

March 16, 2026

Canton First Family and Friends,

When Pastor Kenny notified church leadership of his plans to retire the summer of 2027, he graciously provided us with a long transition period so that we have time to identify the **right person** as the next Lead Pastor. To facilitate this, the Governing Board appointed a task force team to research and make recommendations on how to proceed, and we have developed **a framework for the search process**. We have a thorough process to guide us, and we have met with Conference leadership to share our plans with them.

The Global Methodist Church, while deploying clergy under an appointment system, also provides options to us that we have never had before, options which give us a voice in the selection process for our new pastor. In the “Book of Doctrines and Discipline,” one of these options states that “a church may choose to lead their own search process for pastoral leadership upon the approval of the presiding elder and conference superintendent.”

This is the option the Governing Board has chosen for Canton First. We will take an active, leading role in the interview and selection process, while enjoying the full support of the North Georgia Conference under the guidance and support of the Conference Superintendent and the Presiding Elder. The next step for the upcoming months is to receive and review applications.

If you have questions about the process, please feel free to reach out to one of the task force team members: Jeremy Bowden, Susan Brown, Susan Dreschel (Chair), Gil Edwards, Mike Haire, Dana Hall, Rod Metcalf, Gini Mizelle, Kenny Ott, Nan Peters, Corey Shores, and Dave Sullivan (Vice Chair). This group represents **the 2025 and 2026 Staff Parish Relations (Personnel) Committees** for Canton First. These are the people who will do the research, review the applications, check references, listen to sermons, make visits, conduct interviews, and finally make a recommendation to the Conference Superintendent for the appointment of our new Lead Pastor.

We also have a new page on the church website with information related to the search. You can access it [here](#). You will find answers to your questions and copies of documents we referenced earlier in this letter.

We firmly believe that God has already been preparing the next lead pastor for Canton First, and we just need to identify that person! As we seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance in the process, we ask for your prayers. Pray for the process, pray for the task force team as we work through the process, pray for the leadership of the North Georgia Conference who

will support us through the process, pray for Pastor Kenny and Cathi as they prepare for this transition, and pray for the person who God is preparing to lead us.

Governing Board Succession Task Force Team

Canton First Methodist Church

With Hope and Trust in Christ,

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." Proverbs 3:5-6*