

# Ken's Retiring. What's Next?

As you are aware, Ken Dunivant, our senior pastor, has announced his retirement, which will take effect this summer. It is a time of mixed emotions – excitement for Ken and Barbara as they enter a new phase of life, but also a time of sadness as we will say “so long” to our dear friends. Over the last 18 years, Ken has not only been an excellent pastor and visionary leader, but he has become a deeply loved friend. The Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) is so appreciative of Ken's ministry with us, and it will be a high honor to celebrate his ministry as his retirement date comes closer.

You may be wondering what happens next? We hope these frequently asked questions help provide a better understanding of the process.

## **First, what is the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC)?**

For those who might be unfamiliar with the administration within the United Methodist Church, the SPRC is often referred to as the “human resources” department of the church. While that is certainly true, the SPRC is more than that. We are called to encourage and support our pastors, staff, and their families and work faithfully toward unity within our church family. We work closely with our pastors and staff so that each can best use his/her gifts for effective ministry. We also serve as a liaison between the pastors/staff and you, our church family. Above all, we pray for our pastors and staff and we hope that you will join us in that! One of the duties of the SPRC is to serve in a consultative role during the pastoral appointment process.

## **When a pastor announces his/her retirement, is there a search committee to fill the vacancy?**

There is no search committee. The United Methodist Book of Discipline states “Clergy shall be appointed by the bishop, who is empowered to make and fix all appointments in the Episcopal area.” Our bishop is Debra Wallace-Padgett and her cabinet (all district superintendents in the conference) look at the appointment needs throughout the conference, taking into consideration the

needs of each church, the gifts and talents of each pastor, and other circumstances in the conference.

The SPRC in each local church consults with the district superintendent about the relationship between the pastor and the congregation and communicates the desires of the church. The role of the SPRC is *advisory only*. The district superintendent reports the advice of the SPRC to the bishop and the cabinet. Again, the bishop will make all pastoral appointments. Your SPRC has already had several productive and meaningful conversations with our district superintendent, Reverend Sherri Reynolds and Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett. We provided them with a profile of the skills, background and experience that we feel are necessary to be a successful senior pastor here at First United Methodist Church Tuscaloosa (FUMCT).

### **Why are pastors appointed to churches in the United Methodist Church rather than us finding our own pastor?**

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the United Methodist Church is the itinerant system in which pastors move from appointment to appointment. “Itinerancy is the system by which the Methodist Church moves its ministers from church to church so that at all times every preacher has a church and every church has a preacher...” (From Encyclopedia of World Methodism) This system dates to the days of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. Itinerancy is part of the “connectional” nature of the United Methodist Church.

### **Given the important decisions expected to come from the General Conference and Ken’s long tenure at FUMCT, is this a good time for new leadership? Will our church be okay?**

While the senior pastor is certainly a critical part of the church, we should remember that the church is one body with many parts, and the senior pastor is one part of Christ’s body. As the Apostle Paul tells us:

***For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. –***

Romans 12:4-5 (NIV)

The Body of Christ at FUMCT has many parts and you, the congregation, are a vital part of that body! Additionally, we have outstanding clergy in Reverend Jesse Tosten, Dr Gorman Houston and Reverends Jim Wilson, Sandy Felkins and Randy Allen, an exceptional staff and excellent leaders already in place. The SPRC, under the direction of our district superintendent, Reverend Reynolds, will ensure that there will be steps in place for a smooth transition as we welcome a new senior pastor to the body of believers at FUMCT.

### **How can I express any questions or concerns I might have?**

Any person in the congregation can speak to a representative of the SPRC about his or her concerns. The current chair of our SPRC is Mike Case (246-6784 or [mczip57@yahoo.com](mailto:mczip57@yahoo.com)) .

### **When will we find out who our new senior pastor will be?**

The plan is to have a member of the SPRC announce the appointment of our new senior pastor at the end of each service on April 28th.

### **When will Ken's last Sunday be?**

Ken's last Sunday in the pulpit will be June 9th. He will be cleaning out his office and moving items the following week so for those that want to drop by and say goodbye please do it by June 7<sup>th</sup>.

### **When will the new senior pastor's first Sunday be?**

Our new senior pastor will join us in worship on July 7th. Prior to that date we will host a daylong meeting to introduce our new pastor to the staff and the lay leadership of the church.

### **What can I do, now, if anything?**

Pray! Please pray for Ken and Barbara as they transition to a new season of life. Please pray for our new senior pastor and family. Please pray for Bishop Wallace-Padgett and her cabinet, including our district superintendent, Reverend Sherri Reynolds. Please pray for our SPRC as they continue to serve in a consultative role and lead the congregation in this critical transition of pastoral leadership.

Above all, please pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us all throughout this time of transition and that we all will be open to His leading and wisdom.

Please know that your SPRC is confident that God is in control of the appointment process and that the exciting future ahead of us is His to lead and ours to joyfully follow! God is good all the time and He is in control.