

August 1, 2011

Dear Friends and Brothers and Sisters in Faith,

Yesterday at a called meeting of their congregation, White Memorial Presbyterian Church in Raleigh extended a call to me to become their next Pastor and Head of Staff. I informed the Session of our church yesterday afternoon and the staff of Howard Memorial yesterday evening. As we live in a small town, I am sure that some of you have heard this news before the arrival of this letter.

The opportunity to serve God and church at White Memorial is a call to a new ministry, and even as I am excited and humbled by the prospect of shepherding this new congregation, we are saddened that our time at Howard Memorial will soon draw to its close. My last Sunday with you all will be August 28<sup>th</sup>, and my last day in the office will be August 30<sup>th</sup>. I hope to see as many of you as possible before that time and share in person my thanksgiving for our ministry and our growth together.

The most essential challenge I face revolves around ending well my ministry in Tarboro and my service at Howard Memorial. Beginning this ending is why I am writing you today.

First, I must begin with gratitude. I am grateful to God for our time in Tarboro. Our family could not have hand picked a more loving, accommodating, trusting, supportive, or gracious congregation. These seven plus years have been years of growth for us, and we have received more gifts, more cards, more foods, and more kindnesses that we might have predicted or deserved. It is as though a fountain of hospitality and love has rained upon us since the day we arrived. To God first, and then to each of you, we cannot say thank you enough.

Second, I am working hard with the Session to secure preachers throughout the early to mid-fall. We are working hard as a staff to secure the coming months in Christian Education, Youth, Music, and Worship ministries. I am developing a fall calendar and a plan for Stewardship 2012. I will leave things as complete as I can before my last days at Howard Memorial.

Additionally, we are working with the Committee On Ministry (COM) of New Hope Presbytery. Our Interim Executive Presbyter and Stated Clerk, Ted Churn, will work closely with our Session and the COM to create a transition team which will develop a process to locate a suitable Interim Pastor. In time a Pastor Nominating Committee will be elected, and you will welcome a new Pastor to Howard Memorial and to Tarboro.

And what a lucky woman or man he or she will be as you extend the same welcome you afforded our family! My friends, the future is bright at Howard Memorial. Even though Presbytery rules will prohibit my participation in worship, weddings, funerals, and other services in Tarboro, I will ever pray for you all, hoping for growth upon the foundation we have built together. I will, through the Presbytery and proximity hear of your news and celebrate and mourn when appropriate. It goes without saying that this is a move that will bear its share of sadness for our family: goodbyes, by their very nature, are difficult and leaving so many friends, a vibrant ministry, and a talented staff will prove to be a real challenge.

Trusting in God I give thanks for the call to Howard Memorial and to Tarboro. I give thanks for the blessings upon blessings which we have known here. On behalf of Colleen, Patrick, Gabriel, and Amelia, we offer our prayers that God's grace would rain down upon each of you richly . We pray that you would know our Lord and, in our Lord, be fully known.

With deepest gratitude,

Christopher H. Edmonston  
Pastor, Howard Memorial Presbyterian Church