

Calvary Baptist Church
Family Meeting
5/21/2024 5:00 PM
Smithville, TX

Nick Henderson welcomed everyone and opened in prayer. He asked that all that we do be glorifying to God and that He would give us guidance.

Pastor Phillip Cole reviewed the background of how we became Calvary Baptist Church in Smithville. He spoke about how God had been working in his life, in the life of Calvary Baptist Bastrop, and at Trinity Baptist Smithville. There was a vision to plant a church, but they didn't know where or when. Trinity Baptist had decided that God was moving them to consolidate their resources and merge with another church to bring vibrancy and life to that church. They graciously and humbly opened their hands to the Lord and said that all we have is yours. So, in a span of six months God orchestrated the unimaginable: a church willing to plant, a pastor called to shepherd and a place to call home. You can see the Divine Hand of God moving in natural circumstances to bring about supernatural outcomes. Some renovation happened with the opening scheduled to be Easter 2020, but the CoVid pandemic made that impossible. The opening was then scheduled for August 23, 2020. A drone picture was shown of the finished church. He explained how the church has grown with many visitors, baptisms, and adding services with an average attendance of 272.

Pastor Phillip quoted statistics from LifeWay about church attendance: only 5% of churches average between 250 and 499 people. That is where we are. None of us saw this coming or expected this to happen. There was no strategic plan when we began. We now have a plan or vision of possibilities created by the Church Council.

Keanan Foley was called to give background of how we came to that model or vision. One of the Search Team candidates for Senior Pastor said that we are actually two churches and if he was called to be our Senior Pastor, he would push for autonomy for the Smithville Campus with a cooperative network of churches that work together for the same mission. So that prompted the council to draft what has become known as our new multi-site strategy. It consolidated vocabulary and a diagram was developed to show where we are now with everything combined and what it would look like with a strategy of a Cooperative Network with an autonomous church. We want to be listening to the Lord's leading with a process that could be followed when Pastor candidates ask what we are doing with Smithville. The church council would evaluate the individual campus in regard to finances, growth, baptisms, attendance, maturity level of the Believers. At the same time the campus would be evaluating itself to determine if we feel the Lord leading us to autonomy. So, tonight we are determining if now is the time for this next step in the progression. Pastor Phil was not involved in any way with this draft of a new multi-site strategy.

Pastor Phil then talked about what this is NOT. It is not a split, separation, breakup, or parting of ways. It is not Smithville leaving Bastrop or Bastrop abandoning Smithville. This is a cooperative network that shares resources and ideas. Some things would still happen together (church

picnics, prayer meetings, Bible studies) working together cooperatively in unity for the kingdom of God. This is not a change in character or of the culture of the Smithville church. We're not setting out to become something else but rather to steward well what it is that God has given us. We will fight hard to preserve our uniqueness, beauty, and wonder for the glory of God and the benefit of His people. It should be a place of hope and healing where people are honest and genuine, where they are loved and not alone. He spoke about the intentionality of the 15-minute chaotic turn around and the lack of decorations and the T-shirt/blue jeans apparel. It makes everything genuine, not pretentious. We want the character that God has instilled into this place. All those things we value, we want to preserve as we move forward.

He went on to say that this autonomy is the healthiest model because it is Biblical. The NT churches each had their own elders, their own deacons. They were fully autonomous churches. Also, this new model allows for each church to serve its area in a way that adapts to its uniqueness, giving flexibility and creativity to address unique needs. It reinforces each member's responsibility for the local church, not relying on the mother church for support. In planting a church, each church would plant its own church. Adding another church to our current model would be even more unhealthy. This new model is healthier in long-term viability.

Moving forward with this new model means prayerfully considering our giving, in both finances and service. Our next meeting, at the end of March or beginning of April, will give us more information on where we stand financially to get a bigger picture of the viability of moving forward. We might be healthy in one area, but not so healthy in another area. We would need people to step forward in different areas such as administration and management and to see what positions and holes that need to be filled before holding any kind of vote and to feel confident moving forward if the Lord moves us in that direction. He asked each of us to prayerfully consider our involvement in giving financially and in serving and humbly seek God's will for Smithville's autonomy. Above all we desire that the spirit of God lead us in unity.

He reminded us that to vote (which will take place sometime after the next meeting) you must be a member, so we'll have another on-ramp class soon. There is also an online option for membership.

A time was given then for questions and answers.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane L. Fauth

Diane L. Fauth, church clerk