

Update on the Pastoral Transition

March 20, 2022

I'd like to take a few minutes of your time this morning to give you another update on the pastoral transition that is taking place here at The Gathering.

Many of you know that The Gathering first went public on Sunday mornings in May 2014 as a brand new church plant. Since then, our church has experienced the most remarkable and sustained blessing of the Lord that I have seen in more than 40 years of local church ministry.

In John 20, Jesus breathed on his little band of fearful disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (20:22). He has also breathed upon us at The Gathering, with obvious effect.

I will close out my ministry as the Senior Pastor at the end of June. The slow, methodical transition that is now taking place is an effort to conserve and protect the fruit that God has given to our church.

I have heard so many sad stories from church planters who left too soon, or too quickly, and their churches suffered. Some even closed after the church-planting, founding pastor moved on. *There's too much at stake.*

In our 8 years together, we have witnessed many people come to faith, get baptized, and be discipled. To God be the glory! Our *congregation* has worked so hard to get where we are, and you have given sacrificially for years. Thank you!

But the divine beauty resting upon this church, the heart-melting culture of caring for one another, generosity, gospel-centrality, gentleness, and joy – none of those things could be overstated. *The Lord – the Lord* led us into those green pastures and beside those still waters, for the display of his glory. The church continues to bear much fruit, and we praise God for that!

We have good leaders in place. The elders are godly men. The deacons are working hard. The staff is functioning well. We have the best volunteers on the planet! And God has been so generous!

We love The Gathering! Patty and I love this church! We are not stepping aside now because we're discouraged or disappointed. Not at all. I'm not resigning my spot as senior pastor because of disagreements or disputes. None of that! I just need to sharpen my focus and do what I do best with the rest of my days.

When our pastoral succession is complete, and I am no longer serving as your Senior Pastor on July 1st, we will continue to serve the Lord where we can and where we are needed.

Patty and I find ourselves in our 60s. I'm not sure when that happened, but it did. Most days, we *feel* like we're 40. We feel energized and excited about serving the Lord and maximizing our time with family while we can. But we won't be feeling this great forever.

Sooner or later, something is going to take us out. But until then, we are resolved to keep serving our family and serving the cause of Christ *with everything we've got*.

Years ago I started a Canadian non-profit organization that we call WORDfirst Ministries of Canada. We named it WORD *first* because the gospel is of first importance. We want to preach the Word first, and we want to teach it in a relevant, passionate manner so that the gospel of God becomes the main attraction on every front. Working with Wordfirst Ministries will give me an opportunity to provide pulpit supply in smaller churches that might need some help.

I'll keep writing for publication, coaching church planters, and helping new churches. That's what I love to do! And now I can set my own schedule. No more 60-hour work weeks or being on-call 24/7. 40 years of that is enough. It's just time to shift gears.

Patty and I will both finish our ministry assignments here by the end of June. And we will joyfully hand off the leadership to the elders and the staff. We're planning to take July and August off with our family, so you will not see us here over the summer, but we will be back.

God has been good to us. We are so grateful. Thank you for loving us the way you do! We are immeasurably blessed!

By His grace and for His glory,
Garth