

Elders' Recommendation for Senior Pastor

October 8th & 9th, 2016

In June, Pastor Sam announced that he was nearing age 65 and that he believed it was time to begin the search for the next Sr. Pastor of Stone Ridge. He explained that he was announcing this now, with the desire that the church would seek God's man for our next pastor, followed by a transition period in which Sam slowly turns over the leadership and primary preaching duties to his successor.

We are grateful that Stone Ridge is in the unusual situation of having a staff who have served God and this church for many years. It is our prayer to continue into the next generation with similar stability. The Elders agree with Sam that it would be best to have a longer transition with Sam gradually handing over the leadership, if possible.

As we began to pray about the process of searching for the next pastor, we initially thought that the role of the Elders would be to lead the church through the selection of a Pastor Search Committee. Our goal was to have that committee in place by about now, giving them the last three months of 2016 to pray and get organized, then begin the formal pastor search in January of 2017.

As the Elders began to discuss the process, we knew that it would be up to us to give the Pastor Search Committee some guidelines to help define their search. One of the first questions we discussed was, "Do we want to limit the search to only external candidates or do we want to consider someone who is already a part of Stone Ridge?" We studied and discussed the strengths of both scenarios. We prayed. We talked. At first, we weren't unified about this decision. All of us wanted God's man as the next pastor, but we had very different ideas about this internal-external question.

After a few months of meetings on the subject, God began to speak to our Elders in some profound ways. By late July, we started to see that we were no longer divided. In fact, we were unified in more than the internal-external question. God brought us to the place that we were unanimous in the belief that we should enter serious discussions with Tom Burks as our recommendation for Stone Ridge Sr. Pastor.

Our hearts were drawn to Tom for several reasons:

- We know him. Truthfully, we know his weakness as well as his strengths. We have worked with him for many years and see him as a dedicated servant of God and of this church.
- He often brings wisdom and perspective to Elder discussions about a variety of matters.
- He has a proven track record of leading ministry, including the enlistment and development of many a varied leaders who serve under his leadership.
- He has been a vital part of developing, as well as carrying out our Stone Ridge vision, mission, values and discipleship process.
- He has grown into an excellent communicator and is able to teach and preach with clarity and authority.
- He already has the respect of the Stone Ridge staff and leaders throughout our church.

The more we prayed, the more we talked and the more we met with Tom and Stacy, the more certain we were that God was at work in this decision. Therefore, with great joy, the Stone Ridge Elders present Tom Burks as our unanimous recommendation to be the next Stone Ridge Sr. Pastor. We believe that Tom is God's man to lead us as Pastor Sam retires.

It is the church, not the Elders who must vote to formally ask Tom to be Sr. Pastor. Therefore, we are announcing today a plan for you to hear him preach and to meet with him for an informal Q & A.

Tom will preach in all three services two weeks from now, on October 22-23. From 4-5:30 p.m. on Sunday, October 23, we will have a Question and Answer session with him here in our auditorium.

On October 29-30, we will have ballots for Stone Ridge members to vote on asking Tom to be our next Sr. Pastor.

During this time, our Elders want to be available to answer questions for you about this process. You can contact us. Our email address is elders@stoneridgechurch.com. We will do our best to respond quickly to your questions. If you should prefer to speak with an Elder by phone, please email us your name and phone number and an Elder will call you.