

## Pursuing a Calling

Providentially, God called Mark's father to be the senior pastor at Village Seven Presbyterian Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado where Mark met his future bride Tammy in the church youth group. Mark and Tammy married on November 30, 1985 and now have three teenage children.

Mark began his professional career selling computer equipment and then managed several computer stores. Later he changed careers and developed a successful business selling orthopedic medical equipment. He graduated from Colorado Christian College with a BS degree. He was active for several years as a youth volunteer at Village Seven when he began sensing a call into full-time vocational ministry. He was headed to RTS-



Jackson, his dad's alma mater, but through Village Seven's search for a youth pastor, he met Randy Carstens (a former youth pastor at the Kirk). Randy spoke with Mark about Covenant Theological Seminary (CTS) and then introduced Mark to Wilson and Pam

Benton. Mark and Tammy felt a call to St. Louis and while at CTS became interns at the Kirk in the Youth Ministry from 1993-1996. Also, during their time at CTS and the Kirk, Tammy took an active role in preparing for her life as a pastor's wife, including participation in Bible studies for seminary wives. Upon graduation from CTS, Mark was the graduate chosen to receive the Mark Belz award for Christian Education. Mark also received his United States citizenship while at Covenant.



## The Kuiper Family

Mark and Tammy are deeply in love with each other and their children, and it has been very obvious to the Committee that their children feel the same way.

Tammy (who is a native of Colorado Springs) is a high energy, outgoing partner with Mark in both their ministry and as mom to Jordan, Luke, and Anna. She, along with the rest of the family, loves sports and the outdoors. She was on her college varsity volleyball team (she attended the University of Colorado and Covenant College) and has passed that talent on to daughter Anna. A gifted hostess, Tammy warmly welcomes strangers and friends alike into their home. Teaching Sunday School and interacting with unbelievers are special joys for Tammy. In May of this year she will complete a physical therapist assistant program, and she plans on using her training in a part-time capacity after they are settled in St. Louis and at the Kirk.

Oldest son Jordan (18 and a high school senior) will begin his college career this fall at Mississippi State, majoring in engineering. He played football, basketball, and volleyball and was one of seven seniors chosen to be a "Tupelo Boy." The Kuiper's middle child Luke (16 and a sophomore) loves to play basketball and football, enjoys fishing, and is an avid reader. Anna (13 and in 7<sup>th</sup> grade) loves her big brothers and is following in her mother's athletic footsteps as a volleyball and basketball player. The Kuiper's golden retriever Ben rounds out the family.

Our interactions as a committee with Mark, Tammy, and their family (both in their home and elsewhere) have shown them collectively and individually to be great role models for young people and young families. All the Kuipers are very outwardly focused in their thinking and the way they live their lives.

## A Gifted Pastor

Upon graduation from Covenant (and at the end of his internship at the Kirk), Mark became the youth pastor at Trinity Presbyterian



Church in Charlottesville, VA from 1996 to 2001. Mark and Tammy then went through the PCA church planting assessment program and were asked to plant a church in Pasadena, CA in 2001. After five years of intensive ministry and a growing church plant in California, they were called to Lawndale Presbyterian Church in Tupelo, MS where they have served for the past three years.

Mark preaches expository sermons that are rich in application and point people to Christ. He prefers preaching through books of the Bible and is appropriately transparent in the pulpit. His theology is consistent with the Kirk's theology.

Our various evaluations and contacts with numerous references show him to be a strong and collaborative leader. Throughout his ministry, Mark has sought mentoring from pastors more senior than he including his own father. His training under men such as pastors Wilson Benton (the Kirk) and John Hall (Trinity) has provided Mark with models of strong and humble leaders. He has also actively sought to mentor those less experienced in the pastorate.

From our interaction, Mark's character and his personality traits are consistent with the role of a head pastor. He shows humility in every aspect of his life and people from all different backgrounds are drawn to him; to quote one of his many references, Mark is a "gatherer." We also find that his life is consistent with what he proclaims. He preaches and lives out the grace he has experienced in his own life, and he greatly desires to help equip those (at the Kirk or at CTS) who feel called to the ministry.

We are encouraged that God has called a man to the Kirk who already has experience following a senior pastor of 21 years (at Lawndale), and has worked in large churches (during his ministry at Village Seven, the Kirk, and Trinity), giving him knowledge of the staff and leadership dynamics of a large church.

