

Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church Gives Its Pastor Overwhelming Vote of Confidence

FT. LAUDERDALE, Fla., Sept. 20, 2009 - In a rare congregational meeting today, members of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church rejected, by a vote of 69%-31%, a motion to end their relationship with senior pastor, Tullian Tchividjian. The meeting was called in accordance with the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) Book of Church Order after a group of six members submitted the requisite 100 signatures requesting a congregational vote on whether to retain Tchividjian, who was elected the church's second pastor in its 50-year history in March.

Tchividjian, 37, had been serving as pastor of the 700-person New City Church in South Florida, which he founded in 2003, when Coral Ridge chose him to succeed founding pastor D. James Kennedy, who died in September 2007. The 13-member Pulpit Nominating Committee selected Tchividjian, a grandson of evangelist Billy Graham, from a candidate pool of more than 150 ministers from some 15 states.

Tchividjian was elected pastor of Coral Ridge by a vote of 91%-9% on March 15, 2009, a move that included a merger of the historic church and New City Church. He preached his first sermon as pastor of Coral Ridge on Easter Sunday. The church had experienced growth in virtually every standard of measurement during the past six months including weekly attendance, financial offerings and new members.

Today's meeting, which was moderated by officials from the Presbyterian Church in America's national office, afforded members an opportunity to speak for and against a motion to dissolve the relationship with Tchividjian and was followed by a formal balloted vote. Tchividjian preached at an earlier service today but did not attend the congregational meeting.

Tchividjian commented on the vote by saying, *"My family and I thank the Coral Ridge family for standing behind us and supporting me as your new pastor. While conflict is never easily resolved, this matter was handled in accordance with our denomination's guidelines and we now look forward to moving forward with the work I believe God has called us to do in this community."*

"Change is difficult for any institution, but it is especially difficult for a church which has known only one pastor in its 50-year history and I understand that. Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church is not my church, and it wasn't Dr. Kennedy's church. It's God's church and I want to honor Him and carry on the legacy of Jesus above anything or anyone else."

The six members who initiated the petition drive for a congregational meeting and vote wrote letters to church members in recent weeks expressing concern about issues such as changes to the church's traditional style of worship, certain personnel changes, and Tchividjian's failure to address issues such as "The Freedom of Choice Act, The Fairness Doctrine, Hate Crimes legislation and all kinds of efforts to promote socialism" from the pulpit.



CONTACT:
Mark DeMoss
(770) 757-5100

Bill Ashcraft
(954) 632-2913

[Laura Ford](#)
(404) 983-8043



Coral Ridge Presbyterian
Church Pastor Tullian
Tchividjian

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Tchividjian had the full support of the 30-member Elder Board, or Session, the church's local governing body, which wrote church members earlier this month recommending that "all members in good standing vote to keep Tullian Tchividjian as the Senior Minister of this church." Their letter also reported that church attendance had doubled in the past year, that 300 new members had been added since Tchividjian was installed, and that 192 people are registered for the next new members class, making it the largest new members class in the church's 50-year history.

Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church was organized on May 22, 1960, with a congregation of 45 and became the fastest growing church in its denomination, the Presbyterian Church in America. Its current sanctuary and facilities were completed in 1973 and Billy Graham was the keynote speaker at the dedication service in February 1974.

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