

Associate Pastor Introduction

As most of you already know, we began our search for the Associate Pastor position in earnest in early February and received 32 applications. The elders prayed earnestly and believed God would send the specific person he wanted for FCC and would open our eyes to this man. Our Search Team carefully reviewed all of the applications, and 5 candidates rose to the top. The Team had detailed telephone interviews with these 5 candidates. After prayer and discussion, the team chose 1 candidate as their clear top choice and presented him to the elders. Upon reviewing the candidate's resume' and qualifications and meeting them in person, we realized our prayers had truly been answered. **I am pleased to introduce you to Eric and Melissa Lang, daughter Kylee (8), and son Tucker (5).** Incidentally, Sunday, March 29, was Kylee's 8th birthday.



Let's continue the "story" of how we came to know for certain Eric was the man God chose for us. We contacted Eric and learned his family had a previously planned trip to Springfield (yes, Missouri) over their spring break to visit Melissa's mother. Eric and Melissa anonymously visited our church, attending second service on March 15. That afternoon, all the elders and wives had dinner with them and had a chance to get to know them, and they had a chance to get to know some of us. Eric later told us this meeting had a HUGE impact on their final decision to accept the position as they appreciated how the elders and wives interacted with them and each other. A few of us had another meeting with Eric a couple days later. After much prayer, we offered Eric the position; and a few days ago, after much prayer, Eric and Melissa accepted. Eric mentioned that he and Melissa spent extensive time on Thursday discussing the offer but then agreed they would not talk with each other anymore until Sunday, simply pray independently. Their tentative start date is July 1; however, this is not set in concrete yet. We are also working on setting a time in April or May when they can come here and meet our youth, meet you, and meet Jeff in person in order to provide a smooth transition that is beneficial to our youth. Jeff and Eric had a lengthy phone conversation during the search process, but due to the funeral of Heather's granddad, Jeff and Heather were out of town when Eric and Melissa visited.

Eric grew up around Andover and Wichita, KS, the son of a pastor. Melissa grew up around Joplin. Eric and Melissa met while attending Ozark Christian College and were married in 1997. Eric graduated in 1998. Their first ministry was in Weeki Wachee, Florida at the Christian Church in the Wildwood. Eric served there for over 4 years as Student Minister developing discipleship programs for teens, teaching and mentoring them, and training volunteer teachers. In 2003, they were called to Des Moines, Iowa to the Rising Sun Church of Christ where Eric is presently the minister of small groups, young adults, and administration. Eric and Melissa are very much at home at Rising Sun, are loved and love the people. It was a difficult decision to consider another ministry. After visiting here, meeting a few of you (again, anonymously) and meeting the leadership and wives, they were "drawn away" from their current ministry.

Let us share with you a few paragraphs that Eric included with his application letter.

- From Eric's statement of faith.
"I cannot remember a day in my life where the teaching of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ have not been a part of my life. As a preacher's kid, with two devoted and very good parents I have always been taught the truth of God. Praise the Lord for that. While my parents were godly people, I also was showered with the love of Christ by many Christ-following people within the 3 churches in my upbringing. At the age of 9, I became aware that I was a sinner. While I already loved Jesus, I had not realized my need for Jesus. So one Sunday morning while my dad was getting ready for church in the back room, I asked him if I could be baptized. After talking with me he came to know that I knew of my need for Jesus, and I was baptized in Christ the next Sunday. I still remember the tears and my dad battling to get the words out of his mouth as he took my confession of faith at Union Avenue Christian Church in Moberly, MO."
- Eric's description of marriage.
Melissa and I have been married for 11 years, and she is my best friend (yet I still need male friendship). Melissa is a wonderful wife who makes going home a joy. Home is a refuge, and family is a blessing. God has used both Melissa and my children to mold me into a better man. They all help me to live in my heart.
- Melissa's support of Eric's ministry.
Melissa will continue to provide a home that is a joy to come home to. Home being a retreat is a huge support. Melissa will also engage in volunteer ministry where she sees need meshed with her gifts. She loves teens, deep study with women, singing, accountability, fellowship, neighborhood outreach and more. Ever since I have known Melissa she has always been engaged in ministry, regardless of my vocation.
- About our children Kylee and Tucker.
Kylee Earhart (Melissa's maiden name) is our beautiful 1st born girl. Kylee is in 2nd grade. There is something special about a father and daughter's relationship, and I love that little girl. She loves to cuddle, be tickled, punch me in the shoulder and play games. I hope she always loves her dad the way she does as an 8 year old. I call her Flicka (which means pretty girl). Tucker James (5th generation 1st born son with a James name) is our 5-year-old son. He is all boy and all energy. He is currently in kindergarten and loves P.E. and recess. Tucker likes quality and quantity time with his mom and dad. He is my buddy, and he likes to wrestle, play cars, nerf-gun wars and games.

There is much more we could tell you, and we will in the weeks to come; but for now let's continue to pray for a smooth transition.

The FCC Leadership