



Retirement Resolution

The Reverend Larry David Neal



Whereas, Larry David Neal was born in Columbus, Georgia into a family that would be composed of two loving parents and three brothers;

Whereas, Larry was blessed to be raised in a family that loved him enough to show and teach him about the grace and hope that is found in Jesus Christ, leading him to make his profession of faith at the age of 12 in one of the Southern Baptist Churches that nurtured his faith;

Whereas, his connection with the Southern Baptist Church led him to participate actively in the Baptist Student Union at the University of Georgia and further have his faith shaped in a manner that led him to sense being called into pastoral ministry;

Whereas, Larry experienced the grace of falling in love with someone in college more important than his Georgia Bulldogs, Judy Claire Graddy, with whom he has had the privilege of being married to for over 46 years;

Whereas, Larry and Judy, began their journey in life together as a married couple by moving to Louisville, Kentucky so Larry could begin, and subsequently complete, his graduate studies at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary;

Whereas, Larry and Judy continued their ministry together with Larry serving congregations in Gaffney, South Carolina and Statesboro, Georgia wearing the hats of “Minister of Education,” “Youth Director,” “Associate Pastor,” and “Church Administrator;”

Whereas, on Christmas Eve of 1979, Larry and Judy received their “Best Christmas Present Ever,” daughter Claire Elizabeth while living in Statesboro;

Whereas, prayerfully, and at some times painfully, Larry and his family listened to God’s call to make a life changing decision regarding the direction of his ministry, enrolling in Columbia Theological Seminary in 1982 to pursue ordination in the Presbyterian Church in the United States, soon to be the Presbyterian Church(USA);

Whereas, as part of his experience in seminary, he interned as an “ordained Baptist minister” in a Presbyterian Church in Anniston, Alabama, subsequently graduating from Columbia Theological Seminary in 1986;

Whereas, in June of 1986, Larry and family accepted a call to serve the First Presbyterian Church of Perry, a congregation sometimes referred to as the “western frontier outpost” of the Presbytery of St. Augustine;

Whereas, Larry proved to be the person truly called by God to serve the Perry congregation for over 31 years. Through his Spirit-centered, humble, and pragmatic leadership, he pastored the congregation through the move from a land-locked downtown location to a location on the edge of town where the congregation could maximize the effectiveness of its ministry.

Whereas, Larry was not just an excellent builder of new facilities and locales for ministry, he also showed his “building skills” as the faith of FPCP members was constructed, sometimes de-constructed and re-constructed during times of prosperity and hardship. As challenges were faced, Larry walked alongside members of the congregation, shared his own consternation and frustrations, but first and foremost shared his trust and hope in the Providence of God in all matters;

Whereas, Larry was not only a builder, he was a navigator. Larry is one of a small number of pastors who incorporated and accommodated a spiritual growth and renewal movement like Cursillo in the life of a congregation without creating an “insider/outsider” mentality. Larry’s humility, paired with his keen sense of the unique spiritual needs of each person in his congregation, enabled him to navigate the diverse spiritual needs of individuals and the congregation.

Whereas, Larry also demonstrated repeatedly his “navigational skills” travelling afar (without complaint) to serve on a plethora of committees and commissions of the Presbytery of St. Augustine, serving with unmatched sensitivity, skill and wisdom, while not being afraid to say that “which needed” to be said;

Whereas, the time has come for Larry and Judy to leave this wonderful group of (as Elder Bob Bell describes) “Educated Rednecks,” assembled by God to be the First Presbyterian Church of Perry, and move into a retirement that by God’s grace will be filled with plenty of golf played on courses more beautiful and challenging than long stretches of grass bordered by the ubiquitous pine trees of Northwest Florida, much time spent with grandchildren who have yet to discover the distractions of social media and time with one another that careers and parenting often gobbled up.

Therefore, be it resolved on this third day in February, 2018, the Presbytery of St. Augustine of the Presbyterian Church (USA) grant honorary retirement to the Reverend Larry David Neal effective January 1, and that the Presbytery signify its approval by joining in the singing of the “Doxology” offering thanksgiving to God for one very special blessing, Larry Neal, who is being honored with this day.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeff Welch".

The Reverend Jeffrey W. Welch
Moderator of the Presbytery of St. Augustine, but more importantly Larry’s
friend.