

February 19, 2016

Trust God and Tell the People.

A group of leaders facing a monumental challenge for their church sought out essential counsel from a wise elderly pastor. After hearing the details of their concerns, a short and simple approach met their complex issues. He said, ***“Trust God and Tell the People.”*** His words became a repeated motto. It moved them to actions requiring great faith, but also the determination to be more transparent with the church family who needed to be given more information and asked to help.

As elders of First Christian, we cannot attempt to shoulder heavy burdens alone, of what you as part of this church family should be trusted to share. We are determined to get better at trusting God and trust that being more transparent with people who care, is essential for moving forward.

We have come to a place where **restructuring our ministry is essential**. After a difficult season in the past year, financial challenges have persisted. Pruning back expenses, multiple appeals, and great patience helped us catch up enough to make our annual end of year mortgage payment. We have postponed cutting staff payroll, even while our offerings have dropped by 40%. Currently our expenses exceed our giving by \$7,000 per week and we can delay no longer to take action.

With the invaluable input from experienced leaders who have added counsel, we are restructuring our ministry budget around the priority of four ministry positions. These areas are Preaching pastor/ Evangelist, Children’s ministry, Worship ministry, and Teen ministry (new search beginning). For a church averaging 700, other part-time roles are essential and will remain part of the foundation for rebuilding our church. However, we have **recently reduced our staff**. At this time, we cannot afford to offer 2016 contracts to Executive Pastor Bob Farmer Jr., Counseling Pastor Dennis Hounshell, or Connections Pastor Virgil Brazle. We will miss their significant contributions to our ministry and desire to honor each with some transitional salary and benefits while they seek new job opportunities. Faithful giving at this time will help us with the expenses of these transitions. This is a significant change for them and for each of us.

How can you help? First, understand that our ministers, just like you and our church family, have some healing ahead. Disappointment and insecurity about the future is a real place for many right now. However, that is not a place where people of faith will stay for long. **We need you to help us regroup and rebuild.** Will you choose to be among those who will express support and faithfulness, especially in the next 6 months as we make transitions? If this church has ever ministered to you when you were down, this can be a time where you determine to step up and serve this church family. We can each do that by faithfully “showing up” to worship each Sunday and “growing up” in our giving and serving.

In the days ahead, we will seek to minimize distractions from Sunday worship with church business and budget talk. This time should be for worship and teachings from God’s Word. Our new plan is to have once each month, an after church lunch where **we will keep you updated on our progress**. We will “trust God and tell the people.” Thank you for praying that God will bless us together.

Trusting God,

The eldership, First Christian

Keith Vehlewald, chairman; David Walkup, vice-chairman; Eugene Storjohann, treasurer; Steve Wingfield, senior pastor