

The Network and its Leadership

Who are they?



STEVE MORGAN / LEAD PASTOR

Steve started Blue Sky Church in Bellevue, WA with a team of people during the summer of 2004. He was previously the lead pastor of Vine Church in Carbondale, Illinois (a university student based church planted in 1995). Steve is now the planting pastor of Joshua Church. His main responsibilities at Joshua Church include teaching, leader development, and overseeing other pastors and staff. Steve also oversees our network of churches. You might call him a busy guy. Steve and his wife, Shu-hui, have four great kids.

Steve is identified as the president of the Network, and in his bio on Joshua Church's website as of Nov. 17, 2022 the bio includes that he "oversees our network of churches."

For those not familiar with the Network, the use of the term "oversee" and "overseer" is more loaded than it is in plain English. It refers to the office of overseer or elder addressed in the New Testament in the Bible – the individuals tasked with the leadership of the churches.

The Network exists in a hierarchy that starts with Steve at the top.

Below him is the "Network Leadership Team" composed of James Chidester, Luke Williams, Sándor Paull, and Tony Ranvestel. With the exception of James, these are all lead pastors at other Network churches.



Sándor Paull

LEAD PASTOR

Sándor Paull (pronounced Shawn-door) is the lead pastor and responsible for teaching, long-term vision and planning for Christland and future church plants. He also oversees the other pastors on staff and is responsible for leadership development. He has two bachelor degrees from Southern Illinois University, one in Ceramic Art and another in Industrial Design. He and his wife Amanda have two children, Faith and Jonathan.

If you'd like to contact Sándor, you can email him at info@christland.org



Luke Williams

Lead Pastor

lukewilliams@vistachurchlo.com

Luke started Vista Church in San Luis Obispo, CA with a team of people during the summer of 2016. He was previously a staff pastor at Blue Sky Church in Seattle, WA for seven years. He is responsible for preaching, teaching and vision and oversees all church operations. In his free time, you'll find Luke enjoying the outdoors with his family.



Tony Ranvestel

Lead Pastor



Tony is the Lead Pastor of Vida Springs Church and is responsible for preaching, vision, staff development, and overall care for the people of Vida Springs. He was previously the Lead Pastor of [Clear River Church](#) in Lafayette, IN, which he helped plant in 2006. Before he was a pastor, Tony was studying to be a Tropical Biologist and did research on stream ecosystems in Central America. He loves college football, fishing from his kayak, hiking trails and exploring local Gainesville cuisine with his wife, Sarah. They have been married since 2002 and have five kids.

[James' info is not published on his local church's website, presumably because he's not a staff pastor]

I don't have personal relationships with any of these folks except for Tony, who I consider a friend (if only casually, since we haven't spent that much time together). I consider all of them to be brothers in Christ and I expect to be with all of them some day at the marriage supper of the Lamb. I *like* Tony (he's the only one I've spent *any* time with personally). I expect if I spent time with them, I'd probably like the others too.

Below that in the hierarchy are the lead pastors of other Network churches. All those churches are identifiable at <https://www.vidaspringschurch.org/network>. I've been to several of them. My experiences have generally been good attending on Sunday mornings.

... a problem...

There is a problem in that the Network can't decide what it is. It sometimes presents itself as a single organization that has a president, a board of overseers, and then member churches. Other times it presents itself as a loose affiliation of churches that are connected to one another because the pastors have relationships with each other.

This is a problem for several reasons:

- It is not completely honest to espouse both of these conflicting narratives about what the Network is;
- 5% of every member church's total giving is passed up to the Network, and that money is not accounted for to the member churches nor do member churches have any voice in what is done with it;
- When it is convenient for the Network to assert authority over a local church it can (and does) do so, but when it is convenient for each church to seem completely autonomous, it can (and does) adopt that messaging. This is inconsistent, dishonest, and leads to a great deal of harmful confusion;
- There is no clarity about the role of the Network and the Network Leadership team. Are these men leaders to the pastors of local churches, or are they merely "coaches" making suggestions?
- What authority do they wield with respect to local churches other than their own?

Without clear answers to these questions, local church governance is difficult. Moreover, if these men occupy positions of authority in the Network and thus over Network member churches, are they to be held accountable to the qualifications for overseers / elders that are published in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1?

If the Network is a loose confederation of member churches, then the answer is that these men wield no authority over local churches other than their own. Local churches other than their own need not address whether they are qualified under the Biblical standards for overseers / elders.

If the Network is a single organization with a hierarchy composed of a president, a board of overseers, and member churches, the story is quite different.

Which is it? A later post will evaluate this.

November 17, 2022 jason  [Uncategorized](#)