

## **NEXT 5**

### **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

**Question: Why start this pastoral succession planning now?**

**Answer:** First and foremost, Don and the personnel committee are following the Holy Spirit's leading in this prudent planning process, praying for the best way to prepare the church for future ministry. Specifically, these prayers focus on what is the best way and best time to identify the next directional leader for First Baptist Church, San Antonio – it's one of the significant decisions we must make as a church...how to move forward responsibly, planning for an eventual transition of senior pastor responsibilities. The Holy Spirit is leading FBCSA to pursue this deliberative planning process, which provides time to identify, call and transition to a new senior pastor over the period of two-to-three years. All the while, we understand the process is founded on following the Holy Spirit's leading, which could be faster or slower as we move forward.

**Question: Is Don Guthrie retiring or resigning?**

**Answer:** Don's intention is to retire as Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church in 2019, transitioning to a different role at FBCSA. One of the decisions we must make as a church is how to move forward responsibly, planning for an eventual transition of senior pastor responsibilities. This is a prudent strategic planning step in which Don and the personnel committee are following the Holy Spirit's leading.

**Question: Why should we consider this senior pastor succession process over the traditional method of the pastor resigning first, forming a search committee, calling an interim pastor, and then calling a permanent replacement?**

**Answer:** This multi-year deliberate succession planning process is designed to 1) enable the church to continue moving forward in ministry; 2) allow the new pastor time to learn the culture of First Baptist Church San Antonio, to get to know the congregation, to observe an annual "cycle" of activity, and to seek the Lord's direction for the years ahead; and 3) allow Don to continue to teach and encourage the church moving forward as we go through an important but sometimes stressful transition. The traditional method has often resulted in abrupt and disruptive decisions unhealthy for the long-term growth of the respective church.

**Question: What if the new senior pastor doesn't work out?**

**Answer:** This process is dependent on seeking the Holy Spirit's direction for the next steps...from church approval of the process itself, to selection of the search committee, and to the committee's work to identify the man God has called to be the next senior pastor. We're confident the Holy Spirit will lead us to the right man. God has faithfully led this church for more than 150 years and he'll continue doing so through this process.

**Question: Will Don continue preaching while this process is underway?**

**Answer:** Yes. As the process moves forward, we anticipate a new co-pastor to eventually assume some preaching responsibility. Over time, the majority of the responsibility will transition from Don to the co-pastor who will eventually assume all responsibilities of the senior pastor. The transition period enables mutual trust to grow between the new pastor and the church, which strengthens the enduring purpose of First Baptist Church to thrive in ministry, to make disciples and to make leaders.

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**Question: Does FBCSA have the financial resources to support a co-pastor?**

**Answer:** First Baptist Church is presently in an excellent place financially. God has blessed FBCSA through the generous giving of its members and we're confident, through deliberate planning and wise stewardship, we'll be able to appropriately support a co-pastor. As this process moves forward, the First Baptist Church finance committee will include co-pastor compensation in the 2017 budget recommendation.

**Question: Why not simply promote one of the other pastors to the position of senior pastor?**

**Answer:** The church will select a search team based on recommendations from the committee on committees. The senior pastor search team will prayerfully pursue a deliberate process to identify the man God has called to lead First Baptist Church, whoever that may be. At all steps in this process, we must remain committed to following the Holy Spirit's leading throughout. The current First Baptist Church San Antonio staff members are an exceptional team; we're confident the right thing to do is move forward with a deliberative plan to identify the man God has already chosen to eventually succeed Don Guthrie.

**Question: How does this impact the renovation project of West Hall?**

**Answer:** The renovation project of West Hall will move forward as presented to the church in October 2015. The succession planning process and the building / facility renovation efforts are not dependent on each other. The church's succession planning efforts cannot interfere but must support the ongoing ministry of First Baptist Church – continue to effectively and creatively thrive in ministry, training leaders and making disciples.

**Question: How will this impact the business decisions concerning the Tobin Center?**

**Answer:** This succession planning process will not affect First Baptist Church business decisions with the Tobin Center. Throughout this succession planning process Don and the First Baptist Church senior leadership team are committed to reinforcing and sustaining relationships outside the church, including with the Tobin Center, and will reassure the Tobin Center's leadership of that commitment.

**Question: How long will this planning process last?**

**Answer:** We anticipate this process lasting two-to-three years. All the while, we understand the process is founded on following the Holy Spirit's leading, which could be faster or slower as we move forward.

**Question: Who is involved in the planning process?**

**Answer:** The succession planning process includes the personnel committee, the First Baptist Church senior leadership team and a transition team (lay leaders and staff); additionally, the congregation plays an important role selecting the senior pastor search committee and considering recommendations at various milestones along the way.

**Question: Will Don handpick his successor?**

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**Answer:** No. The church will select a search team based on recommendations from the committee on committees. The personnel committee, the FBCSA senior leadership team and a succession transition team (lay leaders and staff) are very involved in the succession planning process. Through the entire succession journey, congregational involvement is critical and necessary. The church-elected search team will seek, find, and present the candidate they believe God has chosen.

**Question: Will the church congregation have any say-so into the process?**

**Answer:** Yes. At various points throughout this deliberate process, the church will hear updates and consider recommendations in church conference forums. In this process, one of the first steps is for the church to select the senior pastor search committee. The senior pastor search committee, the transition team and the senior leadership team welcome input from the congregation. They, as well as Don, are committed to being open and candid with the congregation throughout this whole process – it's the right thing to do. Being able to identify and call the right man as a co-pastor and eventual successor to Don as the senior pastor requires prayerful consideration and input from those in formal leadership roles and the church as a whole.

**Question: When will the church find a new senior pastor?**

**Answer:** We anticipate the succession planning process to last two-to-three years. This process is designed to, first and foremost, be flexible to adjust as the Holy Spirit leads. Secondly, the realities of identifying potential candidates, undertaking the rigorous review process and the assimilation of a new co-pastor to transition responsibilities of the senior pastor will drive the timeline. The church-selected search team will seek, find, and present the candidate they believe God has chosen.

**Question: Is this process starting because Don's cancer has returned?**

**Answer:** No. Don and the First Baptist Church senior leadership team are following the Holy Spirit's leading in this prudent planning process. Additionally, as Don moves into his twentieth year serving at First Baptist Church San Antonio, this planning step makes practical sense – to begin formally planning how church leadership will look in the next two-to-three years.

**Question: Will Don remain part of First Baptist Church after he retires?**

**Answer:** Don's intention is to retire as Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church in 2019 when he will follow the Holy Spirit's leading about how he will serve in a different role. At this point he and Holly do not plan to leave First Baptist Church, San Antonio. There is great value in different generations of church leadership serving together, complementing each other's gifts.

**Question: Why is this starting when the church is embarking on a major building / renovation project with West Hall?**

**Answer:** This succession planning process is independent of the renovation project for West Hall. Each initiative can proceed without interfering with the other. Clearly, it's important to sustain trusted, credible leadership for the duration of the renovation project – we're confident, given the structure of succession planning and the rightness of it, senior leadership at First Baptist Church will remain strong.

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**Question: How does this initiative complement (or not) the broad strategic planning process?**

**Answer:** The succession planning process is absolutely part of the church's broader strategic planning. Succession of senior pastor responsibilities is one of the strategic considerations in the years ahead. However, the overall strategic planning process is largely based on the church as a whole.

**Question: Will current staff members resign when a new senior pastor is called?**

**Answer:** Staff members at First Baptist Church were called by God to serve this church. We will not ask them to resign when we call a new senior pastor to lead this congregation. Rather, we will encourage them to continue serving and continue prayerfully following the Holy Spirit's leading for them and their families. The transition period enables mutual trust to grow between the new pastor and the church, which strengthens the enduring purpose of First Baptist Church to thrive in ministry, to make disciples and to make leaders.

**Question: Will the co-pastor concept shaped by this process be an enduring model for FBCSA?**

**Answer:** At this point, the co-pastor concept is designed to allow for a comprehensive and trusted transition of leadership responsibilities. It's important we prayerfully work through the multiyear transition process and then the church can make enduring decisions at that time.