

Search Committee Recommendation

It is with great and unanimous joy that the Senior Pastor Search Committee recommends Matt Petty to be our new Senior Pastor. Arriving at this recommendation is the result of guidance and clarity from a loving and gracious God, the non-stop prayers of His people, and the diligence of the Committee you entrusted with this awesome responsibility. We thank all those who have prayed for us and encouraged us along the way.

Matt has led faithfully and effectively as our Pastor to Students here at BHBC for the past 18 years. He is very faithful to his calling as a pastor. The Lord has used him to touch many lives for Jesus Christ and God's Kingdom here, in our community and in places around the world. The Lord has prepared Matt for this time through years of ministry, through study, and through his own life experiences to have the pastor's heart, passion for God's Word, and leadership abilities that we believe God will use to guide us into the future. Matt has served loyally, learning under Pastor Mike, who has recommended him to the committee for this position. You have probably heard Matt preach and know how God has gifted him in this area; but if not, his sermons can be found on the church website.

You may know Matt - and this recommendation of the committee may be all you need to know. But for many others, there is a need to understand how this decision was arrived at and a need to know more about Matt himself.

The Search Committee has worked through a step-by-step process in seeking to be led, not by human influence, pride or personal preference, but by the Lord. The responsibility was heavy, but the Lord faithfully ministered to us through scripture, prayer, wise counsel and your words of encouragement. The Lord led us to move deliberately, step by step, starting with the experience of wise experts that we read and the counsel of our advisors. God faithfully showed us the next step to take as we got there. And He gave us the gift of your generous input regarding the kind of pastor Burnt Hickory needs. We received almost 500 member survey responses with great information and input.

At the beginning and throughout this process we have asked the Lord to show us who He has chosen. We asked Him to lead us to this man. We sought resumes and recommendations from Burnt Hickory members, from networks that included the North American Mission Board, Georgia Baptist Mission Board, Southern Baptist Executive Committee, and other large church leaders from across the nation and made an open announcement on a widely used church resume portal. We received 83 resumes. The committee members spent a number of weeks pouring over these resumes and recommendations to identify and consider the top candidates. We watched and prayed over sermons of each of the top candidates. Questionnaires were sent to those that the whole committee agreed were top candidates and we received very thoughtful responses from each one of them, including Matt.

In light of all that we have experienced and learned, the Lord blessed us with great clarity and confidence in recognizing Matt as God's man for this role.

Matt has proven himself to be a Man of God and a committed leader in our congregation. He rightly divides God's Word every week. He has the education level, leadership, pastoral and communication skills we seek. He has a deep knowledge and love for Burnt Hickory that no other candidate could have. He has a strong, supportive family with a godly wife and parents. He is well respected in the association, community, church family and in Baptist leadership circles. He has been recommended by Mike Stephens, our previous Senior Pastor and by Marty Godfrey, our Executive Pastor. He knows and has a heart for our existing staff, who all know and respect him. He has a strong vision for the future of our church to reach our community and our world. He has demonstrated a great gift of recruiting, mentoring, shepherding and raising up leaders and future pastors in his ministry.

Kevin Turpin, one of our advisors gave a devotional for us a few weeks ago that summarized well what we are looking for in our pastor. Jesus described the two most important attributes in Matthew 22 - to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself. With this are charity or love in action (1 Cor 13:13), a servant's heart (Matthew 23:11), humility (Luke 9:48), and contentment (1 Tim 6:6). After meeting with and interviewing Matt and his wife Melissa, we can see that Matt very definitely has these qualities. He has a calling and a great passion to lead our church to fulfill the Lord's purpose for us.

We took census of the Committee at each step of the process. We committed to take each step in unity together and we have done that. After interviewing Matt there was a clear sense from everyone on the Committee that the Lord had directed all of us together in affirming Matt to recommend him to the church. As with Saul when he was with Ananias in Acts 9, in that moment it was as if the scales fell from our eyes and we could see. We are confident that the Lord is orchestrating His will in our midst.

The Committee will host a reception for meeting Matt and his family on Saturday, July 13. There will be time for Matt to share his heart, for you to ask questions, and for personal time to speak with Matt and Melissa. The church will vote by closed ballot on Sunday, July 14 on the Committee's recommendation to call Matt Petty as our Senior Pastor. If Matt is selected by the church and accepts the position, he will be given time to go away and prepare before he is installed as our Senior Pastor beginning Sunday, August 4.

We are convinced the Lord has His hand on Burnt Hickory, and we are excited to see the great things He will do in this place. We love you all.

Committee Members: Sue Clark, Jim Dodgen, David Meriwether, Tommy Poole, Mary Margaret Smith, Steve Thomas, and Wesley White

Committee Advisors were Daryl Price, Executive Director of Noonday Baptist Association, Marty Godfrey, Executive Pastor of Burnt Hickory Baptist Church, and Kevin Turpin, church member and Personnel Committee member at Burnt Hickory Baptist Church.

