

The Concept

It always seems to me that the calling of a pastor to Fifth Avenue Baptist has to have an interesting story. For Dr. Smith, it was the emergence of his name only AFTER a candidate came to the church for a trial sermon and then withdrew his name. For Dr. Reasons, it was a resume falling into our lap from a previously unused source that told the beautiful story of a pastor looking for a new home at the exact moment that our church needed that kind of pastor. It is always a story...a story that tells you that someone or something beyond all of us is involved and guiding this process.

So what is our current pastor calling story....well, it is a doozy!

We had been about our task for about four months and had reached that point where the stack of candidates needed to be prioritized to eliminate all but the really serious ones. That stack was good....sourced from north, south, east, and west both geographically and spiritually. There was a great deal to consider and a lot to pray about. There was one thing missing....the story. The candidate that seems more like they are being pushed to us from somewhere else rather than simply sifted out of a stack of resumes. Then the phone rang.....well more exactly, the phone rang twice - once at Don Tarter's house and once at Darrin Bird's. The callers were friends of the church. It started something like this....we have a concept for you, something you might not be ready for, but we think you should listen. This is where what I now lovingly refer to as "The Concept" began.

"The Concept" was shared like this..."there is a couple who are both in full time ministry and are open to the concept of serving together. We think your unique situation of two openings might be meant for something more. Would you listen?"

Would we listen? That was the question. You see, I like to lead God. I am not so fond of the listen part. Would we listen? Would we take a peek? Would we trust that there is more to this process than checking boxes? Certainly there is, and must be, an element of faith to the calling of your ministers. Anyway, listening is free. So in the next meeting, "The Concept" was shared and it became quickly apparent that we were being led in a direction for which we had no roadmap.

We have struggled with this. We spent January trying to understand it for ourselves and developing the path forward. In February, we started talking to each other and quickly came to realize that there was something special, but not easy. We would have to work for this idea. There was a moment when it felt like it had all ended and we would part friends but go another way. There is an unusual thing about a Spirit-led task, though....it seems to find a way to overcome the hurdles we throw in its way.

We next moved from our own investigation of "The Concept" to the inclusion of key groups within our church: Personnel Committee, Church Council, current staff. At each point we were careful to ask of both the Search Committee and our other church partners: Should we keep going? At every point, there was no hesitation. If it seemed like it took us a long time to get to a conclusion it is only because it did! You might travel down a new road but you always do it cautiously.



So now we have reached the point where “The Concept” will be presented to you. We have, with the concurrent action of Personnel, decided to bring to you candidates for both the Pastor and the Associate Minister of Education positions. The action of calling the Pastor is being carried out by the Pastoral Search Committee in accordance with our by-laws. The action of hiring an Associate Minister of Education is being carried out by the Personnel Committee in accordance with our by-laws. The intention is that they will begin serving together in pastoral leadership of our church. They will fully take on the duties of each of these roles in leading, teaching, preaching, and all other aspects of those job responsibilities.

I often consider now how much easier it would have been not to listen....but we were never promised easy. We were only promised glory....

Darrin Bird
Chair
Pastoral Search Committee