

## ***From Pastor Russ Ramsey***

Dear Oak Hills Church Family,

April 25, 2010

It is with a mix of love, sorrow, thankfulness and confidence in the Lord that I write to tell you that at the end of May I will be stepping down as the Pastor of Oak Hills Presbyterian Church, this church I love and have been so blessed to serve these past seven and a half years.

I have accepted a call to join the pastoral staff of Midtown Fellowship—a PCA church in downtown Nashville, Tennessee—serving primarily as a minister of preaching and pastoral care over one of Midtown’s two campuses—the 12 South campus.

Near the end of November, I received a call from the person at Midtown who was directing their search, which began this process of decision. And after this season of prayer and seeking wise counsel, Lisa and I have come to believe that this is the Lord’s call for us and for our family.

Lisa and I have been experiencing a range of emotion together throughout this process, as I’m certain you are now as well. We want you to know this decision has been extremely difficult to make. Lisa and I and our kids love our Oak Hills family. We have been so well loved here, and we will miss you more than we can say.

Please know our decision to accept the call to Midtown Fellowship is in no way reflective of any dissatisfaction with Oak Hills. On the contrary. The love we have for Oak Hills, the dear friends we have developed over our years here, the leaders and the staff we enjoy and believe in, and our belief that God is and will continue to work wonderfully in and through Oak Hills, are all things that have made it so difficult for us to even consider what I am announcing to you today.

My confidence in Oak Hills has been deeply affirmed as I have watched the elders here respond to this news with genuine sadness because of the loss they feel, but also with their deepest support, encouragement and affirmation of God’s leading in my family’s life and ministry.

Oak Hills’ elders and deacons are men of remarkable strength, character and sincere devotion to the Lord and His Gospel. The love they have shown me and my family only strengthens my already great confidence in them as the leaders of this church. As you pray for us, please pray for them as well.

You have taught us so much about the grace and mercy of Christ. These have been the best seven years of our lives, and we thank God for you. We love you and we know you love us. Thanks for making that plain.

In the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord of His Church on earth, to whom be all glory,

Russ Ramsey  
Pastor

## ***From Rick Pierce, on behalf of the Oak Hills Elders:***

To the Congregation of Oak Hills Presbyterian Church,

April 25, 2010

We are bearing a heavy weight of sorrow and loss, and at the same time, our hope is sure because it is laid on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ.

The elders have asked me to speak to you on their behalf concerning this difficult news of Pastor Russ's resignation and to address the process we intend to follow as we move forward.

First, like you, the Session is deeply saddened by this news. Although we firmly believe that this is God's call for the Ramseys, and thus it is the call for His beloved here at Oak Hills, this is hard. This call of God forces us to prepare to part with not only our pastor and his precious family, but in many ways, with a very piece of ourselves.

Russ has been to us all a prophet - he has proclaimed the Gospel to the people of Oak Hills with passion and strength and love. Faithfully following his call to preach the Word of God to the people of God, for seven years we have heard God's voice to us through Russ' ministry of the Holy Scriptures. Russ, On behalf of the Session, we are deeply grateful for the thousands of hours you labored to present Him to us. Thank you for loving us in such a profound and diligent way through your intensive and careful study, and thoughtfully intentional presentation of God's Word.

As you think back over the time you've been at Oak Hills, what scenes do you picture with Russ, Lisa and their children? Many of you have shared hiking trails, mission trips, airplane rides and airport detours, conferences, coffees, lunches, Bible studies, birthday parties, community groups, elder meetings, staff meetings, fireworks, softball, kids' play dates, Buffalo Wild Wings, rooftops, scary bus rides, Curt Mauk's Mystery Machine, retreats, Monday Night football, and countless conversations.

And many of you have experienced relationship in much deeper ways – ways that intersected the most intimate places and experiences of your lives. Some of you were married by Russ, many of you have been visited in the hospital by Russ and Lisa to celebrate the birth of new life (*many of you*), and many of you have had the joy of having Pastor Russ baptize those same precious children.

Some of you have experienced visits to the hospital under much different circumstances when your life was a rush of pain and uncertainty. And a few here have experienced the tender care of your pastor in your most raw and vulnerable season of deep, deep loss.

Some of us have walked through life transitions and seemingly impossible decisions with Russ and Lisa. Through jobs lost, adventures gained, pain over strained relationships, and the agony of relationships lost we were not alone, but had the steady loving support of the Ramseys.

I will not ever forget the influence that you, Russ, have had on my life. You have been by my side with encouragement and grace more times than I can remember, and yet there are certain occasions that I was loved so tenderly by you in the midst of the rawness of my pain that I do not believe I will ever forget.

This is so hard because in so many ways it has been so good. We have been loved by the Ramseys – and we have loved them. On behalf of the elders, deacons and the congregation of Oak Hills, I want to thank you for the service, sacrifice and love which you have given to us in your time here as Pastor. In addition to your faithful presentation of God's word from the pulpit, thank you for bearing our burdens and sharing our lives, all the while striving to keep Christ before our eyes and your own.

We thank the Lord for the gift we have been given in you, Lisa, and your precious children. We have watched you wholeheartedly bear the burdens of the people of God with great care and convictions. Your loving support of Russ has freed him to be a present and strong shepherd for us. You have absorbed much pain on our behalf. For this, we are extremely grateful. You also have had a profound impact in the lives of countless women here. Russ...Lisa...You will be deeply, deeply missed.

Second, the Session wants to be clear in communicating our full support of this decision that the Ramsey's have made. Though it is difficult to see them go, we firmly believe this to be the Lord's leading. Therefore, for them to stay would be disobedient to the call of Christ – and thus, we send them with our blessing, and pray the Lord's blessings over them as they enter this weighty period of transition and change. And we hope to serve them in any way we can during this season.

When Scott Sauls, the founding pastor of Oak Hills, was called to serve at a church in need, Oak Hills was left with a need. God soon filled this need with a young seminary graduate in Pastor Russ Ramsey. Now, there is another church that has a need for a shepherd – and we believe God has made it clear that He desires to use Russ Ramsey to fulfill this need at Midtown Fellowship in Nashville. This leaves Oak Hills with another need, and we have no reason to believe anything but that God will and has already chosen his shepherd to fill this need.

We are eager and committed to faithfully pursuing the future plans God has for us, His church. This transition comes during a season in which the elders have been diligently creating strategic plans for Oak Hill's near future – including plans for the pursuit of a more permanent residence. We've been busy for the last six months analyzing our strengths and weaknesses as a church body – seeking the Lord's leadership for how he would have us to better equip the people of God for the work of God here at Oak Hills and beyond. So, your Session sees this transition as an exciting time where we believe the Lord is leading Oak Hills.

Our first priority is to seek the Lord and strategize on how to best seek the next Lead Pastor of Oak Hills. This will begin on Tuesday night as the elders and deacons meet in a joint session. Next, we will work to assemble a search committee as soon as possible. At that time, we will post the vacancy online with the PCA's openings board and we will contact people in seminaries and churches around the country. Our hope is in the guidance and provision of the Holy Spirit, and we are and will continue to asking the Lord to lead us and guide us throughout the process. Our faith is that he absolutely will.

Lastly, we, the elders, want you to know that we are committed to walking this road with our congregation. We know that many uncertainties, questions and even fears will rise, and we desire to process them together with you. You are always invited to contact any member of the Session or deacons with your questions or concerns. Please help us love you well by honestly communicating with us, letting us in to your hearts as we walk together.

We implore you to pray, to be patient, and to know that our need will be met with God's most perfect plan. Jesus is, always has been, and always will be the Lord of His church, and our confidence is strong in Him.

Rick Pierce

On Behalf of the Oak Hills Elders

April 25, 2010