



# THE PASTOR'S PEN

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## A Change in Ministry

At the end of the morning service this past Sunday it was announced by the Board Chair that I will be retiring this summer. My last Sunday as your Senior Minister will be the 28<sup>th</sup> of June. While this is a transition that I would rather not be making, I realize that it is one that is necessary due to my present health and physical limitations.

Some time back, I spoke rather candidly with the Elders about my health and about how I knew that it was beginning to interfere with my service to the Church. One of my main concerns focused on the problem that I was not able to visit in the hospitals and care centers around Pensacola without picking up a respiratory infection or a fever of some kind on a regular basis. While it was an inconvenience for me to be down or out for a few days at a time, I was more concerned with my inability to fulfill my duties and responsibilities as your Senior Minister so frequently. I was also very concerned with making sure that I did not share any of my maladies with others in the congregation. This last task was not always easy as people often wanted to meet and talk when I was not feeling well.

The Elders were very supportive when I shared my concerns with them and we agreed that they would help me monitor my service to the congregation while they helped me with the duties that I had difficulty in performing properly. At that time I also expressed to the Elders my wish that when they felt I was to the point of needing to step down from the position of Senior Minister they would let me know. That time has come and the Elders have made the recommendation, based on their concerns for my personal health and well being, that I go ahead and make the necessary preparations to retire from congregational ministry.

At this time I wish to thank the Elders for their support and their care. I also wish to thank the members of First Christian for the opportunity to have served as your Senior Minister for the past six years. I still have several weeks to go before I must depart and I plan to use the time wisely setting up things for my replacement. I am also looking forward to helping with the preparations needed to closeout my ministry with you and to assist the Board in the process of getting ready to secure an interim minister to work with you as you plan for your future. The Regional Minister, John Mobley, is fully aware of the events here and has already begun providing regional assistance and support to the Board.

After thirty-nine years of ordained ministry, and another four years of lay ministry before that, I cannot say that this time comes upon me unexpectedly. However, I do not see it as the end of my personal service to our Lord even though it is an end of my ability to perform full-time pastoral ministry. I plan to use a portion of my retirement in study, writing and service where I can and as the Lord allows. So, relying on Him, I am content with placing all of my future concerns in His hands and safekeeping.

Once again, thank you all for your love, your care and your support. My prayers will continue to go up for all of you and for the future of this congregation.

Blessings,

*James*