In April, 2007, our Senior Minister departed from IPC. Due to the many circumstances and concerns surrounding his departure, it was determined that a time of healing and reflection would be appropriate for our congregation. So, for the months following, the IPC congregation was called to prayer, led by Richard Pratt in his series entitled, Pray with Your Eyes Open, in August, 2007. It could be said that this season of prayer was structured as a time of introspection and self-evaluation for our membership and leadership. But, more importantly, I believe, it was for the purpose of calling each of us, as members of IPC, to a recognition that we are hopeless and helpless without God’s guiding hand in our lives, both individually and collectively.

We, as a church, need God’s arms of support and encouragement. We need to rely on Him and His mercies, not on ourselves and our own human frailties.

Then, in October of last year, the election of our 11-person Pulpit Search Committee was completed. Since that election was completed, your pulpit search committee has met nearly 40 times as a group, and has had innumerable conversations with prior search committee members, staff members, nominators, candidates, and references.

We have met regularly since the 1st week of November, 2007, and have received names and contact information for over 60 potential candidates. Those candidates come from a wide variety of backgrounds, age brackets, church sizes, and church styles. Many of your committee members have traveled to visit or observe potential candidates. Your committee members have dined with candidates and even drank coffee with candidates, while in pursuit of information to be used in evaluating that candidate’s potential for service at IPC. Literally, hundreds of sermons have been heard. Thanks to the capabilities of the internet, and the information available on it, we have had the opportunity to consider candidates from every corner of our country.

Tonight, I am NOT announcing that we have a finalist, nor am I announcing that we are “close to completion” of our task. I am here to advise you of our progress and to solicit your continued prayers for three (3) specific needs: (1) our candidates (and their families); (2) our church/congregation; and (3) our committee (both individually and collectively).

(1) **Our candidates**, when notified, are oftentimes caught totally by surprise. In some situations, our candidates are not even considering the possibility of a change.
   - Please pray that the Holy Spirit would guide us and those candidates to know and understand the possibility of a call to IPC.
   - Please pray that the Holy Spirit would direct your pulpit search committee to the right individual...that we would continue to receive the names of potential candidates. Many of you have submitted names to this committee. We ask that you continue to do so. Each name is presented to and reviewed by the committee. Many of those submissions continue to be reviewed.
   - Please pray that God’s guiding hand would direct your committee to the right under-shepherd for IPC.

(2) **Our church / congregation** needs to be lifted-up in prayer each and every day.

“All I have needed, Thy hand hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.”
• Please pray for our staff as they minister to the needs of our congregation...that they would have strength for fulfilling their responsibilities (from answering the phones, to cooking the meals, to visiting the sick, to preparing the lessons they teach). Pray for their encouragement.
• Please pray for our membership. Pray that God will supply the needs of His people at IPC. Involve yourself in the lives of your fellow church-members.
• Please pray for the Officers of IPC. Pray that difficult decisions would be made with confidence. Pray that the needs of our membership would be met through the efforts of our officers.

(3) Our Pulpit Search Committee falls into the rut of self-reliance. We need your encouragement and we need your prayers. We want clear direction when we can’t see beyond the fog. We want quick answers when the landscape is covered with the debris that comes with haste. We want to “have the answers” when we know the answers only come from Our Savior above who can and will guide our every step.
• Pray that our committee would continue to be healthy
• Pray for the families of your committee members
• Pray for the unity of your committee
• Pray for clarity of purpose and direction

I recently received an email (of encouragement) from a friend who is a member of another church telling me of her prayers for IPC and for the Pulpit Search Committee. Listen to her words:

Constantly keep before your heart that God knows the pastor He has for your church. Jeremiah 3:15 says, “And I will give you pastors according to mine heart which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.”

And, she closed her comments with:

As I have looked at scripture and prayed, it occurred to me that frequently God delayed providing leadership in His Word because the man He planned to use was not ready or the time was not right. Be willing to wait until God has prepared the man He desires to be pastor.

Numbers 27:16-17 says, “May the Lord, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead out and bring them in, so the Lord’s people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.”

Having shared with you the concerns and prayer requests of your Pulpit Search Committee, I want you to know that we are diligently pursuing the next Senior Pastor of IPC. I can assure you that our efforts have been, at times, frustrating, and, at times, exhilarating. We have examined our church and developed a listing of characteristics we are seeking in our candidates. Our processes have not been

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directed at any single candidate, but rather, we have examined and continue to examine several candidates based on our criteria.

So, where are we in the process? As I indicated before, we have reviewed more than 65 individuals. Of these, we determined that approximately 15 merited further consideration, and we actually contacted them through either letters or phone calls. From this group of individuals, we began discussions with 7-8 candidates (who expressed some level of interest). Our evaluation of these names has included pursuit of background information from a network of “nominators” (individuals who know IPC, individuals who we respect, and individuals who may know the particular candidates). Through our evaluation process, we have heard “live” sermons from all of our candidates. I want to be clear at this point: these candidates ARE NOT finalists. We are not nearing completion of the search process. We continue to pursue and receive names of potential candidates. You should know that we have considered candidates who are: (a) Senior Pastors; (b) Associate Pastors; (c) RUF Leaders; (d) Church Planters; (e) Seminary Professors; and, (f) even individuals from other Reformed denominations.

We have actually rejected candidates, as well as had candidates reject us. The reasons for rejection are too numerous to convey. Our denomination currently has at least 5 “large congregations” seeking a Senior Pastor. However, IPC has a great story to tell. We are ten (10) months into the process, and quite frankly, do not have a time-line for completion. We are blessed as a church to have our friend, Dr. Richard Pratt, serving God in this place so effectively. The ministries of our church reach far and wide. The lives that have been impacted through the ministries of IPC are truly countless. Our high view of worship is a key factor that is communicated to our candidates. As a matter of fact, the story we tell focuses on the fact that Sunday morning worship is the central focus of our congregation...that all ministries of IPC reflect God’s call to individuals (like us) to teach, to sing, to hostess, to visit, to befriend, to fellowship, to financially support.

Our hope and prayer is that through patience and diligence God will direct us to the man of His choosing. May that be the prayer of our entire congregation.

GREAT IS HIS FAITHFULNESS!

Philip S. Johnson

Chairman
IPC Pulpit Search Committee

“All I have needed, Thy hand hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.”