

## Getting Ready to Pass the Baton

September 17, 2017

2016 was a significant year for Midge and I as it marked our fortieth year of pastoring the Vineyard Christian Fellowship here in Grants Pass. When I pondered that 40 year mark I sensed a very quiet voice in my Spirit whisper to me that my time as Senior Pastor here was going to be winding down. In March of 2016 the leadership was also going through a season of change and we all felt the Lord was stirring something up in the Spirit, and after much time spent in prayer and discussion, we announced to the fellowship that Doug Thomas would become Co-Senior Pastor with me. Though most people were already seeing this decision as a natural flow of events because of the giftings, anointings and vision Doug carries, many people were questioning if Midge and I were leaving the church then. Though I knew we would be leaving someday, I assured them that this was not that day. In August of 2017 we had Harold and Linda Eberle with us who were aware of the above story, and they spoke to the elders that it was time for Midge and I to set a date and begin the process of passing the baton to Doug and Sandy. That evening as Midge and I sat before the Lord to process all this through and hear what He had to say we heard His gentle voice whisper, "it's time". So we cried, and grieved, and finally whispered back to our King, "yes, it's time". Immediately the strangest peace and unspeakable joy came over both of us. It was time to set a date and prepare for a transition that would be healthy and beneficial for this amazing fellowship we've given our lives to.

That being said, we want to announce to this amazing family that Midge and I will be passing the baton to Doug and Sandy in September of 2018; believing with all our hearts that they are the ones the Lord has been preparing for many years to take over the office of Senior Pastor at VCF. They have been called, and now they are being chosen; they have been tested and tried, and now they can be trusted; they have been humbled, and now they can be lifted up; they have been faithful in little, and now they can be faithful in much; and just as they have faithfully served, they will now faithfully lead.

The plan is to take this year to release more and more to Doug and Sandy, and then stay another year to tie up loose ends and support him as the Senior Pastor of VCF.

I believe the Lord has been working in Doug and impregnating him with the blueprints to lead the fellowship here to the next place He's calling us to. Doug has clearly appreciated the foundations laid down by Midge and I of the Presence of the Lord, Worship, Word, Spirit, and the Message of the Kingdom, and sees the next obvious steps to build on that foundation greater levels of fellowship, discipleship, and equipping the saints to build a house for a greater glory than we've seen.

The Vineyard Christian Fellowship is more than a church to Midge and me. It's been the place where we have laid down our lives for over 40 years to all that the Lord has gathered. Though we birthed it and built it, we knew it was never ours to claim; it has always been His Church that He has been building through us. It's been an honor serving this amazing fellowship and hopefully it will be a fruitful and joyful journey in the coming two years as we move together toward God's next great adventure for VCF.

Steve & Midge