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November 20, 2008
(revised)

Mr. Jeff Ruttenber, Chair, Deacon Team
First Baptist Church
2801 S.E. Maricamp Road
Ocala, FL 34471-5537

Mr. Terry Upton, President, Chair of Trustees
First Baptist Church
2801 S.E. Maricamp Road
Ocala, FL 34471-5537

Dr. Mark Cummins, Senior Pastor
First Baptist Church
2801 S.E. Maricamp Road
Ocala, FL 34471-5537

Gentlemen:

On November 10, 2008, I wrote the three of you a letter asking for answers within seven days to questions I posed in that letter. I have not received a letter from the three of you answering those questions; so my conclusion is that you have no intentions whatsoever of answering those questions. I did receive a generic letter dated November 11, 2008 that our new pastor sent out to me and other church members, but it too avoids my questions.

Since my last letter, I have learned of other things that have taken place in our church which raise more questions in my mind and those questions are set forth in this letter. I request that you answer each one of them specifically in writing to me and the other church members within seven days since you are communicating to me and the other church members in writing.

Who is in the best position and has the most knowledge to judge the character, integrity, leadership skills and worthiness of purpose of our new pastor - the six ministers who worked with the new pastor on an almost daily basis for the last year and who we've known, loved and trusted for years or Mr. Upton, Mr. Ruttenber and Ms. Hutchinson who only see the new pastor one or two times a week?

Why did our new pastor call his personal lawyer friend during the Personnel Committee meeting on October 31, 2008 and ask him to give legal advice to the members of the Personnel Committee regarding our new pastor's wish to terminate the six ministers who were terminated shortly thereafter? Why did the Personnel Committee members listen to the new pastor's

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personal lawyer friend regarding termination of the six ministers? Who in our church authorized our new pastor's personal lawyer friend to give legal advice to a church committee? Why did our new pastor's personal lawyer friend advise the Personnel Committee that the church handbook supercedes the authority of the Church Bylaws that were voted on and passed by all church members? Why did our new pastor's personal lawyer friend threaten litigation against the Personnel Committee members and others if they did not follow his legal advice? Why hasn't our new pastor's personal lawyer friend put any of his legal opinions in writing as is customary? Why is the new pastor refusing to release copies of the minutes of the October 31, 2008 Personnel Committee meeting in violation of the Open Records Law of Florida?

Why did our new pastor object to a church member sitting in the Finance Committee meeting on November 16, 2008? Why did our new pastor **literally** scream at Terry Upton to find a way in the Bylaws to exclude that church member from the Finance Committee meeting? When Mr. Upton could not find any lawful basis in the Church Bylaws to exclude that church member, why did the Finance Committee adjourn that meeting until the church member left and then reconvene a secret meeting of the Finance Committee in a back room of the church?

Why does our new past refuse to visit sick and dying members of our church in the hospital, in Hospice and at home? Is it true that the new pastor of our church wishes to have our church drop out of the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program so that our church can make more money? Does the new pastor of our church intend to change the name of our church to the First Community Church of Ocala like he did the last church he pastored in Hollywood? Is it true that the new pastor of our church has brought in a CPA that he has personally selected to run the financial affairs of our church? Is it true that our new pastor wants to sell the big parcel of land we bought on 17th Street? Is it true that our new pastor insisted on being paid much more money than our beloved former pastor, Ed Johnson, who capably and wisely led our church for over 20 years?

Why did our new pastor send out a letter to the membership promising that he would have Ocala Police Department officers occupy the church during our November 15, 2008 worship meeting "to maintain order"? Was this really a cover for his effort to suppress dissent and avoid questions seeking the truth about his bizarre behavior and secret personal agenda?

Why have Jeff Ruttenber and Terry Upton been signing letters and making decisions as Chair of the Deacon Team and President of the Chair of Trustees without the knowledge and consent of the deacons and the trustees? Is the decision of Jeff Ruttenber and Terry Upton to support our new pastor's bizarre behavior and secret personal agenda just bad judgment? Or have Terry Upton and Jeff Ruttenber been promised something for their support? If so, what?

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Why did our new pastor call for a special deacons' meeting for the purpose of ousting or reprimanding deacons who had the courage to stand up and ask questions of our new pastor during the November 9, 2008 worship service that our new pastor illegally and without notice converted into a business meeting? Is it true that our new pastor is considering cancelling the church business meeting noticed and scheduled for this Sunday night? If so, is it to avoid answering these questions about his bizarre behavior and secret personal agenda?

In light of the unusual circumstances that have taken place at our church, I believe these are fair questions.

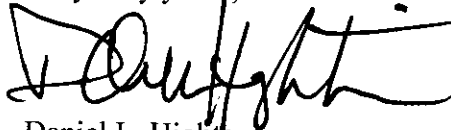
True leaders earn the respect of the ones they lead, lead openly and honestly and demonstrate a stable mindset, even temperament and good judgment. Good leaders do not lead by fear and intimidation nor do they use secrecy, deception and manipulation nor do they scream at their lieutenants nor do they exhibit bizarre behavior nor do they pursue secret personal agendas.

DEACONS, you were elected by the church membership because we, the church members, believed that you had and have certain God given qualities including leadership skills, critical thinking skills, good judgment and common sense. You were not elected to be mindless sheep. We, the church members, ask you to use these qualities when making decisions that impact what is in the best interest of our church on a short term, mid term and long term basis.

DEACONS, time will tell and history will judge those of you who had the courage to call for answers to the questions outlined above and who used your God given leadership skills, critical thinking skills, good judgment and common sense to be the **TRUE** heroes of the First Baptist Church of Ocala. Please prayerfully and faithfully carry out your responsibilities on behalf of our church membership.

Thank you for your consideration of my requests.

Very truly yours,



Daniel L. Hightower
Member of First Baptist Church of Ocala
For over 12 years

DLH/cgp

cc: All Deacons of the First Baptist Church of Ocala