

February 4, 2009

Dear Community Family:

In Acts 13:2 the beloved physician, Luke, records the unique beginning of New Testament missions in the calling of two men from the church at Antioch who were to take the Gospel to the Gentile world. He wrote, "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

What perhaps seemed at the time as a most unusual and difficult thing for God to ask of the Antioch church – to send two of their pastoral leaders forth with blessing – became the groundwork for the great advancement of the Gospel in the New Testament era. The message of Jesus Christ went eventually into Europe, the home of many of our ancestors, because Paul and Barnabas were obedient to the call of God.

Sometimes in His wisdom and providence our sovereign Lord repeats the pattern of such a calling. It is with deeply mixed emotions that I share with you that God has set before Ruth and me the call to the ministry of full-time missions. We have answered that call and are now sharing our hearts with you concerning it.

While this news, going out by letter today to our entire church family, may come as a shock to some, others will no doubt not be surprised. I have often made the statement from the pulpit that we must each be willing to follow the call of God, whether it leads us to Africa or to the streets of downtown South Bend. I cannot be a hypocrite and preach surrender to the will of God and then refuse His call when He sends it, regardless of how difficult the sacrifices may be in our answering.

By the time you receive this letter, the pastoral staff and deacons will be fully informed concerning our decision. This coming Sunday I will personally and publicly address the details of our call. My desire in notifying each of our members by letter is to communicate my heart to the church family and avoid misunderstanding concerning what the Lord is doing.

Ruth and I love you and Community Baptist Church. We have seen our children grow up in this wonderful fellowship. We have made lifetime friends in this place. Many of you are our spiritual children, having come to know Christ under our ministry here. Over the past thirteen years I have turned down a number of requests to consider ministry leadership at other churches and a Christian college. We have had no human desire to leave a church and people that we have so greatly come to love.

Despite the great sense of loss we feel, in dependence upon the Lord and in obedience to His call, I am announcing my resignation as pastor of Community in order to become a missionary with Baptist World Mission, headquartered in Decatur, Alabama. My position will be that of Executive Director of BWM, leading and supporting the ministry of 350 servants of Jesus Christ around the world and assisting and challenging the churches of America as they are involved in the work of the Great Commission. My primary tasks, with Ruth at my side, will

involve preaching, administration and on-the-ground ministry in various countries, seeking to advance the Gospel and to establish strong churches on the field.

This decision has not been a hasty one, but has been arrived at over the past eighteen months as we have prayed and sought Biblical counsel. As we cried out to Him, the Lord confirmed step-by-step, by His Word and His Spirit, His will for us.

For many years I have had an expectation, based on His working in my heart, that someday He would put us in mission ministry, thinking perhaps it would be a transition that would take place when I came to “retirement” age. However, God has chosen for us to take this step by faith at this time. It is our intention to work with the deacons and the church family in facilitating a transition of two months, moving at that time to the Decatur area.

Our request of you is much the same as that made to the church at Antioch concerning Paul and Barnabas. We ask that you recognize by faith the hand of God in this call and send us out with your blessing to the work. It is our desire to retain our membership at Community and to have you serve as our commissioning and sending church – just as our other Community missionaries have done. Likewise we ask that you pray for us. There are many challenges as we launch into a new area of God’s vineyard. Pastoral ministry in a local church has been our lives. Our new ministry will be pastoral in nature, but different in focus, and we will greatly need God’s wisdom and grace.

Our commitment to you is, I believe, likewise Biblical. We will do all that we can to facilitate a smooth transition as the church looks for its next senior pastor; we will keep you before the Throne of Grace daily as this process unfolds; and we will seek to bring honor to the Lord and our church by representing Community as faithful missionaries of Jesus Christ.

Please be encouraged by faith with what God is doing! Lamentations 3 makes clear that in the difficult things of life God has good plans for us. I believe the greatest years of Community Baptist Church are yet ahead, because I believe in a living Savior who will build His church. We have a wonderful group of assistant pastors who will step up to the plate and meet ministry needs. We have godly deacons who are men of wisdom. I believe the Lord in His foreknowledge has already chosen the next senior pastor of Community, and I am confident that our godly deacons will carefully follow Biblical principles and constitutional guidelines as the Spirit of God makes His choice known to them and to the congregation.

Over the next few months, let’s all stay on our knees and be faithful to the work of Jesus Christ as we go forward to the praise of the glory of His grace.

In His Love,

Bud Steadman