



# Keeping You Informed

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A letter from Pastor Nelson  
April, 2009

On Monday, April 13, 2009 I submitted the following statements to the Board of Elders of SGC:

*“Due to circumstances beyond our control AND believing it is in the best interest of the church, I hereby retire from my position as Senior Pastor and staff member of Southern Gables Church effective June 15, 2009.*”

*“In the spring of 2007, it was the initial intention of the church, the Elders and me, upon my request, that I resign as Senior Pastor and assume the position of Associate Pastor for Missions upon the call of a new Senior Pastor. That plan seemed workable until the convergence of several circumstances in January-February 2009. When the Elder's choice of the candidate for Senior Pastor agreed to officially candidate in early April and assume the position in early June (upon approval by the congregation), his acceptance set in motion the timing of several other events. I stopped preaching the end of January to allow four months between my public ministry and the arrival of the new pastor. Also, the celebration of 30 years of my ministry at SGC was timed to coincide with the end of my preaching ministry AND in advance of the April 5 presentation of the new Senior Pastor candidate. Four Sundays after I stopped preaching and two days after the celebration, the candidate withdrew. The end of my regular preaching ministry and the public celebration of 30 years of ministry created a logical and emotional ending to my role as Senior Pastor. Even though the new Senior Pastor candidate withdrew, my role as Senior Pastor was ended.*”

*“Subsequent to the candidate's (and previous potential candidates') stated reasons for withdrawal, there has been much discussion of whether it is reasonable to continue seeking a new Senior Pastor with me, the former pastor, still on staff. Unfortunately, that discussion has the potential of polarizing the church. It also leaves the Elders in the unenviable position of bringing a recommendation to the church that, of necessity, alienates either those who think the church is served best by my remaining on staff or those who think the church is served best by removing me as an obstacle to finding a new Senior Pastor. I think the Elders and the church lose either way and for that reason I remove that issue by unilaterally declaring my retirement. While I hope there are people who will disagree with this retirement, I do ask you to respect my decision and not attempt to force a different course of action. It is time for the church to move ahead in unity.”*

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I read the above statements to the congregation on Sunday night, April 19. The Board of Elders then presented and the congregation voted to approve the following five-part motion:

The Board of Elders recommends to Southern Gables Church that we:

1. Accept the retirement declaration of Jerry Nelson effective June 15, 2009.
2. Proceed to hire an Interim Pastor as soon as practicable.
3. Renew the search for a Senior Pastor.
4. Prepare a suitable severance package for Jerry Nelson commensurate with his time in service to the Body of SGC.
5. Confer the title of Senior Pastor Emeritus on Jerry Nelson upon his retirement from staff on June 15, 2009.

The Elders have already begun the search for an Interim Pastor (one who will serve as head of staff and who will do some or much of the preaching until a new Senior Pastor is secured).

The Elders will also reconstitute the Senior Pastor Search Committee (a couple of members of the previous committee are unable to continue serving). The committee will renew the search for a new Senior Pastor.

As to my leaving the staff of SGC, I now wish to thank you, the congregation of SGC, repeating some of what I shared with you in February:

I begin by thanking my wife Barbara for her co-ministry these past 30 years. This was not just a job for her husband but a calling on her life as well. She has prayed for this congregation and for many of you individually all through the years. Among many other ministries, she led our nursery and preschool divisions, she has hosted hundreds in our home, and she continues to visit the sick and shut-ins. She listened to me complain about you and patiently waited for me to get over it. I cannot imagine a "help-meet" more supportive and engaged in ministry than my wife. Thank you, Barbara.

I also thank my daughters and their husbands. They have loved God and his church; they love this church and you. Through music, teaching, missions, leadership, Women of the Harvest and Heart-Craft they have invested as much as any and more than most in God's kingdom work here and abroad. With the Apostle John, I can mean it literally, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."

I am grateful to God for a ministry staff, a support staff, an Elder board, and the other leaders, past and present, who have shared the load and served so faithfully and excellently. Special thanks to my assistant, Julia Grauberger. With the Apostle Paul I can say to you who have served with me, "I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."

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Now most of all, I wish to express my deep appreciation to you, the congregation of SGC. I am struck with the faithfulness of God in the faithfulness of his people.

You have been a patient congregation! I was 34 years of age when I came to this church. One year after I came to SGC, a petition was signed by several leading families of the church asking for a change in the preacher. Many of you waited patiently for your pastor to grow up. Even when you have disagreed you have been gracious. And when there have been mistakes, you have been forgiving. You've been a patient congregation!

You have also been a supportive congregation! Thirteen years into my ministry here, I had burned out and could not go on without a significant change. I told the Elders and then the congregation and I received nothing but overwhelming support – time away for healing, new help for some of the ministry, and just great encouragement. You have loved me and my family well for thirty years and we have counted on the prayers of many of you. In the painfully uncertain first three years of our son Paris' life you prayed for him and saw us through. We will be forever grateful for a people who loved and still love our son. You've been a supportive congregation, making service a joy and not a burden.

You have been a liberating congregation! You have given me the privilege to preach and the freedom of schedule to prepare. You have granted me freedom to pursue ministries in the community and around the world: inner city ministries; a Bible study at the state capitol; a ministerial prayer group; the Billy Graham Crusade, teaching in India, and many others. You have allowed my children and Barbara to pursue involvement and ministry in the church according to God's leading and not according to preconceived expectations. You've been a liberating congregation!

You've been a generous congregation! Our financial needs have been met and beyond. You assisted financially with my doctoral studies. Some of you have made your vacation places available to us for some outstanding family times. You've been a generous congregation!

And you have been and are a blessed congregation – blessed by the grace of God. This church has never been seriously threatened by division. We have been protected from real scandal and even false claims of scandal. We have had strong male leadership and a solid theological foundation (I bless my predecessor, Dr. Jim Means, for that). And God has always blessed us with sufficient resources of people and money to pursue our ministry objectives. 'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.'

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Leaving the staff of Gables is a major change for my family and me. One nice thing about “retirement” is that it doesn’t mean we are leaving the church. You have graciously awarded me the title of “*Senior Pastor Emeritus.*” Emeritus - “One retired from professional life but permitted to retain as an honorary title the rank of the last office held.” (Miriam-Webster) It has been a privilege to serve this church as Senior Pastor for the past nearly 31 years and to be granted this honorary relationship for the future.

Barbara, Paris and I will use part of your generous 30-year celebration gift to visit several of our missionaries in Asia yet this spring. Following that trip we expect to worship and serve as volunteers with you here at SGC. As the Apostle Paul wrote, I too can say, ‘I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.’ I praise God and thank you for over 30 years of ministry among you.

## Our Missionaries This Summer

Several of our missionary families will be home this summer and fall. We anticipate they will be visiting our Adult Communities, giving updates in our worship services and meeting with many of you in your small groups.

Please do everything you can to accommodate their schedules to get reacquainted and learn more about OUR ministries in the parts of the world where they serve on our behalf.

John and Abigail Singer*	May 18 - August 15
Joel and Christina Smith	June 6 - July 15
Daniel and Maria Teacher*	July - December
Jon and Kathy Haley	May 29 - Sept 22
Steve and Cindy Thompson	August - May
Jacob and Carol Miles*	Possibly mid-summer through the fall.

\* Names changed for security reasons

## Our Finances

We praise God and thank you for your faithful financial support of the ministries of SGC. Though things are, as they say, “tight,” they are adequate to meet the immediate needs. As you will see below we are slightly behind in the giving we had projected, so we ask that you remain faithful in your contributions to the good work God is doing in our midst and around the world.

	General Fund	Anticipated need	Received
	7/1/08-4/12/09	\$1,285,000	\$1,242,000
7	Kingdom Connection		
	1/08-3/31/09	\$214,089	\$214,479

# Keeping You Informed

## The Gospel of John Sermon and Study Series

April 26 Rev. Dan Luebcke—John 16:17-33  
New Partner reception

May 3 Dr. Jim Means—John 17:1-26  
The Lord's Supper

May 10 Dr. Larry Lindquist—John 18:1-40  
Mother's Day and Infant Dedications

May 17 Dr. Jim Means—John 19:1-42  
The Lord's Supper

(Chapter 20 was considered on Easter Sunday morning, April 12)

May 24 Mr. Dan Luebcke—John 21:1-25 (Final John study)  
Memorial Day weekend

May 31 Dr. Jim Means

## Coming Events

Monday, April 27, 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

*Inspiring People & Sharpening Skills* A workshop for those who are unemployed or in a job transition. To register, contact Al Hodges: [ahodges@sgc.org](mailto:ahodges@sgc.org).

Sunday, May 3, 6 p.m.

*Old-Fashioned Hymn Sing* Special guests Paul and Marjorie Ferrin.

*Jerry Nelson*