



Bellevue Baptist Church Communication Committee
A Message to the Congregation

November 8, 2006

Your Communication Committee desires that we all keep our eyes on the Savior and continue to minister to a lost and dying world. There's nothing more precious than the Gospel and never has it been more important to stand for truth.

Bellevue operates with integrity and the highest of standards. Yet in the past few months, there have been unfortunate instances of confusion and miscommunication regarding the integrity of our pastor, staff, and lay leadership.

In the evening service of September 24, Dr. Gaines, Senior Pastor; Chip Freeman, Church Administrator; Chuck Taylor, Chairman of the Deacons; and Harry Smith, a member of the Budget Planning Committee, thoroughly answered concerns that had been raised. This was followed by several responses in the media by our staff and lay leadership.

Some allegations continued however, and on October 29, Dr. Gaines asked the Finance Committee, Deacon officers, and the Communication Committee to review his credit card charges because some had alleged he used it for personal expenses. After a careful review of the documents by everyone present, no inappropriate expenditures were found.

On November 5, the current and the newly elected deacons met. Dr. Gaines requested that the deacons also review his credit card charges. After the review, the deacons present unanimously agreed that the pastor's credit card use was in accordance with Bellevue's policies and no inappropriate expenditures were found. A motion was made and passed unanimously by the deacons, which asked the deacons to support Dr. Gaines by signing a statement of support and to stand with him on the platform as a visible sign of support and approval to the congregation on a Sunday as soon as possible. Many deacons expressed their regret and embarrassment for what our senior pastor has experienced these past few months. The meeting ended with the deacons surrounding Dr. Gaines and praying for him.

While we are excited about the progress made, we recognize that many of our members continue to have questions regarding facts, policies, and/or procedures. Your Communication Committee stands ready to help. The Communication Committee consists of 15 church members, 13 are deacons and two are staff members. Each member has a wide range of experience in our church inner-workings, including financial and legal issues, policies, practices, and procedures.

The Communication Committee was appointed by the deacon officers and approved by the Pastor. The Deacons affirmed the appointment of this committee, and the committee was presented to the church family. The original committee consisted of Harry Smith, Chairman. Members: Jeff Arnold, Jim Barnwell, David Coombs, John Crockett, Scott Foster, Bryan Miller, David Perdue, Mark Spiller, Steve Tucker, and Wayne Vander Steeg. Chuck Taylor, ex-officio. The committee has added these members: Jim Angel, Al Childress, and Derek Duncan. The Committee may add more members in the future.

We encourage anyone desiring to know more to submit questions to the Communication Committee without delay. Forms for submitting questions are available at the East and West Events Registration Centers and at all first floor Welcome Centers. To submit a form, please deposit it at the West Events Registration Center.

We would also kindly ask our membership to refrain from writing e-mails and responses on websites or blogs. This only serves to spread misinformation.

Beginning November 12, several members of the committee will be available every Sunday morning from 8:30-9:30 a.m. in room Fellowship Hall 3 to answer your questions in person.

The Committee is making plans to meet with various groups over the next few weeks to encourage open discussion. The Committee will meet with the staff, choir, Bible Fellowship teachers, senior adults, and women's ministry participants to name a few.

We realize it is challenging for any family to agree 100 percent on everything because we all have different preferences, but above all else, we as believers are committed to be united in Jesus Christ. The Committee encourages anyone with differences with another brother or sister to go directly to the other party for discussion and resolution. This is never easy, but is what the Bible commands. We hope and pray that our church family will be obedient to that command. It is the first step toward revival.

"Live in peace with one another. We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." I Thessalonians 5:13b-18 NASB

It is the hope of this committee that we will focus on Jesus Christ and direct our energies on the tremendous ministry opportunities that lay before us.

To God be the glory!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Harry J. Smith".

Harry Smith, Chairman

Members: Jim Angel, Jeff Arnold, Jim Barnwell,
Al Childress, David Coombs, John Crockett, Derek Duncan,
Scott Foster, Bryan Miller, David Perdue, Mark Spiller,
Steve Tucker, and Wayne Vander Steeg. Chuck Taylor, ex-officio.

Bellevue Baptist Church Communication Committee
Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Updated November 8, 2006

NOTE: *The members of the Communication Committee have made every effort to ensure that all the facts, policies, and procedures in this document are correct. However if you have any evidence of a factual error, please contact a member of the committee immediately. Thank you.*

Are there problems with our bylaws?

No. Bylaws are legally required by the state, and our bylaws were approved by the church in 1929. They are a reflection of the biblical principles that serve as the ultimate authority for governance of the church. Dr. Adrian Rogers summed up our church's operational philosophy by saying that "Bellevue is pastor led, deacon served, committee operated, and congregationally approved." This model has changed little in the past 30 years.

Why isn't the Pastor's salary disclosed to the public?

Why aren't all staff salaries public?

It has been Bellevue's practice for many years to keep salary information confidential. This policy is based upon practices and experiences of other large churches and similar organizations. This policy serves two purposes: 1. The protection of sensitive and private employee information. 2. The preservation of staff and congregation unity. Frequently, salary disclosure results in dividing the staff and congregation. Individuals not involved with the salary process do not have information on job qualifications, job responsibilities, and the labor market to properly determine if a salary is adequate or inadequate. Our Budget Planning Committee is equipped with this information to make fully informed decisions.

Who sets salaries and how are they determined?

Several years ago, the church leadership sought to develop a fair and systematic approach to staff compensation. Staff compensation (except for the pastor's) is set by the Pastor's Office, business administrator, and the Compensation and Personnel Committee, a subcommittee of the Budget Planning Committee, based on the employee's performance and a grade system developed by an outside consultant. The committee alone determines the pastor's salary. The Compensation and Personnel Committee reviews and approves salaries within the total budget set by the Budget Planning Committee.

Has this procedure changed in the past few years?

In the past, the executive staff gave recommendations regarding compensation for employees in their respective areas. In early 2006, this was changed so that only the Pastor's Office and the business administrator work with the Compensation Budget Committee, a subcommittee of the Budget Planning Committee, in order to protect employee privacy. Supervisors can turn in reports of outstanding performance to the Pastor's Office and/or business administrator regarding employees in their area of responsibility. Ultimately, the Budget Planning Committee must approve all annual salary adjustments.

Was the staff compensation process bypassed when new employees were hired since September 2005?

No. All compensation for new employees has been reviewed and found to be appropriate under the grading system Bellevue has in place and within budget constraints.

Who has the authority to hire employees?

For many years the Pastor's Office could approve most new employees at their sole discretion. Dr. Gaines has asked the Budget Planning Committee to assist the Pastor's Office with the hiring process in the future.

Additionally, when a staff member is hired at the supervisory level and above, they are also interviewed by a group of three or four lay-couples chosen by the Budget Planning Committee.

Did Dr. Gaines negotiate his compensation prior to his coming to Bellevue?

No.

Explain the salary process for Dr. Gaines.

Dr. Gaines did not inquire about his compensation before agreeing to come in view of a call. A compensation subcommittee of the Pastor Search Committee (chairman Chuck Taylor, vice-chairman Harry Smith, and former Associate Pastor of Bellevue, Bob Sorrell) discussed compensation with Dr. Gaines, but only after he agreed to come. This subcommittee of the Pastor Search Committee contacted John Crockett, Chairman of the Finance Committee, for approval on the amount. Mr. Crockett checked with the church business administrator, Craig Parker, to ensure that the figure was within the salary budget for the pastor. It was approved by the compensation subcommittee of the Budget Planning Committee. An adjustment was made later when the compensation subcommittee of the Pastor Search Committee recommended that the church pay for Dr. Gaines' moving expenses; the mortgage payment on his house in Gardendale until it was sold or for one year, whichever came first; and an increase to compensate for additional living expenses. The compensation subcommittee of the Pastor Search Committee submitted this request to John Crockett, Chairman of the Finance Committee. Again, Mr. Crockett checked with the church business administrator, Craig Parker, to ensure that the figure was within the salary budget for the pastor. It was approved by the compensation subcommittee of the Budget Planning Committee.

Has Dr. Gaines used his church credit card for personal expenses?

No.

Who has reviewed the pastor's credit card expenses?

Chip Freeman, Business Administrator, David Coombs, members of the Finance Committee, and Deacon Officers at various times prior to October 29.

On October 29, the documents were reviewed by: Wayne Vander Steeg, Harry Smith, Aubrey Earnheart, Perrin Jones, Mark McDaniel, John Hyneman, Everette Hatcher, Rex Jones, David Coombs, Chuck Taylor, Steve Tucker, Jeff Arnold, Scott Foster, Mark Spiller, Bart Berretta, Mike Hobday, Bryan Miller, Jim Barnwell, Dr. Gaines, and Chip Freeman.

On November 1, these same records were reviewed by Gene Howard, Assistant Secretary for the Deacons. All of the above have found the credit card charges were reasonable and customary for the senior pastor. No inappropriate expenditures were found.

On November 5, the current and newly elected deacons met and reviewed Dr. Gaines' credit card charges. After the review, the deacons present unanimously agreed that the pastor's credit card use was in accordance with Bellevue's policies and that no inappropriate expenditures were found.

What is the procedure for paying credit cards?

All credit card charges are reviewed and approved by the Finance Office before payment is made.

There is a story circulating that Dr. Gaines used his credit card for a \$400 dinner at Ruth's Chris Steakhouse with only staff in attendance. Shouldn't this be a personal expense?

No. This was a typical hospitality meal for Dr. and Mrs. David Jeremiah and Charles Billingsley, our guests during Awesome August. Those in attendance were: Dr. and Mrs. Gaines, Bill and Dayna Street, Mark and Dianne Dougharty, David and Donna Jeremiah, and

Charles Billingsley. The cost of the meal was \$448.17, which comes to approximately \$39.63 per person before tax and tip. All expenses were consistent with Bellevue's [executive staff expense reimbursement policy](#).

Why were the Streets attending the meal?

Bill and Dayna Street served as host and hostess for the Jeremiahs including providing transportation. A different couple was assigned each week to host guest speakers.

What policies are in place for travel and hospitality expenses?

All employees must complete a detailed expense report, which includes all receipts in excess of \$5 with a full explanation of why it was necessary. Payment cannot be made until it is approved by a supervisor. Travel must be approved in advance. [Read more...](#)

Is Dr. Gaines furnished a car?

Yes. Consistent with the policy of the past, Bellevue Baptist Church provides a car and all vehicle related expenses as a benefit for the senior pastor. Dr. Gaines pays taxes on the personal portion of this benefit.

Does Bellevue have an independent audit of the church finances each year?

Yes. An audit was conducted in May 2006 by Brundige Payne & Company, PC, Certified Public Accountants. They found Bellevue's accounting practices to be in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. It was an excellent audit report, and they had no management letter comments this year for improvement to our accounting policies and procedures. This is a tremendous commendation for our accounting and finance department.

Did Dr. Gaines apologize to the church and the family for crossing the privacy fence?

Yes. He apologized after the evening Worship Service September 24, 2006.

"I say to the family, I hope you know that we never ... there was no intimidation involved. We just wanted to be reconciled, and we're sorry. And I want to tell you as a church, we're sorry. It was poor judgment on our part. But I want to tell you this, it did not come out of a bad heart. It was a ... if it was a mistake, and it was. I'll take the "if" out. It was a mistake. It was a mistake of the head, not the heart. We don't have bad hearts. We were trying to reconcile with a brother."

Did Mark Dougharty receive a one-year salary bonus?

No. Two years ago a deferred compensation benefit was given to Mark Dougharty, Associate Pastor, provided that he completed 10 years of service. A deferred compensation benefit simply means he cannot receive it until he retires. He will receive an additional benefit if he completes 25 years of service.

This benefit was consistent with other benefits awarded to former pastor Dr. Adrian Rogers, former Associate Pastor, Bob Sorrell, and Minister of Music Emeritus, Dr. Jim Whitmire.

Was the decision to give Mark Dougharty a deferred compensation benefit made by just three people?

No. The deferred compensation benefit was approved by the full Budget Planning Committee, the full Finance Committee, and Dr. Adrian Rogers.

Why did the music change?

For years, Dr. Adrian Rogers sought to have a blended style of worship. When Dr. Rogers retired in March 2005, Dr. Jim Whitmire led us to update our music while continuing to have a blended style of traditional and non-traditional songs. When Dr. Gaines came in September 2005, he encouraged this process to continue. Dr. Gaines has said he wants all of us to worship together and to not divide the congregation over music with separate traditional and non-traditional music services. The objective is to have a blend of approximately 50 percent hymns and 50 percent new songs in each service.

Was Dr. Jim Whitmire asked to retire?

No. Dr. Whitmire announced to the entire staff on December 14, 2005 that he was not asked to leave but was choosing voluntarily to retire at the end of the year. Dr. Whitmire continued to help Bellevue and Jamie Parker's transition by assisting in the production of the 2006 *Memphis Passion Play*. He also fulfilled his commitment to take the Bellevue choir to the Southern Baptist Convention in June 2006.

Did Chip Freeman resign and come back on staff?

Yes. Chip Freeman felt that the Lord was calling him to work for a company as their Chief Financial Officer. Mr. Freeman said that after only a few days the Lord made it clear to him that his work at Bellevue wasn't done. He asked to return to the Bellevue staff. Dr. Gaines and Mark Dougharty told Chip he could come back on staff and pick up where he left off as if he had never left.

When Chip Freeman returned did he receive a bonus, additional compensation, or payment of any kind?

No.

Does Dr. Gaines take Wednesday nights off?

No.

Why doesn't Dr. Gaines preach on Wednesday nights?

Because our congregation is quite large, Dr. Gaines has chosen Wednesday nights to attend committee meetings, meet various church groups, and attend a variety of church events in order to meet as many people as possible. Dr. Gaines also encourages us to hold all committee meetings on Wednesdays and Sundays to allow members to spend more time during the week with their families. Does Dr. Gaines preach any other time besides Sunday? Yes. Currently, he preaches to men at Morning Manna, Thursdays at 6:30 a.m., and to 18-29-year-olds at i2 Memphis, Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.

Why did Dr. Agee preach on Wednesday nights in the spring?

Dr. Joe Jernigan had major surgery in late 2005, and a Wednesday night speaker was needed. Dr. Gaines knew Dr. Agee to be a godly man and an excellent preacher.

How can I get the Pastor's away schedule?

It has been our policy under Dr. Rogers and now Dr. Gaines to keep the Pastor's away schedule confidential due to security issues for him and his family.

Why was the Pastor's office remodeled?

It was upgraded to provide a place for Dr. Gaines' library to be installed and to create an area for him to prepare his sermons. Dr. Rogers prepared his sermons at home. Other minor changes were made to the old office area as well.

Did Dr. Gaines have a dream about a church member that said "Amen" too much?

No. Dr. Gaines did not have a dream or say he had a dream, but there was a misunderstanding by a staff member as to what he did say, and that misunderstanding was communicated to staff who had the responsibility of dealing with the issue. Dr. Gaines addressed the issue of dreams in his book, *Morning Manna*, February 2:

"We do not need to lust for a vision, prophecy, or dream. We need to hunger for the written Word of God. In the Bible, we will find the grain we need to feed our hungry souls, the fire we need to keep us ablaze for Jesus, and the hammer we need to shatter the false ideas of our pagan, confused society. Who needs a dream when you have a Bible?"

Is Dr. Gaines making money from his trip to Greece and Turkey next year?

No. It is normal and customary for the trip host to receive free trips in exchange for organizing the trip and signing up participants. Dr. Gaines is giving away the free trips to family and friends in the same way as Bellevue's former pastor, Dr. Adrian Rogers, did when he led tours of the Holy Land and Bible Study cruises.

Why didn't you answer questions about other former employees?

The committee is working to give full and accurate responses. However, Bellevue is also committed to protecting the privacy of our employees and former employees in accordance with their wishes. We hope to have a response soon, but we may not be able to address every personnel question due to a concern for privacy.

How was the Communication Committee formed?

An ad hoc Communication Committee has been appointed by the deacon officers and approved by the Pastor. The Deacons affirmed the appointment of this committee, and the committee was presented to the church family. Since that time, the committee has added these members: Jim Angel, Al Childress, and Derek Duncan.

Who is on the Communication Committee?

The original committee consisted of Harry Smith, Chairman. Members: Jeff Arnold, Jim Barnwell, David Coombs, John Crockett, Scott Foster, Bryan Miller, David Perdue, Mark Spiller, Steve Tucker, and Wayne Vander Steeg. Chuck Taylor, ex-officio.

The committee has added these members: Jim Angel, Al Childress and Derek Duncan.

I have other questions. How do I get them addressed?

Forms for submitting questions are available at the East and West Events Registration Centers and at all first floor Welcome Centers. To submit a form, please deposit it at the West Events Registration Center.

You may also [submit questions online](#).

NOTE: *The committee will only address questions from the membership. Please be sure to include your name, address, and telephone number in your correspondence so that your membership can be verified.*

Beginning November 12, several members of the committee will be available every Sunday morning from 8:30-9:30 a.m. in room Fellowship Hall 3 to answer your questions in person.

Travel and Entertainment Guidelines

Revised November 15, 2005

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." I Corinthians 4:2

The following guidelines have been established to inform Bellevue staff of travel and entertainment spending practices which have been authorized by the Office of the Pastor in conjunction with lay financial leadership, and to standardize spending practices across departmental lines. Appearance, attitude, conduct, and spending practices directly reflect on the church, our Pastor, and our Lord. Therefore; it is expected that, at all times, the conduct of Bellevue staff will exemplify the high moral and stewardship standards established by God's word, and owed to the Bellevue members who faithfully support the work of the Bellevue ministry with their tithes and offerings.

Travel and entertainment expenses incurred while conducting Bellevue ministry will be reimbursed to the individual after appropriate approval and documentation is received in accordance with the following guidelines. All expenditures must be appropriate to the conduct of Bellevue ministry, and individuals must make sure that expenditures are not for personal expenses and that accounting for all expenses is proper and timely.

These are spending guidelines and not hard and fast rules; therefore, exceptions may be made to any guideline with advance written approval from the Office of Administration* or the Office of the Pastor.

Travel Expenses

Reasonable and customary travel expenses of spouses accompanying Bellevue staff to the Southern Baptist Convention will be paid by the church. Reasonable and customary travel expenses of spouses accompanying Bellevue staff on Bellevue missions projects (foreign or domestic) will generally be paid by the church; however, advance approval must be obtained from the Office of the Pastor or the Office of Administration*.

The church encourages the participation of a spouse in the ministry of his or her husband or wife. Further, the church desires to promote business/ministry travel practices that encourage the health of staff families. To that end, the church will pay reasonable and customary travel expenses for a spouse to accompany his or her husband or wife for all out-of-town travel. In the event the staff wife or staff husband is unavailable to accompany his or her spouse for out-of-town travel, then the unaccompanied spouse must travel with another staff member or lay member of the same sex. Out-of-town travel is generally limited to members of Ministerial & Executive Staff, and a Conference Request Form along with a Travel Authorization Form must be submitted and receive proper approval before travel is authorized.

The church also encourages spouses and children to accompany Bellevue staff when they are leading out-of-town ministry projects (camps, retreats, choir tours, etc.). There may be times when it is not appropriate for family members to accompany a staff spouse or parent; therefore, advance approval of travel should be obtained from the Office of Administration*.

Lodging

When overnight travel is necessary and authorized, the traveler is expected to stay in a reasonably priced hotel or motel. Obviously, the cost of lodging will vary depending on locale. The general rule will be that the cost of lodging should be a maximum of \$115 per night, and any amount greater than the \$115 guideline limit must be authorized in advance by the Office of Administration* of the Office of the Pastor.

Meals - Travel

A traveler may be reimbursed for up to three meals per day up to a maximum amount of \$50 per day while on overnight travel. The daily maximum allowance will be pro rated on the day of departure and the day of return if departure is later than 10:00 a.m. and if return is before 5:00 p.m.

Tips for meals are recommended at a minimum of 10% and a maximum of 20%. No amount greater than 20% will be reimbursed.

Meals - Local

There will be times when it will be appropriate for Bellevue staff to purchase meals for guests during the conduct of church ministry. The cost these meals will be reimbursed if prior approval has been obtained from the Office of Administration* or the Office of the Pastor. The request for local dining should include the ministry purpose of the meal, the name of the restaurant, the anticipated cost of the meal, and the names of the individuals attending the meal. The proper authorization will need to be in writing (an e-mail will be satisfactory) and attached to the original receipt when submitted for reimbursement.

Auto Rentals

Vehicle rentals must be approved in advanced through submission of a Travel Authorization Form. A mid-size or smaller car should be requested. When renting a car, the traveler should only select the "physical damage" coverage that is offered by the car rental company.

Telephone

When overnight travel is required, one 10-minute personal long distance call per day is appropriate and reimbursable. Any long distance calls should be charged to a church calling card. If a call is not charged to a church calling card, reimbursement may be denied. If you receive a monthly cell phone allowance from the church, no long distance calls charged to your cell phone account will be reimbursed.

Personal Entertainment

Any expense related to personal entertainment such as: movies, tickets to sporting events, admission to amusement parks, golf, etc. will not be reimbursed.

Receipts

Original receipts are required for all items greater than \$5.00 (except for mileage and tips).

Parking

All parking expenses associated with authorized church travel are reimbursable with appropriate documentation including parking at Memphis International Airport.

Other

Other expenses that are not specifically mentioned in these guidelines, but are related to the conduct of Bellevue ministry are reimbursable. Examples include fees for faxes, copying costs, express mail and postage charges. The purpose for these expenses must be documented on the Expense Report Form, and original receipts are required.

Expenditures related to non-customary ministry travel expenses such as dry cleaning, laundry, newspapers, magazines, snacks, gifts, traffic fines, and personal care products will not be reimbursed.

Expense Reporting

An Expense Report Form is to be completed and submitted to the employee's immediate supervisor within ten days of the end of travel or within ten days of local entertainment. The Expense Report Form is to be reviewed and approved by the immediate supervisor and then forwarded to the Financial Administrator for final review and approval.

The same procedure is to be observed for the authorization of payment of church credit card statements. The monthly statement must have all documentation for expenses attached and submitted to the employee's immediate supervisor within ten days of receipt of the statement. The immediate supervisor will review and approve the credit card statement and forward it to the Financial Administrator for final review and approval.

Any questions in regard to the intent or interpretation of any guideline may be submitted to the Office of Administration for clarification.*

**The Office of Administration means Church Business Administrator.*

Submit your comments / questions to the **Bellevue Communication Committee**

NOTE: The committee will only address questions from the membership. All form fields are required so that your membership can be verified.

Full Name:

E-mail Address:

Home Address:

City:

State:

ZIP:

Home Phone:

Comments / Questions: