

# FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

*For Christ in the Heart of Charlotte*

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June 19, 2010

To: Members of First Presbyterian Church

Dear Friends,

The writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us that “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.” (Ecclesiastes 3:3)

On Sunday October 2, 1983, I began my service as minister of First Presbyterian Church. These past twenty six years have been the most memorable of my life. In the course of these years I have had the unique privilege of serving as the Senior Minister of one of the most dynamic churches in our denomination. During these years I have experienced the great joy of serving as your pastor and friend. In this period our church has grown from a congregation of 1200 members to a church of 2200 members. We have welcomed new members, baptized babies, and conducted weddings and funerals. We have also successfully completed three capital campaigns and have substantially rebuilt the facilities of our church.

It is therefore with a great deal of sadness and satisfaction that I plan to announce to the Session on Sunday, June 20<sup>th</sup> my intention to retire at the end of this calendar year. My last Sunday in the pulpit of our church will be Sunday, November 21<sup>st</sup>. At the time of my retirement I will have reached my 67<sup>th</sup> birthday. Retirement offers for me an opportunity to continue to minister through teaching, writing, and serving the church in a variety of different ways. It is also my hope to have a bit more time for travel, tennis, fly fishing, and some badly needed work on my golf game.

For the church this is the occasion for new leadership, a new vision, and renewed ministry in our witness for Jesus Christ in the heart of the city of Charlotte. Some months ago I notified the Personnel Committee of the Session of my intention to retire at the end of this year. This has given the Personnel Committee an opportunity to begin the process of preparing for the next minister of our church. At the stated monthly meeting of our Session on June 20<sup>th</sup> the Personnel Committee is prepared to recommend to the Session that a Transition Committee be named to begin the process of welcoming a new minister to our church. You will receive a communication from the Session shortly describing the process of transition that will be in place.

In the meantime, please know the great affection that I have for you, the members of our church. You have been with me and my family in times of great joy and sadness and for that I am eternally grateful. The privilege of serving as the minister of this church is one of the greatest honors that any minister could imagine and I have a deep sense of gratitude for this. Harry Emerson Fosdick once said that if he had a thousand lives to live, he would gladly live all of them as a parish minister. Though I cannot imagine the possibility of a thousand lives, I am certainly grateful that I have served the one life given to me as an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church.

As we approach this time of transition, I want to express my great confidence in the leadership of this church through the Session and its Personnel Committee. I believe that the best days of our church are ahead of us and I am confident that in the providence of God and under the lordship of Jesus Christ, our church will continue and strengthen its great witness in the center city of Charlotte.

It was Reinhold Niebuhr who once observed that

“Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in a lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone. Therefore we are saved by love.”

It is in this spirit that I extend to each of you not only my profound appreciation for your friendship and support but also my gratitude and thanksgiving for the years that I have spent in your midst.

With deepest appreciation and affection,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill", written in a cursive style.

William P. Wood