



Bellevue

Office of the Pastor

Pastor Steve Gaines, Ph.D.

Dear Bellevue Family,

The Lord Jesus Christ clearly called our family to Bellevue and to Memphis 19 years ago. Bellevue, you have been our family. You have prayed for us, cared for us, and loved us well. Since 1903, the Lord has had His hand on our church, and we are so grateful for the opportunity to be part of what He is currently doing. We could never put into words how grateful we are for Bellevue Baptist Church.

It has been a great honor to serve as a pastor in four churches over the past 41 years. But many years ago, the Lord spoke to my heart that He would one day want me to serve as an itinerant preacher. That simply means that I would travel and minister at different churches instead of serving as the pastor of one church. The Bible says, "There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Nineteen years ago, the Lord began a season for us at Bellevue, and now we have heard His voice that it is time for a new season.

While I am not retiring from ministry, I will now begin a transition out of the pastorate. Before I go into detail of what this will look like, I want you to know two things.

First, no one has asked us to do this. We have not felt any pressure from anyone to make this transition. Donna and I began talking about it a couple of years ago, and we agree that this is the right time.

Second, I want to address the obvious question of my health. While I have received a cancer diagnosis, this transition is not connected to that. My treatments are going well, and I even received a good report last week on my latest PET scan. But regardless of what tests show, I firmly believe the word the Lord has given me that "I will not die, but live, and tell of the works of the Lord." (Psalm 118:17).

While Donna and I will, Lord willing, be traveling and speaking in different places, I have no intention of leaving Bellevue. This is home. Bellevue is my church. Just like my three predecessors (Dr. Adrian Rogers, Dr. Ramsey Pollard, and Dr. R.G. Lee), this is where Donna and I intend to remain. Bellevue will be the home base for our itinerant ministry.

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bellevue.org



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Now, what does this mean for Bellevue? I have begun meeting with a team that will help us during this time of transition. They, along with some others, will form a search committee that will prayerfully seek who the Lord has as the next Senior Pastor of Bellevue. Even though this team isn't yet fully formed, I ask that you begin praying for them every day. Pray that the Holy Spirit will grant them wisdom and that they will clearly hear His voice.

We do not know the exact timeframe in which this transition will be complete, but we are trusting the Lord to instruct us and teach us in the way that we should go and guide us with His eye upon us. I will continue to preach and be your pastor until the Lord brings the next man, and then I will join you as our new pastor leads us.

Once our next pastor arrives, he and I will begin a several-month process of transition as we "pass the baton." In a relay race, each runner works together to win the race. As one runner is finishing his portion of the race, he runs with everything he has. While he is finishing his race, the next runner begins his race. There is a time of transition when they are both running at full speed, and the baton is being passed from one to the other. Until that baton is passed, the first runner does not slow down at all.

That is what I intend to do. I'm not slowing down. I'm committed to handing this baton off well. As a church, Bellevue has gone through this transition six other times. My race as Senior Pastor of Bellevue is coming to an end, but my commitment to you is to keep running with all my strength and effectively hand the baton to the next Senior Pastor.

I do not come to this transition with fear or regret. I am genuinely excited to enter into the next phase of ministry that the Lord has for me. I'm calling it "my fourth quarter," and I'm "taped up and ready to play."

I am excited to have more time to invest in my children and grandchildren in a way that has not been possible while serving as a full-time pastor.

By God's grace, He has given all of us a path forward. While the future may contain some unknowns, we know that the Lord Jesus Christ will never leave us or forsake us. The greatest days for Bellevue Baptist Church are yet to come. I am looking forward to experiencing them with you. God bless you all.

3 John 2,
Brother Steve

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