



November 15, 2016

Dear First Presbyterian Church Family:

At the Session meeting on Monday, November 14, our Interim Senior Pastor Ron Scates told the Session he believes it is in God's timing for this church to begin actively looking for our next Senior Pastor. In a heartfelt speech, he outlined several options for this process and offered to do whatever the Session thought was in the best interest of the church. This church has been through a long period of uncertainty, with four interim pastors and two senior pastors in a period of 13 years. We have had several discussions about the transition and its timing over the last several months. We believe the church needs stability and an orderly transition of leadership. After considering Ron's thoughtful guidance, the Session agrees that it is time for the church to move forward.

We are in a new denomination with new and liberating ideas, visions, and procedures. Under ECO polity the Session is permitted to function as the Senior Pastor Nominating Committee. This has been confirmed by our Presbytery leadership. This was discussed at length at our monthly meeting this week and we came to the following conclusions: Session is already a representative body, elected by the congregation, representing different facets of the church, and has members which sit on every committee of the church. Being 24 instead of the usual seven or nine members of a PNC brings many more viewpoints to the table. It also saves time, in that the Session is already party to all the issues and history of the many discussions and communications on this subject. Additionally, the congregation votes on pastoral changes at the church, so the congregation will ultimately decide this issue. Rather than subject the church to the time-consuming process of appointing a nominating committee, the Session, after lengthy discussion, decided acting as the nominating committee was the best course forward.

A motion was made to consider a short-term co-pastorship. At the Presbytery meeting in Dallas this past weekend, we learned that the moderator of our presbytery is planning to do just that at his own church. Ron of course, has a long and treasured history at our church, but I wonder how many know of his high reputation among Presbyterian Evangelicals across the country? ECO was birthed in his office when he was senior pastor at Highland Park in Dallas. He is a strong biblical preacher and a strong personality, able to navigate our congregation's sometimes choppy waters. He is tested and true. Ron has served FPC and Christ's Kingdom faithfully and well through this period of painful transition. He loves our church. We have already guaranteed Ron a spot here as pastor through December of 2017.

In a very short time Bob Fuller has endeared himself to many members of our congregation. His 13 years of experience as a senior pastor at Fairview Presbyterian Church in North Augusta, South Carolina has been an asset to First San Antonio. What many of you may not know is that the PNC which called Trey Little considered Bob Fuller a strong contender at that time; however, Bob removed himself from that search because of obligations he had to his then-congregation. When the recent APNC contacted Bob, he was willing to leave his senior pastorate primarily due to the opportunity to serve with and learn from Ron. He asked that he also be allowed to throw his hat in the ring to be considered for our next senior pastor, which is permissible under ECO. God has led two different PNCs which searched the entire country to Bob Fuller!

After thorough and fruitful discussion, The Session believes that God has blessed us richly indeed and placed His answer at our very feet. The Session therefore recommends that Ron Scates and Bob Fuller be nominated to serve as Co-Pastors of First Presbyterian Church from January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017. During 2017, the Co-Pastors would share the responsibilities of Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor for Christian

Education, to be determined by them in consultation with the Personnel Committee. Their terms of call for 2017 would not change, and the operating budget would not be affected. Effective January 1, 2018, we recommend that Bob Fuller become the Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of San Antonio.

Bob has expressed excitement about the possibility of being able to serve alongside Ron during 2017 as co-pastor. He said it is a rare new senior pastor who gets a running start to learn the intricacies of a congregation under such wise tutelage before he is placed in charge. He welcomes the chance to both preach and to work on our department of Christian Education before he takes over. With God's guidance, Ron and the Session will decide exactly how Ron would serve us after 2017.

In order to faithfully hear from the congregation on this proposal, the Session is scheduling a **Dinner and Town Hall meeting at 5:30 p.m. on December 7, 2016 in Westminster Hall**. Ron and Bob will present their visions for the future of our church, and there will be a period for your questions and comments afterwards.

Immediately following the Town Hall meeting, there will be a specially-called meeting of the Session to consider your response to this proposal. If God should guide us all as a body that this is indeed His plan, the Session will vote to call a **Congregational meeting on December 18, 2016**, after the 11:00 a.m. service, for the purpose of voting to elect The Rev. Ron Scates and The Rev. Robert Fuller, Jr. to serve as Co-Pastors for 2017, and to vote on the election of The Rev. Robert Fuller, Jr. to serve as the Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of San Antonio, effective January 1, 2018.

Your Session and pastors are convinced that God has a bright future for His church at Fourth and Alamo, and He is revealing it to us in His time. We strongly believe, in the words of our Pastor Emeritus Louis H. Zbinden, Jr., that the best years of this church are ahead of us. Please make every effort to attend these important meetings.

**Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it;
Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain.
Psalm 127:1**

Earnestly in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Norton A. Stuart, III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "N" and "S".

Norton A. Stuart, III, MD
Clerk of the Session
First Presbyterian Church, San Antonio