

THE PULPIT COMMITTEE

THE SEARCH FOR THE NEXT SENIOR PASTOR OF FBCA

Retirement and Next Steps Q&A with Pastor Don

There are lots of questions swirling concerning what happens next in the light of my retirement at the end of December. Here are a few that have come to me—

Question: Who will the next senior pastor be?

Answer: Well, if we were Methodists or one of many other denominations, a pastor would be sent to us. Appointed for us by a Bishop. But that's not how our system works. There is no outside authority over FBCA—we are an independent church. So that means we will have to find one for ourselves. With God's help, of course.

A Pulpit Committee will be selected to seek and find a person to be recommended to the church. Eventually the church will vote, and the new pastor will come.

Question: It sounds like this Search Team has a big job. How will they be selected?

Answer: Our By-laws are clear about that. (Note: The ECC recently proposed a change in the By-laws concerning this. But because my retirement announcement came so quickly, they have decided it is better to keep the current method in place.) Here's how the By-laws have read for many years--

Pulpit Committee:

The Executive Church Council will initiate plans to establish a Pulpit Committee as needed for the purpose of securing a Pastor. The Pulpit Committee shall consist of seven (7) Church members elected by the Church.

The Church members, in a Sunday morning worship service would, by written ballot, indicate their nomination of seven (7) members of this Committee. Church staff members and members of their families shall be ineligible to serve. From these ballots, the twenty-one (21) names receiving the highest number of votes, and who are willing to serve, would be given to the Executive Church Council for the final selection of the seven (7) members of the Pulpit Committee. Not more than one (1) Church member of any family shall be elected to serve. The tabulators will be selected at the time of balloting. The Executive Church Council will assure that, for two (2) consecutive weeks prior to the balloting by the congregation, notice will be made in the BEACON and Sunday bulletin.

The Executive Church Council and the Church members should be advised by the presiding officer, in the meeting at which the nominations are made, that careful consideration be given to Pulpit Committee nominees who are representative of the entire Church membership. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Pulpit Committee will be designated by the Executive Church Council.

Question. When will we make our nominations for the Pulpit Committee?

Answer: You will have the opportunity to make up to 7 nominations on **Sunday, October 31**. They will be tallied by the **Personnel Committee** on November 1-2, and the 21 candidates receiving the most nominations and who are willing to serve will be submitted to the ECC. The ECC will select the 7 committee members on November 3, and announce them to the church on Sunday, November 7. The Pulpit Committee will immediately begin their work.

Be sure to keep all of these important dates in mind, and we'll be sure to remind you as we move closer to these dates.

Question: What qualities should I look for in nominations for this team?

Answer: Well, no one who has a personal agenda. I hope that people of wisdom and spiritual depth will be selected. People who know our church well and are thoroughly involved in its' life. An open mind and a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, too. This is the most important job they may ever have in our church, setting the direction for FBCA for another generation, so I hope we choose from among our best.

Question: How will my opinion and suggestions be heard?

Answer: A survey asking your opinion on the qualities important for a new senior pastor will run from September 28 until October 26. This will be provided online as well as with paper copies available in the Welcome Center. You are encouraged to share your ideas. These will be compiled and given to the Pulpit Committee once they are selected and start their work in November. And, of course, you will ultimately vote on the pastor that they recommend.

Question: So, how long will this search take?

Answer: Only God knows the answer to that. It will last a few months for sure and could take up to a year or more. You really don't want to rush this process.

Question: Who will preach in the meantime?

Answer: We have gifted pastors on staff and several retired pastors among our membership who will be asked to preach. Plus, we will be inviting special guests (including our former pastors) to come and fill in. Early in the new year the ECC will make a recommendation about whether or not to have an interim preacher on Sundays, an outsider to provide consistency week to week.

This person, should we have him, would not be a candidate for the full-time position. The day- to-day operation of our church all be assigned to one of our current staff.

As I think you know, I am the leader of the Executive Church Council as long as I am here. In the absence of a senior pastor, the 1st Vice Chair becomes the leader of the ECC. Joe Riojas holds this position currently, but in 2022 it will be Bryan Jones. (Note: In the months before I came in 2005 the ECC was led by Stephanie Boyles.)

Question: What about the current search for a youth pastor?

Answer: That search continues and does not need to be impacted by all of this. It may not be possible, but I'd still like to have a person to present to the church before I leave.

Question: What can I be doing right now?

Answer: I'll admit that this is a bit of an awkward period in our congregation—for me and for you. If I had resigned to go to another church, I'd be gone in another week or two. As it is, we are having a long goodbye while you are simultaneously beginning to dream about the future. Don't mind me. I want you to talk as much about the future of First Baptist as about the past. And I will not be interfering or trying to impose my ideas on you. I've had my day.

Here are some activities you can do to help during this time:

- **Pray** for your church that our people will be patient and positive over these next months.
- Stay active in attendance, financial giving, and inviting others to attend with you and join.
- Look out for our members who might fall through the cracks during this period.
- Focus on the vision and mission of our church, and support the leadership of our staff and lay volunteers who will be working harder than ever.
- And --it's not too early to pray for the person God is right now preparing to come and shepherd you.

I hope that you will keep asking such good questions. Don't wonder—ask. The commitment by our leaders is to be open and transparent throughout this whole process and communication will be one of the keys to this.