

Q&A with the Rev. Scott Sauls

What is it about Christ Presbyterian Church that would encourage you to consider becoming its next Senior Pastor?

My interest is sparked by several things that I have learned about CPC. Your desire to be gospel-centered, yet culturally engaged in the community is appealing to me. CPC has historically been involved in starting new congregations throughout Middle Tennessee. This seems to suggest that CPC exists for others, not simply for its own sake.

I also sense that CPC is in a position to greatly influence the city of Nashville by virtue of the resources God has entrusted to you through the composition of your membership and the structure of the church.

What do you see as the role of the Senior Pastor in a church like CPC?

In addition to being a biblical preacher who elevates the grace and truth of God each week, I would envision the pastor's role involving several things. First, it is to shepherd and lead the staff and Session,



and be the primary architect of the vision of the church. Second, the pastor needs to be the primary steward of the staff and work to foster a leadership culture that is healthy and unified. This culture is built upon the various “one another” practices of the New Testament. When this is done successfully, the church will follow suit. I also find it important to be lovingly engaged in the surrounding community and city, as well as Presbytery.

Who do you surround yourself with to speak truth into your life?

My wife Patti is a gracious truth-teller. While never faltering in her love for me, she is equally committed to help me become a better man, a better friend, a better husband and father, and a better pastor.

The Rev. Martin Ban is a fellow PCA pastor from Santa Fe, N.M., and is someone who has always believed in the Lord's work in my life and ministry. The Rev. Scott Crosby is a fellow pastor at Redeemer, and also a close confidant and friend. Scotty and Darlene Smith have also been good friends to us, especially as we have considered a possible move to Nashville.

I have number of personal friends that I lean upon to talk about life, the gospel, and the heart.

Who are some of your favorite authors and why?

Tim Keller. If anyone has almost single-handedly shaped my personal philosophy of ministry, it is Tim—through his books, writings, personal mentoring and friendship.

Scotty Smith. I am refreshed by Scotty's deep, pietistic faith. Scotty is a man of prayer who lives and breathes the grace of God. His daily prayers sent out via the web are often a lifeline for Patti and me.

C.S. Lewis. Lewis has that rare combination of addressing the intellect and the heart. He also has a way of taking historic truths and stating them in a new, compelling way. He is a brilliant apologist.

Joni E. Tada. She is a woman of deep faith in the face of lifelong adversity. To me, Joni has been a living picture of what it means to live with hope, regardless of what our circumstances happen to be. I imagine that I will need Joni's perspective more and more, the older I get.

Brennan Manning. I love Manning's honesty. I love how he writes so openly about his experience of redemption, which has come primarily through his wounds and failures. He puts the mirror in front of my heart, forces me to deal with my idols and demons, and then pours the grace of God all over it.

Jonathan Edwards. I am challenged by Edwards' deep commitment to theological depth and precision—combined with his "Reformed charismatic" personal faith.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King challenges me to think about the responsibility of those who come from power and privilege (like me)—to use power and privilege to serve the needs of the weak, marginalized, overlooked and oppressed. Dr. King has also helped me to understand that my view of God and the Kingdom are limited by my own situation, culture, and upbringing. The more I seek humbly to understand and learn from others who are different than I am, the more clearly I understand who God is.

Please share with us your ministry philosophy:

- The centrality of grace. Grace is the theme that I want to saturate all of my ministry—whether it be preaching, counseling, interacting with the surrounding community, sharing Christ with friends and neighbors, or leading a staff and session.
- Intelligent yet heart-engaging teaching and preaching.
- Broad appeal. I want Jesus, his grace, and his truth to be the central theme of the church that I serve. I want to serve a church that is a "friend" to the weak, the lonely, sinners and strugglers, just like Jesus was. I want to serve a church in which a wide range of people—liberal and conservative, younger and older, affluent and just scraping by—experience both disruption and a sense of home, and learn to love one another for Jesus' sake.
- Cultural engagement. I want the ministry I serve to demonstrate honor and respect to the culture around it—and to be intentional about finding those "common grace" points where the church and non-believers in the community can have respectful, meaningful dialogue.
- City-positive. I want the ministry I serve to focus on ways to help its city flourish—whether through the planting of new churches, engaging the workplace with the values of the Kingdom, or living as good neighbors in the community. I want the church to be experienced by its non-believing neighbors as a life-giving and valued presence.
- Intentionally outward-faced. To prioritize serving and loving the poor and marginalized who are within the reach of the church. It is also important to me that the ministry embrace an intentionally "non-believer friendly" approach—in which non-believers experience Christians not as an alienating or judgmental bunch, but as a life-giving community that is rooted in love, and that possesses a quality of life that is beautiful, because God is beautiful.
- Life together. I want to serve a church that embraces the importance of community that is built around the gospel—something akin to Acts 2:42-47. This kind of community should be experienced as authentic, accountable, accepting, prayerful, and Spirit-filled.

What are your thoughts on styles of worship?

Worship should be unapologetically and refreshingly centered on God—who he is and what he has done in Christ. Weekly worship is the occasion for the community to reenact the Gospel drama, which tells us that Jesus has come into the world to reconcile sinners to himself and each other, and to renew the whole world. Worship style should serve and support the church’s mission, not vice versa. I believe that worship style should be governed by the unique sensibilities of the community that surrounds the church, and should be reexamined and tweaked every few years to ensure that style is “current” with the surrounding community’s sensibilities. Regardless of style, worship must include content that is biblically sound, be coherent to congregants from all levels of spiritual maturity, and ease the participation of those present.

Please describe your view of the church’s role in Preschool-12 education.

Patti and I have a flexible philosophy regarding the education of our children. Both of our daughters have been educated at home, in private Christian school, and at public schools. We believe that there are unique advantages and challenges to each of these three approaches. In terms of which approach we believe is best, it really depends upon the child.

It is our belief that regardless of educational choice, we as parents must be directly involved with the stewarding and shepherding of our daughters’ learning. We have also urged parents to resist the temptation of regarding their own educational choices as superior to those of others.



Given that philosophy, how important is Christ Presbyterian Academy to the future of CPC—and vice versa?

Clearly, CPA is a valued entity and has brought much good to many families in Nashville—and no doubt will continue to do so. Given the fruitfulness and stature of the school, it is important that the church continue to give strong support to it and celebrate it as a life-giving extension of the church’s ministry. It is also important that the church be equally welcoming to, and equally eager to support and celebrate, families who elect to send their children to other schools.

Although CPC is directly affiliated with a single school, the church should also celebrate the good that comes out of the many other schools in Nashville—whether private, public, or home. In other words, while CPA is an important ministry of the church, a decision to participate (or not participate) directly with the school should in no way affect a family’s status in the church.

How do you feel about the future of the PCA?

I have been an ordained pastor in the PCA for most of my ministry, and am committed to its future. I suppose that the best summary of my thoughts about our denomination can be found in Tim Keller’s article on the same subject at:

<http://www.pcaac.org/2010GeneralAssembly/WhyILikePCA-Tim Keller.pdf>

In the past I have served on the Candidates & Credentials as well as the Mission to North America committees of my Presbytery. Should I serve at Christ Presbyterian, I imagine I would want to be very active at the Presbytery and in building up the PCA throughout Middle Tennessee.