

4/26/09

Remarks to the Congregation

by the Chairman of the Deacons, Woody Tucker

I want to take a few minutes this morning to explain the process First Baptist will follow in our search for a new pastor. Article 7, Section 2, Part A of our Constitution governs the election of a Pastor Search Committee. The seven member Search Committee will be composed of a minimum of three men and three women.

The Committee of Deacons has 60 days after the church has notice a vacancy will occur to assess the needs of the church and the timing of electing a Pastor Search Committee. At a church conference prior to June 18, Deacons will make a recommendation to elect a Pastor Search Committee or to undertake a time of study and evaluation prior to electing a Pastor Search Committee. It is likely that our church will go

through a time of reflection and visioning to help us all understand what God is calling His church to be and do.

Article 8, Section 1, Part B, Section 3 of our Constitution governs Pulpit Supply and Interim Pastor when the office of pastor becomes vacant.

The Chairman of the Committee of Deacons shall appoint a special committee responsible for pulpit supply during the vacancy as well as determining if and when an interim pastor is necessary. The

Constitution does not give this committee a name so in all future correspondence from the Deacons this committee will be called the Pulpit Supply Committee. No time frame for the appointment of the Pulpit Supply Committee is noted in the Constitution but I assure you this committee will be appointed in a timely manner.

While the news of Dr. Leathers' retirement is new to you, Dr. Leathers shared his decision to retire some time ago with me and with Van Pernell, Chair of Personnel and Marvin Smith, Chair-elect of the Committee of Deacons. The three of us have met together a number of

times and exchanged numerous emails in preparation for the upcoming Deacon meeting on Monday night.

One question most of you probably have is how long will the selection of a new pastor take. At this point, there are probably as many opinions as we have church members.

Dr. Leathers served our church for fourteen years. We have been told that for a church family, the retirement of a pastor is much like a death in a family. There has to be time to say goodbye and a time to grieve.

Earlier this week, one of our deacons told me the decision a couple makes before getting married is much like the decision a church makes when hiring a new pastor. If there is to be a healthy relationship between the new pastor and the church, it is not a commitment that is to be rushed in to or taken lightly. That was good advice. You can be assured that your Committee of Deacons will move forward at a pace that insures the good health of our congregation.

During this period of transition, God has blessed us with a most capable group of ministers and church staff to assist us as we move forward

doing the work God has called us to do here at First Baptist Church. We ask for your patience and prayers in the days and months ahead.

One last thought concerning our present financial situation. We are currently behind in giving to meet our budget. Our budget shortfall will not be solved because we will no longer be paying the salary for a pastor after July. We will incur other expenses during this transition period.

The Finance Committee and church leadership will be keeping a vigilant watch on church finances during this time. You can be sure that potential pastors will also be looking to see how our church meets its financial obligations. Now, more than ever, we need to step up and meet the challenge.