



First Presbyterian

FLORENCE SOUTH CAROLINA

November 22, 2016

Dear First Presbyterian Family,

It was September 1, 2005 when I was called to become the Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Church. These past eleven years have been an incredible journey with God and with you. You have blessed Susan and me more than words could ever describe.

God has, however, made it clear to me that it is now time to retire from the pastorate. I informed the Session Tuesday night of my intention to retire at the end of May 2017. This decision was not easy and comes after much prayer and listening to that “still small voice of God.” We have accomplished much together, but God has made it clear to me that now is the time for a new leader to take the church forward into the next phase of ministry and mission. The Apostle Paul once said, *“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.” (1Cor. 3:6)*. These words are particularly personal now as God has enabled me to “plant” and I am excited to see who God will now raise up to do the “watering”.

It is my desire that over the next six months it may be possible for our church to know whom God will bring forth as my successor. Our ECO polity allows me to remain as pastor during the search process, but I will not engage in the process. Hopefully, a transitional pastor will not be necessary, but if it is, there will be time for those arrangements and I will step aside earlier, if that is needed.

Thirty-five years ago I felt God’s calling into the ministry and with fear and excitement I took a step of faith. Once that step was taken, God relieved all of my fears and He has been with Susan and me every step of this wonderful journey. Susan and I are again taking another step of faith, as we do not know how we might serve God in our retirement. However, we do know with absolute certainty that God is in control and He will make this clear in His time.

It has been one of the greatest privileges of my life to serve as your pastor; to walk with you through the joys and sorrows of life and to help you grow in your relationship with Christ. Over the next six months there will be plenty of time for “Good-byes”, so please don’t start now as this would be too hard.

The Session will be sending a letter in the next few days outlining the next steps of this transition. You have wonderful Elders who serve this church faithfully and God will guide them and you through this process.

Again, I am forever grateful that God called me to pastor this church. Thank you for being the people of God that you are. Susan and I love you and we look forward to what God will continue to do at First Presbyterian. Jeremiah 29:11 has never meant more to me than now:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

God Bless,