

THE KIRK OF THE HILLS

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

We preach Jesus Christ as Lord; and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. II Corinthians 4:5

DR. STEPHEN ESTOCK
Minister of Christian Education

REV. MICHAEL KENNISON
Minister of Congregational Care

REV. MICHAEL HALL
Minister of Youth

REV. CARTÉE BALES
Minister of Global Outreach

MR. BEN PORTER
Director of Young Adults

DR. JEFFREY HEYL
Director of Music Ministry

MR. PHILIP VAN VALKENBURG
Executive Administrator

MRS. GRAHAM BEHNKE
Director of Children's Ministry

DR. W. WILSON BENTON, JR.
Pastor Emeritus

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The Congregational Meeting on Sunday, April 19 will include time for discussion, questions and voting. The following is to help answer questions that we anticipate may arise between this announcement and the meeting.

PROCESS AND BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

1. How many candidates did the Committee consider? What were they like?

Over 150 names have crossed our candidate list over the last 2½ years. Most were from the PCA, with a few from EPC or independent churches. The list included senior pastors, associate pastors, missionaries, seminary professors, and campus ministers. Some had doctorate-level degrees. A few were from outside the U.S. and ages ranged from 27 to 60 years old.

2. How did the Committee “process” the men it considered?

Based on how a candidate's background matched with our list of requirements (gleaned largely from input from the planning effort conducted by the Kirk near the end of 2006), we placed candidates on an A-list, B-list, or other-list. Next, we checked those on our A-list with one or more “trusted advisors” (men in leadership positions outside the Kirk, yet within our denomination). Once we had a manageable number of men on our A-list, Committee members were assigned to listen to several sermons for a given candidate. We did this for all those on our A-list. Committee members reported back to the whole group, allowing us to further reduce the A-list. The Committee voted on the top three candidates from the A-list and three or more Committee members would see the man preach in his church. At the same time, we would make “quiet inquiries” about him from people we knew and who would know him. When we landed on someone of interest, we would make more inquiries about the man, and the Chairman would talk or visit him in person. If things progressed, we would have conference calls with the potential candidate. And in some cases the man, or the man and his family, would come to St. Louis. This cycle, or some variation of it, was repeated many times.

3. How many trips did the Committee take?

We made more than 30 trips to different churches in many different states. In each case, three or more Committee members attended a worship service at the related church. In addition, we took multiple trips to a few churches with pastors of particular interest. Also, the two Ruling Elders on the Committee attended two of our denomination's General Assembly meetings and were able to meet men there. Our Chairman was able to have additional meetings during his business trips with MTW.

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OF THE HILLS
PULPIT
COMMITTEE

Elder
John Tubbesing
Chairman

Elder
Mike Duffy

Deacon
Jim Botts

Deacon
Doug Hickel

Sherrie Drury

Pat Kleinknecht

Franz Kohler

Linda McKindley

Jennifer Moerhle

4. Did some men in whom the Committee was interested say no? Why?

Yes, there were times we were initially excited about a man and he said no (Mark Kuiper being one of them; more on that later). There were a couple of times we went back to one of these men and asked him to reconsider, and he still said no. This is not an uncommon occurrence within a pastor search process. We now know this was God's protection and provision for us.

Timing was the most common reason given by these few men (i.e., something in the life of his church wouldn't allow him to leave at that time). Another reason was that the man did not sense his ministry at his present church was finished, and God still wanted him to stay where he was. Frankly, we did not hear a lot of other reasons.

5. Were some men interested in the Kirk but the Committee told *them* no? Why?

Yes. Several of the men interested in the Kirk simply did not meet the requirements we were looking for. For the men who did meet our requirements, we found that it takes a while to determine if a man and his family are whom God wants at the Kirk. As we learned more about a man, we would begin to see that he was not God's man for the Kirk.

6. Which men on the Committee's list said no to us? Which men did the Committee say no to?

We have been advised, and have made a commitment to each other on the Pulpit Committee, not to share any names. It can be detrimental to the men involved, and serves no good purpose for any of us to speculate why "so and so" was not the man God wanted for the Kirk. You will hear in the weeks and months ahead that the Committee did or did not consider "so and so," or that the Kirk was rejected by someone, or that the Committee told certain men we were not interested in them. The week we voted to recommend Mark Kuiper, one of the Committee members was told by a Kirk member that he heard we were very close to choosing someone, but the name he gave was not Mark's. The bottom-line is that we ask each member of the Kirk to be careful with what you hear and what you pass on to others.

ABOUT OUR PROCESS WITH THE KUIPERS

1. When and how did you first hear about Mark?

Mark was on the early list of men that one of our "trusted advisors" gave to us. We did not consider Mark at that time because he had not been at his church long enough for us to contact him. We made this same decision on other men, too. The same man who gave us Mark's name initially encouraged our Chairman to consider Mark at least twice throughout these 2½ years of our search, but we were always "in process" with someone else. Providentially, we believe now that God prevented us from calling another man.

2. What was the process the Committee went through to research, get to know, and call Mark?

Here is a question we are most excited to answer, because we have really seen God at work moving us to believe Mark is the man whom God wants at the Kirk. We first contacted Mark in the fall 2008, after we had listened to sermons on-line and three of our members had seen him preach at his church in Tupelo. He expressed an initial interest in the Kirk, but then shortly afterward surprised us by telling us he could not be considered. His main reason was that he felt that he needed to stay with his current church and did not want to uproot his family once again.

Providentially, the five Kuipers came to St. Louis in January 2009 for a long-planned wedding. God began moving in the hearts and minds of each of the five family members, drawing each one in his or her own way to consider St. Louis. Additionally, Mark's closest advisors and Tammy's best friends told them they should consider the Kirk. Even Mark's parents, living close by in Mississippi, told them they should look at the Kirk. As Mark continued to wonder if the Kirk might be something he should pursue, he began to pray again about whether God might be calling him to the Kirk.

We started "down the path" with Mark. We asked Mark to provide us with the results of his and Tammy's assessment from the PCA Church Planting Assessment Center that they had taken several years earlier. We also had Mark take a leadership-type test, and contacted 17 references to learn what we could about Mark and Tammy. During January and February our Committee went to Tupelo to see him preach, spread out over three separate visits. On two of those visits, the Kuipers had our team over to their home for dinner and discussion. Also, Mark and Tammy spent two days with our Committee in St. Louis during that time. Everyone on the Committee fell in love with them and their three children.

Everyone of us was excited about the Kuipers. On Sunday, March 15—the day our church family prayed in the worship service!—we voted unanimously to recommend Mark to the Kirk.

Mark gave us their answer on March 21. Interestingly, or providentially to be more accurate, before the Committee ever started thinking about Mark, our Chairman was asked at a staff and Session retreat (early last fall) when he would tell them who would be our new senior pastor. He gave them a "flippant answer" of March 22. The Lord's timing is indeed wonderful!

3. What is Mark's current church like?

Lawndale Presbyterian Church is not too different from the Kirk, although it is on a somewhat smaller scale. During the Committee's visits to the church, the order of worship and the style of music fit the Kirk. Membership is around 300 with a good range of ages (including lots of children). The people at Lawndale seem much like us in terms of jobs and education. They have a women's ministry, youth group, and a men's ministry. Additionally, they strongly support missionary efforts, including supporting 15 missionary families and 3 RUF campuses. The congregation also has created and sponsored an annual regional seminar on theology that brings in speakers from the area and other parts of the country. The church has been growing over the last few years, and they have been planning a facility expansion.

HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

Additional questions can be submitted to the Pulpit Committee ahead of the April 19 meeting by:

- Dropping questions in the "Pulpit Committee Question Box" in the Commons following Sunday morning services on both April 12 and 19.
- Send an e-mail to the pulpitcommittee@kirkofthehills.org.

All responses will be provided at the Congregational Meeting.