

Interim Pastor Report

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church

Knoxville, Tennessee

November 29, 2018

Dr. Steven P. Eason

Introduction

SHPC has been in transition since July 2, 2017. At year-end, that will be 18 months. (See attached Interim Pastor Report, February 13, 2018). I arrived January 1, 2018 and will complete twelve months at the end of December.

Goals

The session established four primary goals during the transition period. The following is a progress report on these goals.

1. Committee for stewardship and financial development and growth.

Jim Harrison and Debbie Diddle were recruited to co-chair the new committee, "The Strategic Development Team." A meeting was held to recruit members to the team. The College of Elders was established and a banquet held on September 23, 2018.

There was no 2018 "Stewardship" committee. No chair of a campaign. No theme. Jim, Debbie, and I designed an approach that included the College of Elders, letters, a sermon series, five home meetings, improved methods for pledging, a Commitment Sunday (November 4), and follow-up.

The result is a 17.16% dollar increase to date over 2018 pledges. This includes 40 new pledges, for a \$239,385 increase from 222 total giving

units. There are 52 outstanding pledges made in 2018 and 227 units that made no pledge in 2018 and have not pledged for 2019.

The new Strategic Development Team will meet in January 2019 and begin plans to recruit, train, and support a Stewardship team for the 2020 campaign. They will also look at the overall financial sustainability needs of the church, including endowment, wills and bequests, and other funding sources. This approach will provide a year-long effort in stewardship as opposed to only a seasonal Stewardship Campaign.

2. Change the name of the “Review and Evaluation Committee” to “Personnel.”

This has been much more than a mere name change. There was no updated Employee’s Manual. Now there is. There were no reporting and supervision lines within the staff. Now there are. The review and evaluation process has been upgraded. Several staff changes have been made.

The Personnel Committee meets monthly, along with the Head of Staff and the Business Manager. Job descriptions need to be upgraded. Salary comparisons (market analysis) need to be made, establishing high, mid, and low ranges for each position.

This has been a tremendous change for the good. Under the leadership of Chair, John Luttrell, this new committee has tackled several tough issues within the staff, reducing the chaos and providing much needed security and direction.

3. Form a Task Force to research and make accommodations concerning designating funds to the presbytery, synod, and general assembly.

The session established this Task Force with all council chairs and the Interim Pastor. Meetings were held. Mike Ewell was invited to present

the history of the decision to designate. Judd Shaw was invited to discuss the ramifications of designating vs. undesignating. The Task Force decided to set up identical visits with the session at large, followed by a meeting to discuss the matter and consider future action.

Ewell attended the September 2018 stated session meeting. William Pender and Josh McGill, representing the Presbytery finance committee, attended the October 2018 session meeting. At the November session meeting action was taken to undesignate the 100K. A decision will be made at the December meeting as to how to allocate those funds in 2019.

4. Create a team to check in with everyone who is on the roll.

During the transition, the session approved shifting the focus of the deacons to “compassion ministry.” It was determined that the deacons would be the appropriate team to contact the membership. January – March 2019 will be the time frame. We anticipate collecting valuable information and clearing the rolls of those who wish to be removed.

Other

- The order of worship was revitalized.
- Staff, session, and deacon meetings have been improved.
- The Pastor Nominating Committee has been hard at work. I have provided support upon request.
- The Organizational Chart was revised.
- Nominations policies were upgraded.
- Worship attendance is up.
- The Business Manager position was moved to full-time and filled by Katie McHargue.
- Established one annual Congregational Meeting to elect deacons, elders, and the Nominating Committee; present the budget; and vote on recommended changes to the terms of the pastors’ calls.

- Building security has been improved, key facility needs addressed, and two sextons employed for full coverage.

What is needed?

In my opinion, the following are areas that need attention:

1. All committees need to be recruited, trained, and supported. They need a set meeting schedule, take minutes, and establish a rotating system for membership. Every committee has a staff liaison that needs to be at the meetings and work with the chairs on agendas.
2. Facilities and maintenance need to be continually addressed. This will require funding.
3. Outreach needs to expand and have more hands-on involvement of the congregation.

Conclusion

A tremendous amount has been accomplished. This is due to the leadership of the staff and officers, as well as the support of the congregation. A lot of people have stepped up. Any pastor considering a call to SHPC should recognize the efforts during this transition period. These are indications of this church's health and vitality. The potential is great. This can be a leadership church in the presbytery and in Knoxville. The resources and the leadership are here. The heart for Christ is here. It's been rewarding to serve as Interim Pastor of SHPC at this time.

Gratefully,
Steve Eason