

Paul Lessard Nominated as ECC's Executive Minister of Start and Strengthen Churches

CHICAGO (March 22, 2019)—Paul Lessard has taught church history to college students, helped plant six churches across two countries and served as senior pastor at a Covenant church in Colorado. He now brings his love and passion for local churches to the entire Evangelical Covenant church denomination as its nominee for executive minister of Start and Strengthen Churches.

"I am passionate about the church and her health and well-being," says Lessard, who will sit for election June 27-29 at Gather 2019, the Covenant's Annual Meeting. "The work of Start and Strengthen Churches (SSC) is vital to enabling fresh and innovative expressions of faith through our churches, both plants and established, as well as tending to the maturation and graceful aging of our fellowships."

The church in North America, Lessard says, is undergoing significant change, "and the effectiveness and Christlikeness of the local faith community is critical if we are to continue to make a difference in Jesus' name. It is the heart and soul of SSC to serve our more than 875 congregations, and what that looks like changes as the needs of our churches change and our culture continues to move away from organized expressions of spirituality."

An executive coach to several mission-oriented and nonprofit organizations and the founder of his own consulting group, Lessard is familiar with transitions of all kinds and has a heart for discerning where and with whom Jesus is calling to plant healthy, missional churches.

"My hope as the Executive Minister of Start and Strengthen," he says, "is to further encourage and equip our conference directors of church planting and church vitality, and under the strong and godly leadership of Alex Rahill, director of church planting and interim executive minister of SSC, and Shaun Marshall, director of congregational vitality, to even greater effectiveness."

ECC President John Wenrich calls Lessard "a wise and caring leader who wants to see people, churches and teams flourish." Angela Yee, the Covenant's executive director of ministry development, says Start and



Strengthen Churches is at the leading edge of growing ECC churches in planting and vitality.

"I am so thrilled God has brought Paul Lessard into this role to lead this effort," she says. "He brings gifts of strategic leadership, team leadership, communication and systems. He has experience in church planting and vitality, as well as involvement in the denomination at every level."

In addition to 17 years of experience working in Christian higher education at Covenant Bible College in Canada and Colorado Christian University, Lessard also served as senior pastor at Castle Oaks Covenant Church in Castle Rock, Colo. Lessard, a resident of Castle Rock, has a bachelor's degree in liberal arts and a master's degree in executive leadership.

He's been married to his wife, Rebecca, for 37 years, and they have a son, daughter and four-week-old granddaughter. An avid hiker, Lessard and his son trekked for two weeks and made it to the base camp of Mount Everest two years ago, when "getting up day after day to just walk in the mountains was a dream come true."

Henry Greenridge, with whom Lessard has partnered in creating and leading multiethnic worship at Covenant events like Midwinter and Gather, calls his friend "a pastor's pastor."

"He brings a degree of creative energy and perspective that is sorely needed as the church faces the challenges of this tumultuous age," says Greenridge, executive pastor at Trinity World Christian Center in Douglasville, Ga. "Paul is a true gift to the Covenant church."

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