto:dstone@wheatonbible.org), but most importantly have the candidate apply on the Vanderbloemen website ([vanderbloemen.com](http://vanderbloemen.com)).

## WHO DECIDES ON THE CRITERIA FOR THE SEARCH?

The Board of Elders and Senior Leadership Team went through a process of identifying some of the search criteria. The Search Committee and Search Coalition did the same and have prayed and met together to create a comprehensive profile for our pastoral search. This comprehensive profile is currently on the Vanderbloemen website ([vanderbloemen.com](http://vanderbloemen.com))

## WHEN AND HOW DO I GET TO VOTE ON THE NEXT SENIOR PASTOR?

Only church members will have a vote on the next Senior Pastor. If you are not a member and want to have a vote, we strongly encourage you to visit <https://wheatonbible.org/next-steps/wheaton-bible-church/growth-track/> and sign up to go through the membership process. The vote will happen after the Board of Elders has a Senior Pastor Candidate to recommend to the church.

## HOW CAN I/WE PRAY FOR THIS PROCESS?

Succession planning is spiritual work. Prayer is central as is staying in God’s Word. In the words of Pastor Rob, “The most important thing you can do is pray, pray that God by His Spirit will do incredible things here at WBC, that this will be a unifying process and that God will make his will clear about who he has chosen to be the next Senior Pastor.” Prayer times are being planned and

will be communicated. You are also encouraged to pray in your Life Group, Adult Community, with others, as well as individually for this significant matter. A prayer guide has been provided for you on the church website. You can find the prayer guide by following this link <https://wheatonbible.org/senior-pastor-search/> and clicking on the pray tab.

## HOW OFTEN WILL COMMUNICATION UPDATES BE PROVIDED AND WHERE CAN I GO FOR THEM?

We plan to communicate monthly through videos to the congregation or during the service on Sunday mornings. If you miss any of the communications on Sunday morning, you can access them on the church website under the Senior Pastor Search tab.

We realize in a church family our size that we face a difficult task in communicating perfectly to every person. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us if you have questions and would like a personal conversation with either an Elder or a Search Committee member. You can contact us by following this link <https://wheatonbible.org/senior-pastor-search/>

## HOW CAN I ADDRESS QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS I HAVE DURING THE PROCESS?

You can submit your questions or concerns to one of our Elders or members of the Search Committee by emailing [dstone@wheatonbible.org](mailto:dstone@wheatonbible.org) and it will be given to the Search Committee Member or Elder.

# PASTOR ROB

## HOW LONG HAS ROB BEEN THE SENIOR PASTOR AT WHEATON BIBLE CHURCH?

Rob started serving as Senior Pastor in September 1994. In September 2019, we celebrated his 25th anniversary at WBC.

## WHY IS ROB RETIRING AS SENIOR PASTOR OF WBC?

God began stirring in Rob's heart in 2015. After extensive time in prayer over several years, God repeatedly confirmed to Rob that it was time to retire from being the Senior Pastor of WBC. This is his decision based on his initiative and the leading of the Holy Spirit. It is what led to the succession planning that Rob and the Elders have been working on for the past four years.

## WILL ROB AND RHONDA CONTINUE ATTENDING WBC AFTER RETIREMENT?

No. While they love this church (Rob has been here 25 years and Rhonda has been here 32 years), have spent the bulk of their adult lives here, have raised their children here, and have grieved the loss of their first spouses here, they will be worshipping somewhere else in the area to graciously create space for the new senior pastor to launch.

## WHAT DO ROB AND RHONDA PLAN TO DO AFTER ROB RETIRES FROM WBC?

While Rob is retiring from WBC, he will not be retiring from ministry. He will transition to a part-time, global missions role with Greater Europe Mission, where he has been chairman of the board for the last 12 years. Rhonda plans to continue to work as a part-time pediatrician.

## WHAT WILL ROB DO IN HIS REMAINING TIME AT WBC?

Rob will continue in his ministry of the Word by preaching. He will continue providing strategic leadership of the church, providing theological depth, and helping develop the next generation of leaders. He will continue to be accountable to the Board of Elders.

## WHY DID ROB SAY A DATE RANGE OF 12–15 MONTHS AS TO WHEN WILL HE RETIRE FROM WBC?

Succession is the intentional transfer of leadership from one primary leader to another. Rob has been the longest-serving Senior Pastor in the history of Wheaton Bible Church. This succession is an intentional plan and one that we are undertaking together.

Succession is an emotional journey for all involved, especially with a 25-year pastorate. The myth is that it is a structural decision mostly replacing one leader with another. This is rarely the case. Instead, it is a matter of helping the current pastor, his spouse, the key staff, the Elder Board, the bulk of lay leaders in other roles, and the congregation towards an encouraging future. This 12-15 month period allows for a good process that acknowledges the spiritual, emotional, procedural, and structural sides of the process.

