

February 3, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

Pastor Dave came to our church in Portland, Oregon when we needed help. Through his work with VCM, we hired him as our intentional interim pastor. Our lead pastor of 17 years was leaving, and the church had been experiencing loss and decline in the last 5 years. Dave arrived and humbly began to get to know our church members, meeting with them and assessing the health of our congregation. Once the lead pastor had left, Dave got to work eagerly, filling the normal duties of the lead pastor (teaching, staff care, administrative, etc.) as well as some additional identified needs, such as a teaching team and elder cohort.

Some of Dave's most significant work was within our Ministry Board. He has experience with and knowledge of church polity and as chair of the board, began to ground us in the work set before us. As a board, we were exhausted, hurt and a bit skeptical. Dave was kind and clear. He had specific tasks and actions planned, but remained patient with us as we probably took longer than necessary to wrap our heads around some of the work ahead.

Another team, led by Dave, that I took part in was the Focusing Team. This group of church members were tasked with planning for, preparing and facilitating multiple Summits for the church body. The Summits were designed to help lead the church through a 'refocusing' process. This team, led by Dave, helped our worn and tattered community start the healing by recalling our history (both blessings and wounds) and look with truth and grace at our current reality and dreams for the future. Our 'scrappy' team was not always the easiest to lead, but once again, Dave was patient and walked through the process with us.

Within both teams, I appreciated that while Dave is well prepared and has a plan for how something should go, he is quick to pivot and adjust those plans when challenges arise or when there is a sense that a shift is needed for the health of the church body. This unique gifting, I believe, is matured through an individual's personal prayer life with Jesus. The more time we spend in the Father's presence, the more we recognize His voice and movement in our lives. It is apparent that Dave prioritizes time with His heavenly Father and leads with a discerning spirit. In my opinion, there is no better shepherd than that.

I am grateful for the time that Dave spent with our church body and his care for our flock. None of us could have written the story that unfolded, and I count it a privilege to get to witness and testify to the work that God has done here, including sending Pastor Dave to us for this season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katie Thom". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and email address.

Katie Thom

katiegaylethom@hotmail.com