

"Deep Roots, New Branches"

Pastor Dan Erickson

September 13, 2026

The only person who likes changes is the baby with a wet diaper. Folks, that reality doesn't seem to be good news for Chisholm Baptist Church. On the surface one of the biggest changes in this church's history is about to occur. For the past 33 years I have served as the senior pastor of this congregation. Most of you were not here when I became the pastor of Chisholm Baptist. And others were a bit younger than they are now. This is what Pastor Bryan looked like when I first came to Chisholm Baptist Church and this was our secretary, Erin McNeal. But the plan is, if the Lord wills, starting in January of 2027, less than four months from now, I will no longer be the senior pastor. Oh, I am not planning to go anywhere. I will still be part of the pastoral staff. My title will likely be "Connections Pastor." But the new Lead Pastor, which is the Title we will use, if the congregation approves, will be Matt Hagsten. Over the past couple of years Matt has served as our discipleship pastor and has worked with our youth ministry, as well as being Chisholm Baptist's number one drummer.

So, it is a time of change here at Chisholm Baptist Church and some of you may be feeling a bit anxious. That is normal. You are not a baby with a wet diaper, so change is not something that you naturally embrace. But if you are worried about change at Chisholm Baptist, don't be. Jesus says in **Matthew 6:34 Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.** Or as the Apostle Paul reminds us in **Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.** So, don't worry, trust the Lord and be happy.

The second reason to not be anxious, and actually should be excited is because I believe, by the grace of God, the future is very bright for Chisholm Baptist Church. Yes, there will be changes, but I think they will be good changes, and they will not alter what and who we essentially are as a church. I like to explain it this way. Chisholm Baptist Church is a church that has both deep roots and new branches. Some of you recognize that as the theme of our 100th Anniversary back in 2006, 20 years ago. I think it is still an apt description of

this church. It points to how we are shaped by and celebrate the values, beliefs and practices which have made and make Chisholm Baptist what it is. The deep roots mean we are like that **Psalm 1:3 tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.** The deep roots mean when storm comes and the wind blows that tree will not go down even when others around are doing just that.

Now, I want to pause a moment and note that today's sermon is a little unusual. Our normal sermon at Chisholm Baptist Church is expository preaching, going through a book of the Bible, if not verse by verse, at least paragraph by paragraph. But today we won't really focus on what the Bible teaches about God or the gospel and how we are called to respond. Instead, our focus will be on how the Lord is at work here at Chisholm Baptist Church. If you are a guest this morning and here for maybe the first time, the topic may seem a little strange, but I think you will learn important things about how God is at work at Chisholm Baptist Church. And if you are wondering if this is a church you want to be part of, this sermon should help you answer that question. I also want to note, that as I mentioned, the official decision to call Matt as our lead pastor will not be made until there is a congregational vote in November. In this sermon I am assuming it will be an affirmative vote, and Matt will indeed be the lead pastor starting in January. I believe that will happen. But, as in anything else in life, including the outcome of a particular football game this afternoon, it will happen only if the Lord wills.

Okay, "Deep Roots, New Branches." What are the deep roots? Well, these are things that were true before I became the pastor of this church. And those roots have grown deeper over the past 33 years. Our roots include our values. We highly value the Bible, God's Word, and it plays an important role in almost every aspect of our life as a church. We are also a church that strives to be a loving fellowship. At Chisholm Baptist Church people care about and for each other, in very real and practical ways. There is plenty of room for improvement, but the people who make up Chisholm Baptist really do love one another, and

we think that is very important. We are also a church that values unity. That involves focusing on the essential truths on which we agree and dealing with any disagreements in a gentle and gracious manner. In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity, is a creed that describes how we function as a congregation and it is part of our roots.

Our deep roots also include an understanding of what this church is called to be and be doing. A few years ago, we adopted a formal mission or purpose statement for Chisholm Baptist Church. "We are here to love God, love others, and make disciples." Even though it became an official statement just a few years ago, it describes what Chisholm Baptist Church has been about for a long time. Chisholm Baptist Church exists by God's grace and for His glory. Our primary responsibilities as a church are summed in the Great Commandments to love God and other (Matthew 22:37-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19, 29) to make disciple here on the Iron Range and throughout the world.

These are the deep roots which are a big part of what makes Chisholm Baptist what it is. And they will continue to shape this church in the future. Why am I confident of that? Two reasons... #1 Because of Pastor Matt. During the past few years as I have talked with Matt and observed him doing ministry it is pretty obvious that he embraces the deep roots of Chisholm Baptist Church. Matt and I have very similar theological perspectives. I one of the first conversation I had with Matt, he told me that the three individuals that have shaped his thinking the most are John Piper, Tim Keller and C.S. Lewis. I said, "What about Francis Schaeffer?" I asked because the four individuals who have shaped my thinking the most are John Piper, Tim Keller, C.S. Lewis, and Francis Schaeffer. Matt said, "Francis who?" That isn't too much of a surprise since he was born three months after Schaeffer died, in May of 1984. But it was clear that Matt and I are very much on the same page, Thus, I have not been surprised to see Matt enthusiastically embrace Chisholm Baptist's deep roots.

It is also not surprising that Bryan Fagerstrom does as well. Bryan has been our Administrative Pastor for the past couple of years, and the plan is for him to continue to serve in this very important

role, where he will be a huge asset to Matt and the entire Chisholm Baptist ministry. Bryan has been part of the church longer than I have, so these deep roots have helped shape his Christian life. Bryan and I are also very much on the same page theologically. That may be partly because he has listened to probably close to 1500 of my sermons over the past 33 years.

Here at Chisholm Baptist Church, we have made an unusual, not weird, unusual, but very purposeful decision to choose new leadership, both Lead Pastor and Administrative Pastor, internally. This means we wanted new leaders who were already part of this church, individuals who understand Chisholm Baptist Church's culture and ministry. We want them to appreciate and embrace those deep roots we have been talking about. We also wanted leaders who already loved the people who make up this congregation and love the people of the Iron Range communities we are committed to serving. We have made this decision, not because we think Chisholm Baptist Church is perfect and cannot benefit from outside perspectives, but because we recognize that the Lord has done a very special work in our midst. The Lord has graciously blessed this church in so many ways, and we don't want to squander these gifts.

The second reason I am confident the deep roots will continue to shape our church is because of the Elders leading this congregation. This is one of the new branches here at Chisholm Baptist Church. Up until maybe 5-10 years ago the Senior Pastor was the leader of the congregation, and he was assisted by the Board of Deacons and maybe Associate Pastors. Yes, a vote by members of the congregation could overrule any decision the pastor made, but that rarely happened. In recent years, we have moved to a plurality of Elders as the basic governing structure with the members of the congregation still having the ability to overrule decisions. This was formalized a year ago and now we have four pastors, a Church Chairman, and nine elected Elders who make up our Elder Board. Now even as the Senior Pastor I am the first among equals, but I am only one of 14 votes on that board. And that will be the case when Matt is the Lead Pastor as well. He will be one of 14 votes. Oh, I think the other Elders will be inclined to follow his leadership, but they will not provide a blank check. For any of the deep roots to be pulled

out, or radical changes to be made, it will require eight votes on the elder board. If either I or Pastor Matt proposed that we meet on Saturday morning instead of Sundays for corporate worship, or that we start performing same-sex weddings at Chisholm Baptist Church, we would need to convince at least seven other members of the board that this was a good idea. The chances of that happening are about, well, zero. The Elders who provide leadership for this Church will ensure that our deep roots remain vital and guide our ministry.

Folks, the deep roots of Chisholm Baptist Church are so important, but so are the new branches. As I have explained, I am confident, and I think you can be too, that there are not going to be any huge, radical destructive changes at Chisholm Baptist Church, at least anytime soon. But there will be changes. Now, there would be changes if I were still in the Senior Pastor role, but there maybe will be a few ore with Matt as the Lead Pastor. But I think most, if not all of these changes will be good things. They will be new branches that the Lord wants to grow in our midst. And I suspect they will be new branches growing from some of the new branches we have seen at Chisholm Baptist Church in recent years. Here are some examples.

One of our new branches is a greater emphasis on making disciples of Jesus Christ. Now Chisholm Baptist Church has always been making disciples. That is one of our deep roots. Love God, love others and make disciples. But, led by Pastor Mark and also by Pastor Matt, we have focused being more intentional about making disciples. We have evaluated different aspects of our ministry by asking, "How is this helping us make disciples?" We have talked about what an ideal disciple looks like. You remember this fellow or gal. (Stick Figure) What are the characteristics we should be trying to encourage in a disciple of Jesus? What are good next steps for someone who is trusting and following Jesus? And we want to help those who are disciples, become disciple makers. We want to make disciples, who make disciples.

Off of that new branch, another branch has grown: Life Groups. Many of you are part of a Life Group, but if you are not familiar with what it is, I will put it this way. It is a small group Bible study on steroids. You get together with others to study

the Bible, but it doesn't stop there. It also involves serving each other and the people around us. Life Groups provide encouragement and accountability in making disciples. Incidentally, if you are not part of a Life Group but would like to be or would maybe like to learn what they are about, you will be able to get information at the ministry fair today.

Another new branch from our deep roots of making disciples is a vision statement that we adopted as a church a couple of years ago. It says, "We want to see more and more lives transformed by the gospel across the Iron Range." We have seen a bit of this vision fulfilled this summer when 30 people were baptized, 26 on July 19th and four more on August 23rd. This is also about being more intentional in encouraging friends, family members, and others who are not trusting in the Lord Jesus to do so. It means inviting these folks to maybe join us here at church some Sunday morning or to come to the Iron Range Renewal event that will be held in Mt. Iron this Thursday evening. Again, this will be a great opportunity for us as believers to grow in our ability to answer questions others have, and a great opportunity for seekers and skeptics to ask those questions themselves. That is Thursday, 7:00 pm at the Mt. Iron Community Center.

Another new branch growing from this desire to make more disciples is what will be happening on Wednesday evening here at Chisholm Baptist Church. Everyone is invited to join us for a meal, a worship time, and then family night program for children, youth and adults. I think this will be a great time for people to start coming to church, and thus something to which you should consider inviting friends, family members and others.

Okay, these are some of the new branches of Chisholm Baptist Church ministry that have been growing the past couple of years, I suspect with a new lead Pastor, Matt there will probably be even more new branches. And I believe these will be things the Lord uses to help us better love God, love others and make disciples, more and more of them, across the Iron Range, and also in other parts of the world. I believe, by the grace of God, that a few years from now, Chisholm Baptist Church will be a better church, a more God honoring church, a church with a bigger impact for the gospel. I cannot say I am certain of that,

but I believe it, and am praying this will be true. And so, the primary reason for me stepping aside as the Senior Pastor is to help Chisholm Baptist Church be more that type of church.

I realize I probably have not made this very clear, so let me try. I have no desire to retire. No one asked me to retire. I love what I do as the pastor of this church. I think I am still effective in what I do. Lord willing, I am going to continue to do many of those things. But it is time for a change. I believe the Lord has helped me realize it is time for me to step to the side. As much as I love this church, Chisholm Baptist Church is not about me, it is about the Lord Jesus. I believe it is time for younger leaders like Matt and Bryan. It is time you have a pastor, who when he makes a reference to a pop song, it will not always be something from before 1980. It may even be time for you to not have weekly reminders of what is greatest franchise in the NFL, by Pastor Dan, G' man, the Packer Fan. I hope you still remember that, but maybe you don't need those reminders. Yet, I am convinced it is time for a new leader at Chisholm Baptist Church. And I am convinced that Pastor Matt, assisted by Pastor Bryan, with Pastor Mark and I still around, is that new leader.

Folks, I am excited to see what the Lord has in store for Chisholm Baptist Church. If He wills, I hope to be around for some time. Pastor Ron just retired at age 85, and I have 16 more years to go until I reach that age. But I am excited to see our deep roots getting even stronger, and new branches continuing to grow, by God's grace and for His glory.

Okay, now let me tell about what will happen over the next two months. This has been the kickoff of a sermon series that will be different than anything I have ever done before and actually different from anything I have ever heard of. We will continue to think about deep roots and new branches with our theme verse being **Colossians 2:6,7 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.** We are going to have six sermons that will explore in more depth what it means for us to love God, love others and make disciples. There will be two sermons on each of those three parts of the mission statement... Next week, for example, the

topic is, "Because we love God, we are committed to corporate worship." The next Sunday, it will be "Because we love God, we are committed to personal worship."

But these sermons will be different. Next Sunday I will give a brief message on being committed to corporate worship and then Matt will give a brief message on the same topic. We won't know what the other will be saying ahead of time. You maybe see why I am a little anxious. But I think this will be a great way to illustrate our deep roots and new branches. You will see how Matt and I share the same basic beliefs and convictions, but also how we each have unique perspectives, and how he will bring fresh perspective that God can use to help us grow to honor Him better. Now, it is kind of an experiment. And if it doesn't quite work next Sunday, we will certainly recalibrate. But I believe it will be a wonderful opportunity to see and celebrate how God is at work here at Chisholm Baptist Church and I don't think you want to miss it.