

# Christopher M. Aiken

Senior Pastor

## Calvary Baptist Church

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To: Clay Toyne, Chairman of Deacons; Elizabeth Viola, Personnel Team Leader, and the Congregation of Calvary Baptist Church

Dear Church Family:

In April 2007, this church paid me the greatest compliment that any man can receive: having discerned the will of God, you called me to minister among you and serve you as your pastor. Now, eleven years later, the honor and privilege associated with that invitation still cause me to be filled with awe.

Over the eleven years we have labored together, we have served thousands of people in Christ's name, baptized over 200 people, been on mission together countless times around the world, and have seen many people grow in their faith toward God. We have developed strategic partnerships in our community and have honored the Lord together.

Calvary has been a place of fruitful ministry, and I am forever humbled and grateful for your love and willingness to follow my leadership over these many years.

After a season of prayerful consideration and seeking the will of God, Jodi and I have become convinced that our season of ministry at Calvary is drawing to a close and therefore today, I tender my resignation as the pastor of this great church.

Many months ago, I entered into a season of prayer with Jodi and with my pastor, Dr. Michael Cloer and his wife Tebra. Our goal was to discern the will of God regarding a transition to join the staff of Englewood Baptist Church in Rocky Mount, NC. This process was lengthy but deliberate. A few weeks back, the church extended an invitation to preach in view of a call, after which they voted unanimously to call me to serve as the Assistant Pastor with responsibility over evangelism, connection, and discipleship.

When asked to come to Calvary eleven years ago, I thought it was a "crazy idea." I did not understand why God would move our family from the mission fields of the Northeast to a city with more churches than convenience stores. As I made my case to the Lord, He clearly spoke to my heart, telling me that He desires obedience to His plan over the best laid plans I could muster (1 Samuel 15:22-23). In obedient response to that clear call, Jodi and I loaded up our belongings and family and drove to the opposite end of the country to make Pensacola our home.

Here we have raised our sons who have both graduated from high school and moved on to college and beyond. Here we made new friends, many of whom became eternal friends, and became part of the family of Calvary. Here, the Lord grew me personally and has faithfully continued a refining work in my life. I have been truly blessed to be your pastor and, I pray, in some ways that you have been blessed by that relationship as well.

The days ahead will fly by. I will be meeting with all levels of leadership from deacons to ministry teams in the coming weeks to define a transitions strategy that will enable this church to flourish as you prepare for the next chapter of ministry. As details of the transition are defined, we will gladly share them to you. Please be patient with the leadership. They are good and godly people whom God has raised up for “such a time as this.”

While it is extremely difficult to leave here, we take some comfort in the fact that we have amazing technology that virtually shrinks that distance tremendously.

We ask for your prayers as we make arrangements to sell our home, wrap up a thousand details and plan a move to NC. We also commit to pray for you faithfully and for the next shepherd that God has in mind for this great church that we have called our family for these many years.

With deep affection and love in Christ,

*Pastor Chris Aiken*