

The following is the text of a letter sent this week by Dr. Larry Reynolds, pastor of Southmont Baptist Church in Denton, to his congregation. Reynolds was named in a lawsuit filed this year by a former member of his congregation, who alleged that Reynolds sexually abused her as a teenager. As a part of the settlement of this lawsuit, Reynolds apologized to the church congregation Nov. 19, saying “proper boundaries were not kept.”

December 19, 2006

Dear Southmont Family,

After much prayerful consideration, I have decided to retire as pastor of Southmont Baptist Church effective December 31, 2006. I want to make clear at the very outset of this letter that this decision was mine and mine alone. Carol and I feel very loved and affirmed by the Southmont family, and we know that I could continue as your pastor indefinitely. However, in light of the events of recent days, I simply do not feel that is the right thing to do.

As I am sure you understand, coming to this conclusion has been very difficult for us for many reasons. Among them are the following:

- Southmont has been our lives for the past twenty-eight (28) years. We love the church as one of our own children. It is difficult to conceive of what life will be like apart from that relationship.
- We do not want to disappoint the many of you who have so passionately urged us to stay on and fight through this thing. While I appreciate so much your encouragement, my heart tells me that is not what is best for the church. Also, I do not have the physical, emotional, or spiritual stamina to do that. In my heart, I know that I could not be the pastor you need and deserve.
- I know that some will interpret my leaving as a tacit admission of all the allegations made against me. It is not; but I realize I cannot help what some choose to believe.

I have made this decision because I feel that it is in the best interest of the larger church family and for the image of Southmont in the Denton community. My sincere desire for Southmont is that there be no spirit of bitterness, rancor, division, or strife in the fellowship. One of the great strengths of this church is its unity of fellowship, and it would deeply grieve me for that to be undermined at this critical time. Please continue loving one another, supporting one another, encouraging one another, and doing the good work God has given the church to do.

I am proud of you and will be forever grateful for the opportunity of having had a part in the Southmont family.

Sincerely,

Larry Reynolds