

What does God require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God. — Micah 6:8

Living Hopefully in Our Times

Editor's note: The following is an excerpt from the sermon preached by Nancy Petty on September 20, 2009, following receipt by the congregation of Jack McKinney's letter of resignation. The entire sermon text, along with Jack's letter, can be found on the Pullen website, www.pullen.org.

Our church community received surprising and sad news this past week—the resignation of our pastor, Jack McKinney. For nearly ten years Jack has ministered with and among this congregation offering wise leadership, prophetic preaching, and compassionate care to all who walked through our doors. Because of him, we know a bit more about Texas living (okay a lot more), about the crazy things young boys do with their childhood friends, and the value of laughter when talking about serious matters of faith. But above all, throughout these almost ten years, he has in the strongest of Pullen tradition, challenged us to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. And he has done so first by example, and second by being a prophetic voice in our community. Now, with the same authenticity and honesty with which he has pastored us, he shares that it is time for him to leave this work for new adventures and new challenges. For our loss, we are deeply saddened. And for the time that Jack has shared his life and his gifts with us, we are deeply grateful.

When a pastor leaves, it is natural for the church to feel anxiety and loss. It doesn't help to ignore these feelings, and we won't. It is also natural to ask the question, "What now?" This question is particularly significant for our congregation. Seven years ago, our church decided to try a different model for the pastoral role—we called it the co-pastor model. For seven years now, this church has had two pastors—two pastors with different gifts and abilities sharing the role equally. When we were discussing the co-pastor model the question was asked, "What happens when one of them leaves?" In true Pullen fashion, we decided that we would deal with that when it happened. Now it has happened, and in due time we can trust that we will address the "What happens next?" question. Our guide will be yet another question, "What is best for our church?"

When we ask "what now?," we might also ask: Where in our congregation do we sense the stirring of God's spirit? Where is there energy for risk? Who is asking to be heard? What hungers of the heart are being expressed? What cries, especially muffled ones, do we need to listen for? Usually these

are the places where God's spirit is at work. And when we follow where we sense the stirring of God's spirit in our midst, we will, indeed, do what is best for our church.

Over the next two months, however, our work is to celebrate with gratitude the ministry of our pastor, Jack McKinney. Over the next three months, our work is to celebrate with gratitude the ministry of this church over the past 125 years. Beyond that it will be our work to discern our staffing needs while living out our call to be a people of hope in our world. Let us not lose our way of laying hold on a greater faith and continuing to walk as no other church has ever walked. It is our tradition. And our faith will carry us through these times in which we are living. If we live as people of hope, we will live graciously and gracefully in time—in our times and in all time—for, as Paul tells us in Romans 5:5, "hope does not disappoint us."

—Nancy



**125th Anniversary
Celebration of
Congregational Song
Sunday, September 27, 11:00
AM; Guest Hymnologist: Paul
Richardson**

pullen
making a difference
in the world for 125 years

**Adult Sunday School Session (Poteat Chapel)
"The Poteats: Baptists, Liberals, and Church Musicians"**

Arrive at 9:30 AM to peruse archival displays, hear a portion of a sermon in Poteat's voice, and sing the music of Poteat with the Chancel Choir.

**Worship (Sanctuary)
"In Our Own Voice: A Festival of Pullen Hymns"**

Sing from a commemorative collection of Pullen hymns led by the Chancel Choir, Pullen Orchestra, Paul Richardson, Cynthia Brown, and Larry Schultz. We will sing for the first time Pullen's 125th Anniversary Hymn by Shirley Erena Murray. (See the hymn's text in the August 26 edition of the *Pullen-News*).

—Larry Schultz