

Subject Line: Important Message from Pastor Jamey

Last night's Council Meeting was called to order by our new moderator, Emily VanKleeck. A few matters were discussed:

- 1) Making official her move to replace Julie Terry who had to step down for health reasons (prayers for Julie's continued health and gratitude for her faithful service!).
- 2) Discussing the appointment of a replacement vice-moderator since Emily is taking over.
- 3) Informing the council that the nomination process for the 2020 annual meeting is solidly underway.
- 4) Acknowledging the *notification of bequest* that will be coming from the estate of Judy O'Neal for \$10,000. Judy honors us with a posthumous gift for the express use of caring for our building.

The matter of greatest impact was the announcement of my resignation. This was difficult for everyone. Michelle and I have become convinced that the time is right for a career shift. So, throughout this fall I will be winding down my ministry time in Stanton as I ramp up my consulting work with hurting churches around the country. I will talk more about it in the days to come. For now, some brief details are included in the letter Emily read last night (see the full letter below).

I am extremely thankful for my ministry time here in Stanton and I am trusting that since God is doing something new in my life, He's doing something new within and among FCC. I pray you'll have that same trust. 2020 has already been a bizarre year for so many reasons and now we have one more thing to add. Thankfully, God is writing the overarching story and for that we remain joyfully confident.

Also, last night I spoke briefly with the council about some succession planning. The Diaconate and Trustees will be considering the question of an ad hoc transition team which would take the lead for walking FCC through this next season of change. In the weeks and months ahead, we will take our time to say goodbye, find a temporary pastor to fill in, and then prayerfully seek God to lead us to the next shepherd of this terrific congregation. I will remain as pastor until everything is as stable as possible in all aspects of the ministry. That means I will continue with weddings, funerals, and general ministry oversight for as long as needed. Nothing else will change among our staff or our usual operations. The plan for now is that I will finish preaching during September and then preach intermittently in October and November. The last group Bible study I will lead begins next week Tuesday and will run at least through October. Keep watch for Emails, Open Door articles, and Sunday announcements to stay apprised as the process moves along.

Emily closed the meeting with prayer. During her prayer she spoke of trusting God as he "moves the pieces" of His church during our lifetime. It is a beautiful and precious thought to remember that our church is actually just tiny part of His great kingdom and that, as such, it knows no boundaries and we are always together even when apart. And now, to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.

Jamey

To my wonderful church family,

I would have preferred to share this news with each of you personally, but it would have taken far too long and been more emotional than I could stand. I hope you will forgive the faceless nature of a letter at a council meeting as well as the fact that it is being read to you by our moderator. I am simply too much of a crybaby to make it all the way through.

Several years ago, I was introduced to Interim Pastor Ministries (IPM), a specialized type of consulting group that combined counseling and pastoral ministry. Since that time, I wondered if God might eventually draw me to such work as it is a perfect blend of my skills and education. A year ago, I felt it was time to investigate further, so we went to Chicago for the IPM training. Michelle and I immediately recognized the fit and so I joined a group of 125 pastors across the nation. This fall, the time has come for me to take my first interim position. It is a congregation in Michigan's upper peninsula who is saying goodbye to a pastor of 21 years following some challenging issues with a staff member and several church members. I anticipate this will be the first of several placements during the next phase of my career. Each assignment typically lasts around 12 months give or take. During my vacations and between assignments I will return to my home here in Stanton. I have roots here. My grandmother and my father are buried here. My mother is still moving into our home sometime next year. Michelle will still work at her job in Lakeview. And I have many, many lifelong relationships forged over the last 18 years with all of you and dozens within the community. I will be home most weeks for a few days since this first assignment is reasonably close. Michelle will drive up and join me on many weekends, as well. Because this type of church consulting requires being on site most Sunday mornings, I will no longer be able to serve as pastor to FCC.

I have anticipated this day with both hopeful expectation and enormous dread. The hopeful expectations are for what new things God might want to do through me for His wider church. The dread involves saying goodbye to all of you and moving on from a ministry that I love. Please accept this letter as my official resignation. And please know this ministry will remain forever in my prayers as I wish to remain in yours.

With constant affection,

*Jamey Nichols
September 3, 2020*