



December 29, 2021

Church Family,

The New Year is here, and with a new year comes new opportunities, changing seasons, and fresh, way-making paths from the Lord.

On Sunday, December 26th, our Governance Board presented a letter to the congregation from Pastor Ben. In this letter, Ben presented his resignation from his role as Lead Pastor by highlighting the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our fellowship over the past 6 ½ years, and a renewed call on his and Kristen's life from the Lord. Ben and his family will be entering a call of rest as they transition out of the role as Lead Pastor of our fellowship after January 30, 2022.

Ben's departure will be a large change for our fellowship – one that may bring uncertainty, questions, and perhaps even fear. This new season for the LaGrange First Church of God family is one that does not come without opportunity, and that is where we invite you to take part in a few things:

- 1) Prayer for our leadership. A search committee will be formed to begin seeking the next Lead Pastor. Please pray for wisdom and discernment as that committee is formed, and also for the committee members as they seek the will of the Lord for the next right fit.
- 2) Pray for our staff. This change will not go unnoticed in regular daily work in the church, and it will not be an easy transition for our diligent staff. Please lift them in prayer as they continue to lead their ministries in boldness, wisdom, and in their calling. Pray specifically for Pastor Cassy, Pastor Nathan, Erica, Ian, Marisa, Ben (Leu), Randy, and Jan.
- 3) Pray for our next Lead Pastor. We believe that, while the Lord has laid a fresh calling on Ben and Kristen's life, He has also laid a fresh calling on the next Lead Pastor for our fellowship. Join us in prayer for this person and their family as they receive that call, and as they enter into it.
- 4) Pray for each other. This change is not easy. It is something we as a family have endured before, but it still comes with challenges. We'll face our own questions and moments of uncertainty, but it is in those

moments that the Lord invites us to our knees to pray. He is still King, and in the end, He asks for our hearts to be focused on Him alone. Let's pray for one another—that we have the faith to endure, and the love to lift up one another during this trying season.

“Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them. You are [our] hiding place; you will protect [us] from trouble and surround [us] with songs of deliverance. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.”

Psalm 32:6-8

Prayer is always important, but it is vital now. May we choose now to lean into the Lord as we take our next right step.

Together, and in the Lord,
The Governance Board:
Sara Patrick, *President*
Steve Gage, *Vice President*
Chad Olinger, *Secretary*
Jordan Younce
Keith Stanton
John Fleischauer
Michael Watts



LaGrange
CHURCH OF GOD
PUTTING LIGHT IN DARK PLACES

December 20, 2021

Dear Church Family,

October 4, 2015 was one of the best days of my life, because it was the day you, LaGrange First Church of God, installed me as your pastor. I entered into this sacred role as a 36 year old man with a wife and two toddlers. It was more than I could have ever asked or imagined.

I believe God called me to LaGrange First Church of God to reach the lost and raise the willing. God called me to use my spiritual gifts to preach the Gospel and equip the saints for acts of service. I knew God was ready to do immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine through you, and He certainly has.

As I assumed the role as the Lead Pastor, God quickly began to humble me and reveal just how much I didn't know.

This congregation is so much more than a church. It is truly God's Light in the darkness of this present age. You have shined God's "...light into this world. A city on a hill that can't be hidden. (Mt 5:14). Every year you have said, "Yes Lord. Send me!" (Is 6:8)

The hunger in your Spirit to show our city and county that the church is a people, and not a building, has humbled me. You have led and served in ministries such as: Night to Shine, Feed My Starving Children, and Shine LaGrange. You have worked together with other churches in the community to put God's light in dark places. God has moved in ways greater than I could have ever imagined.

Celebrate Recovery, Moving Forward, All Stars, and the Lighthouse have been a glowing example of what it looks like to obey God's commandments:

1- "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."- James 1:27

2- "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40

Then, there have been changed lives within our church family. Countless lives given to Christ, baptisms, and disciples that go make more disciples is the standard we use to testify to His work among us. God has worked through you in such a mighty way, **we are able to count lives changed**. As "Way makers," you ran a capital campaign to make way for more people to worship together. It has been a blessing to be part of a congregation where we don't just count noses and nickels.

Faithful and consistent ministries have provided opportunities for our new people to heal and grow. The Word of God is faithfully taught in Sunday School and at home groups. The worship and technology teams weekly lift the name of Jesus in Spirit and Truth. Gender Ministries like Women at the Well, and the Men's Banquet have been powerful expressions of the Gospel that reach men and women in unique ways. The children, youth and 55+ ministries are why we are a church family with "lots of 80's and lots of babies." Your faithfulness in these ministries has changed lives for the Kingdom of God. Everyone has used their spiritual gifts in the planting, watering and nurturing the "seed".

This church has embraced innovation at unheard of levels in rural America. Your willingness to embrace online worship before COVID gave us a foothold to shine bright when church was "shut down." Currently our social media posts are seen on 9,000 plus screens. That is 9,000 screens that hear the Gospel. This is a testimony of our mission: Putting Light in dark places! By utilizing on-line giving, implementing the use of our new database (Breeze), and 750+ downloads of our church App, this church has everything it needs in tools and testimony to thrive.

I didn't know how God was going to do the immeasurably more through LaGrange First Church of God, but clearly He has and continues to do so!

Last December I began to wrestle with my call, here, at LaGrange Church of God. The questions weren't born out of anger, or lack of His presence among the congregation. I believe it was preparing my spirit for a next season, and for us right now that season is to rest.

Over the past 12 months Kristen and I have talked, prayed, and sought wisdom from Godly leaders. In the seeking, and in prayer, we have come to believe God is transitioning this church into a new season, and this new season will require a new pastor.

I have presented the Governance Board with my letter of resignation. Per our by-laws, as Senior Pastor, I am to "provide for a minimum of 30 days before vacating the pastorate, unless other arrangements are worked out to the satisfaction of both the Governance Board and Pastor."

My family can't say thank you enough for all God has used you to do in our lives. You were there for us during my health problems with meal trains, prayers, and so many treats of encouragement. You have helped us train our children in the way of the Lord. We have made friendships that will last for a life time. You have sold me cars. Moved my home. You have ministered to us. In short, thank you for allowing me to serve. We love you!

Putting Light In Dark Places,

Numbers 6:24-26

Ben