*Message from Pastor Nominating Committee Co-Chair Eric Behrens*

In our early meetings, the PNC discussed ways to cast our search net as widely as possible. However, the actual search for a Pastor could not effectively begin until the PNC received the completed Mission Study Report to guide us on the specific qualifications a Senior Pastor needs to move Piedmont Community Church forward.

While the Mission Study Report was being prepared, Zookie and I researched the current State of the Pastorate in the United States. This research included the internet, news and magazine articles, and surveys by the Pew Research Center and the Barna Group, which are two research firms which study religion in the United States. PNC members also reached out to likeminded denominations to see how they conduct searches and whether we could find candidates there. Finally, I learned much from leaders of Vanderblomen and Agora which are the two largest Pastor Search Firms in the United States.

What we learned was discouraging. Declining trends in national church attendance and seminary enrollment have been further aggravated by COVID. In addition, and most importantly, Pastors are quitting the profession in droves. One article called this national POST-COVID trend *“the Great Resignation”.*

These trends have led to extreme competition among churches for strong Senior Pastors, especially younger ones. As one Pastor told a search firm, “I can’t believe the number of recruiting calls I’m getting”.

After the PNC received the Mission Study Report entitled, “What We Seek—Senior Pastor Profile”, we discussed both our findings on the State of the Pastorate and how this information would impact our search. We noted that the church’s Bylaws gave the PNC considerable flexibility since they say absolutely nothing about HOW the PNC should conduct its search.

The PNC then discussed HOW we could find our the next Senior Pastor. The two PNC members with previous experience in searching for our last two pastors shared that the process could take up to two years to complete. The other option was to hire a Pastor Search firm to identify a small group of Pastors who might qualify for our church. The cost of hiring such a firm would easily be in the $60,000 to $70,000 range.

During our meeting, we discovered an illustration of what Zookie called God’s fingerprints in our process: one of the members of our committee, Adam Thacher, owns an Executive Search firm. Adam’s expertise made him a rich source of professional insights and experience. He presented a recommendation that, rather than conduct an extended search or pay an expensive search firm, we should recommend Steve as our church’s next Senior Pastor.

Among Adam’s key points were that hiring a new leader presents two main risks. First is that the candidate’s skills and experience prove to be disappointing once he or she is actually in the role. The second risk is that the candidate is not a good fit with the new organization.

To our advantage, the PNC, the church’s Staff and PCC’s congregation have had the benefit of working with Steve over the last 13 months. During that time, he has demonstrated considerable executive leadership and is a very good fit with our church culture. The pressing financial and organizational challenges our church faces today require that we address them as soon as possible. PCC can’t afford to take two years to conduct a robust search in a highly competitive market, given the national trends I described. Further, in what might be called a “seller’s market” for Senior Pastors, our church could lose Steve during a lengthy search. There are also financial benefits in hiring a local pastor who owns his home near the church, since that eliminates the costs of hiring a search firm and the expenses of moving a Pastor to the Bay Area and providing housing for him or her.

Next, the PNC discussed how best to evaluate Steve’s thirteen month performance against the criteria which the Mission Study Team set forth in its Senior Pastor Profile. Zookie will now conclude our presentation by summarizing how the PNC evaluated Steve’s performance.