

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

## Where Two or Three Are Gathered

On Sunday, September 28, we will gather as a church family to discuss our financial picture for the next several years. Several of our lay leaders, including the Finance Committee Chair, Treasurer, and the Co-chairs of the Personnel Committee feel that it is important for the church body as a whole to have an accurate picture of our upcoming financial needs and to participate in thinking about creative approaches to our budget. As I see this meeting, it is an exciting and challenging time for our church.

It is an exciting time for our church because 2009 promises to be a significant year in our life together. We will spend the entire year celebrating our 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a prophetic Baptist church in the South; we will dedicate our new chapel, mission space, fellowship hall, and educational wing; and we will begin new ministries out of the *Hope Center at Pullen*. We will also continue the ongoing ministries of this church that have been so important in the lives of Pullenites, the Raleigh community, and in places like Cuba, the Republic of Georgia, Zimbabwe, and Nicaragua. Most importantly, though, each Sunday we will gather to worship God, to draw strength from one another, and to be inspired by the teachings of our faith as we welcome old and new friends to worship with us as we celebrate our history and our future. It is an exciting time for our church.

It is also a challenging time—not just for our church but for our world. The war in Iraq has placed a great strain on our country; and economically, spiritually, and morally it has placed a heavy burden on the shoulders of our global community. People all over the world are struggling with the basics of living life: adequate health care, affordable housing, having enough to eat, and providing safety for their families. While as Americans we have it easier than most of our human family, there are still many among us who don't have a safe place to live or enough food to eat or doctors to go to when we are sick. And while these issues are not new to our world, the gap between those who have and those who do not have seems to be getting wider. As a church, trying to respond to the needs of our own community as well as responding to the needs of our sisters and brothers around the world is stretching us in new ways. It is a challenging time for our world and church.

In these exciting and challenging times, I see so much hope in our church. This church has not wavered in its commitment to responding to the needs of people whether they are standing at our back door or living halfway around the globe. I have seen that commitment affirmed over and over again—in handing out over 175 back door lunches a week and in one Sunday collecting \$7,000 for our sister church in the Republic of Georgia as they faced resettling thousands of refugees as a

result of the Georgian/Russian conflict. Again and again, I have seen our commitment to stand with the oppressed and the marginalized affirmed as we have welcomed the “stranger” in our midst, visited those in prison, offered safety to those whom the institutional church has condemned, and ministered to one another in our “time of need.” The Pullen Memorial Baptist Church community has a long tradition of truly being church to one another and the world by offering hope in challenging times.

As we prepare to meet on September 28, it is my wish for our community that we will center ourselves in the hope that has guided this church for almost 125 years. Furthermore, it is my hope that as we gather for this important conversation we will listen well to one another, respect each other's opinions, be patient with our questions, focus on our opportunities, and walk away with excitement about the challenges that face us in the coming years. Scripture reminds us that “where two or three are gathered, God is there.” Most of all, I hope we will be mindful of God's presence among us and listen for the guidance of God's Spirit.

These are exciting and challenging times for our church and world. Each time we gather—whether in worship or to discuss the business of this church—my hope is renewed in God and in humanity. Daily, I give thanks to be a part of Pullen Memorial Baptist Church.

—Nancy