

Church Announcement

For Public Release

September 15, 2024

People of Shepherd's Grace,

For the last several years we have been struggling with attendance in our church. Since the COVID year, our attendance has declined from an average of approximately 50 people per week to an average of approximately 15. Our giving has also declined proportionally with the decline in attendance. Recently, we have mourned the loss of a number of our most generous contributors. As a result of these events and other changes in lifestyle, our giving has not been sufficient to keep up with the spending needs of our church. As a result, we are struggling to meet our financial obligations.

Many of you know that recently I suffered some significant health issues. These issues prompted me to notify our board of elders that I would most likely be retiring in July of 2025. This should have come as no surprise to anyone, because I have indicated for a number of years that upon reaching my 70th birthday I would no longer function as the pastor of Shepherd's Grace Church.

When you consider both of these events together, you realize that we as Shepherds Grace Church have to make a very difficult decision. We have been blessed with elders who are clear thinking, dedicated, and devout brothers and sisters in Christ. Their recommendation based on the current flow of revenue in our church is that we begin looking for someone to purchase the church building, and that we cease operations as a church after December of this year 2024.

It is my responsibility today to announce to you that the elders believe this is the clearest and most accurate assessment we could make. We have been faithful as servants of God for 18 years and in that time we have touched the lives of many people. We have served approaching 60,000 meals in our meal ministry. We have had the opportunity to share in ministries around our community. We have taken well over 250 young men and women on mission trips traveling in excess of 100,000 miles as we shared our love for Jesus Christ with people in other parts of our country while our young men and women learned how to be more Christ like here at home.

We can point to many other accomplishments, but I hardly think it's necessary. You know what being a valuable member of Shepherds Grace Church has meant to you, and while ours will start to become a different kind of relationship after the cessation of church operations, please know what a tremendous honor it has been for me to serve as your pastor, to be your friend, and to be your brother in Christ!

We thank each and everyone of you and all who have attended Shepherd's Grace Church in the past for making it possible for us to do the kind of work God has called us to do in this place. I am confident God continues to call and will lead us to exactly the places we need to be as we all move forward.

Our elders wanted to make this announcement this morning because we did not want you to hear from someone outside our community about the decisions or the actual conversations that have been taking place. We have always tried to operate our church with full transparency, keeping you advised each and every step of the way in all of our decision making processes over the course of the past 18 years. I believe we have been faithful to that endeavor.

I also believe that we will continue as members of the community of faith to honor and serve the Lord in ways the Lord continues to call us. God is about to do a new thing here in this place. We do not yet know exactly what that new thing will be, but we know that when it is revealed to us we will give praise and glory to God as we have done week after week month after month and year after year in the ministry to which we have been called.

I leave you with the phrase that I invite you to consider so frequently as members of our worship community. Come and worship! Come and see!

Yours in Christ's service,

Jack Dickson, Pastor Shepherd's Grace Church