

ZION CHURCH

July 2026

To My Zion Family,

Twenty-five years ago, I met Pastor Keith Battle in a gym. I had no idea that moment would lead to a 24-year journey of ministry that would shape my life, my faith, and my calling in ways I never could have imagined.

I want to publicly honor Pastor Keith Battle and our First Lady Vicki Battle for what they have meant to me and my family over these 24 years. Pastor Battle has given me room to follow God through every season, even when it meant changing directions and trying things the church world had never seen. First Lady Vicki has been a constant blessing, a woman of grace and faith whose encouragement has touched so many who serve in this house. I do not take any of it for granted.

God has consistently called me to start things that did not yet exist. Because of Pastor Battle's leadership and trust, I had the privilege of being the first to serve in many roles at Zion, most built from the ground up, including Evangelism Pastor, Youth Pastor, Small Groups Pastor, Multi-Site Pastor, iCampus Pastor, Innovation Pastor, and ultimately Chief Innovation Officer. Along the way, I also had the privilege of co-leading our first multi-site location, serving as Campus Pastor for Bowie, and launching our Greenbelt campus. I share this not to draw attention to myself, but to bear witness to what God does when you simply say yes. Every one of these was His doing.

I write today not with a goodbye, but with a declaration of purpose. By the end of July 2026, I will be stepping down from my role as Chief Innovation Officer, a choice I made freely and prayerfully. As Isaiah 43:19 reminds us, "Behold, I am doing a new thing." I believe this is that new thing for me.

My heart has always been to build sustainable products, services, and experiences that advance the mission of Christ and Zion. As a C-suite leader, I served alongside an incredible team who became more than colleagues, they became family. But I believe my highest and best use now is focused entirely on building an Innovation Department that will serve Zion long after I am gone.

The work ahead is some of the most exciting of my life. We are developing personalized discipleship tools and leaning into artificial intelligence as a genuine instrument to spread the gospel faster, reach more people, and equip the church in ways never before possible. What *we* are building will keep Zion forward-thinking for generations to come. That is the legacy I am investing in.

I ask for your prayers as we bring new products and services to life, and for the team that will carry this work forward. Pray that everything we build serves one ultimate

purpose: connecting people to Jesus Christ and helping them become everything God created them to be.

While I am not going anywhere today, I want to be transparent with you. By the end of 2027, I plan to further reduce my role at Zion as I enter a new season of life, one where I can be even more present with the family God has blessed me with. Ministry has always been a joy, and so has being a husband, father, and grandfather. I look forward to pouring more intentionally into both.

For His glory and Zion's future,

Pastor Elwood

Chief Innovation Officer, Zion Church