



TRINITY  
AVENUE  
PRESBYTERIAN

July 18, 2010

Dear Congregation,

Over the past 12 ½ years, I have fallen deeply in love with you, the people of Trinity. I have encountered the living Word as we walked together into valleys and onto mountaintops. Together we have grown in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So it is with deep sadness that I now submit my resignation to you, for I have accepted the call of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Nashville, Tennessee to be their next Senior Pastor. While I am convinced this call has come from God, the decision to accept it has been the most difficult decision of my life. Trinity is the Drake family's home of love. You have raised my family in the faith, and I have never once felt your lack of support or love. As the Apostle Paul wept with the elders of the Church of Ephesus when he left them, so do I weep at the very thought of my departure. Over the years, I have had a number of opportunities to move elsewhere, and the ability to say "No" was very easy. For reasons that I cannot explain, when I said "No!" to the Westminster Pastor Nominating Committee, it did not feel right. A few months later, the PNC prayerfully called for me to reconsider. Like answering the call to serve Trinity, I do not know how to describe the sense of call to Westminster. What I know is that I'm leaving the comfortable for the uncomfortable. I believe that this call will offer me an opportunity to further grow, as well as focus my attention toward my passions for preaching, writing, and service to the community.

When I arrived at Trinity, Travis Porter invited me out to breakfast to access what my agenda might be at Trinity. I assured him that the only agenda that I had was to preach the Good News and to lead our congregation to better know and serve God. That agenda can never be completed, but we have come a long way together. I believe that I leave this congregation in a better place. Every day, I look around and cannot believe what I am giving up. I believe that the combination of this dynamic church and the amazing transformation that has occurred in Durham will attract the best and brightest to come and serve as Trinity's next pastor. I know our staff is the best that it has ever been, and I know the officers of this church will follow the lead of Christ in the days ahead.

Due to the earlier school year in Nashville, my family will move to Nashville in early August. I will be in the pulpit on August 8 but will have to miss the following two Sundays. My family and I will return the last week of August. The Session has called a congregational meeting set for my last Sunday, August 29th. In the meantime, an interim search committee will be formed. A PNC will soon follow to search for the next pastor. During my tenure with you, God has blessed us beyond measure. It is my belief that "He that has begun a good work in you will bring it to completion in the day of Jesus Christ."

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Donovan". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Donovan Drake



**Personnel Committee  
Exit Interview for  
Rev. Donovan Drake**

**TAPC's Strengths/Accomplishments:**

- Growth in Fellowship of the Church both within the church and the community
- New initiatives for outreach, e.g. the Fall Festival
- Establishment of two vibrant weekly worship services and the Wednesday Nite Lite program
- Respect that TAPC has gained in the community, through its active outreach activities
- Promotion of our Mission Statement "TELL"
- Beginning to attract young adults and families, booming church school good example

**Opportunities for Improvement:**

Infrastructure (Organizational Support) needs commitment from church to continue on a Growth Path

- Additional Associate Pastor would be necessary to expand membership. Our current size often called a "clergy killer" because of never-ending demands on clergy staff
- Community Ministry (New Hope, Habitat, Durham Urban Ministries) needs to continue and to remain foundation elements of our mission
- New Member Initiatives should become part of new staff person's responsibilities so that visitors and potential new members have continued follow-up, new member assimilation process

Next discussion was on the some important functional areas of the church

**Comments on Session:**

- Need to conduct annual or semiannual Retreats that establish TAPC's Goals and Time Schedule for Implementation. Church membership needs to be aware of Session leadership and not always look to clergy for direction. The Session should recognize a leadership component beyond administrative and business matters, namely the theological elements of their role as a Session
- Need Active Lay Leadership to drive the initiative(s) to conclusion (Travis Porter was particularly good at follow-up and delegation).
- Proud of the creation of the Nominating Committee that considers broad representation of our membership on Committees and leadership positions. Senior Pastor should have a concurrence role, but should not direct the selections made by the Committee. They need to be tasked to recruit the best qualified resources in the church to execute the initiative(s).

### **Comments on Music:**

Leadership needs to service the entire church's musical requirements

- Develop a new musical genre for the 9:00 Service compared to the 11:00 Service. With over a third of our worship attendance at the 9:00 am service, we should include instrumentalists and small vocal ensembles to enhance the worship service.
- Recruit Church Members with musical talents to support a variety of musical offerings. A good example is the new Children's Choir.
- 11:00 Service is a strong musical service that attracts new members and complements the worship Service. Would like to see music a more central part of 9:00 am service as well.
- Donovan had thought of a future third service with entirely different musical approach from formal, traditional style.

### **Comments on Church School/Youth Program**

- Children's Church School Leadership is confident and passionate, and has made great gains in the past three years.
- Need to support leadership with continuing educational opportunities for the Director and members of the Christian Education Committee.
- Need to establish a transition between Children's Church School Leadership and Youth Director to maintain involvement of kids as they grow older.
- Youth Council is active and effective and needs to support new Youth Director's initiatives.
- TAPC needs a signature Youth Event/Year, a program that is known to all and the Youth view it as the big event of the year, one that TAPC always is part of.

### **Comments on Staff:**

- Associate Pastor is passionate, caring, and effective and needs strong lay support over the next several months.
- Continue to reinforce the contributions of the Associate Pastor, promote good chemistry between Associate Pastor & Pastor
- Youth Director appears to be a great talent and needs strong support during the pastoral transition.
- Need to establish a Personal Development Plan for all Staff Members

In closing, Donovan has grown TAPC into a respected church in the community and has left us a far better place than when he arrived.