

I can't begin to tell you how humbling it is to be the successor to such a godly, faithful, Spirit-controlled man. It is also an honor to be called to help lead a church that is so passionate about truth, seeing it lived out in their lives and impacting those around them. God sovereignly brought us to New Community over 6 years ago as we were looking for a church where we could worship as we started the church planting process. While we were only here for a year a half at that time, we saw a church that held an extremely high view of Scripture and that loved the clear teaching of it.

During that time God allowed pastor Jerry and me to develop a strong relationship. He was gracious enough to meet with me regularly to help us learn the St Louis area and became a trusted counselor and advisor throughout our church planting experience. I was thankful for his generous sacrifice of time and for sharing his ministry experiences, having planted a church himself. But little did either of us know what God was doing at that time and the friendship and foundation that He was building for what was to come.

After two-and-a-half years there arose some serious issues within the church plant and through much counsel and prayer it became clear that we needed to step away. It was by far the most difficult decision we have ever had to make and led us into some of the darkest days we have experienced as a family. I wondered "How could God be taking away what we had prayed, planned and dreamed about for years? Why would God bring us to St Louis only to take away what we thought was the whole reason we had moved here?" Again, little did we know what God was doing at that time and the plan He had in store for us.

After we stepped away, we knew where we needed to be for the short-term. Jerry and Cindy had been such compassionate and caring counselors through that time and we knew we needed to be at a place where we could both heal and grow. We knew that at NCC we could learn from other godly men and women as well as receive the instruction of the Word of God, which was our only hope of be sustained through that time.

But God allowed a couple other things to happen during that time that we didn't expect. First, God allowed our hearts to be connected with this body in a special way as God used so many of you to help us heal and grow as well as reaffirm our equipping for ministry. Another unique thing that happened was that God allowed our passion for ministry here in St Louis to remain. Although we hadn't lived here long at that point, we felt like St Louis was home. Again, we didn't know why at the time, but God knew what he was doing.

Although the past 7 years in St Louis have not been what we expected, we are so grateful that God knows what He is doing and that He doesn't reveal the path all at once. There were lessons we needed to learn and journeys we needed to take in our own lives that we probably would not have learned or experienced otherwise. I am so grateful for the way pastor Jerry and the elders have prayerfully and thoughtfully approached this transition. I look forward to learning more and growing under pastor Jerry as we go through this transition phase. It will also be a blessing to have him here after the transition to continue to counsel with.

As Jerry and I have spent countless hours together, it has become clear how like-minded we are in doctrine, philosophy of ministry, church governance and our approach to preaching. As those of you who have been around here for a long time know, I've learned what a gift pastor Jerry is to the church. It is very unusual to find a man that has kept the same passion, energy and faith for forty years of ministry. God has used him in so many of your lives and this church would not be here if he didn't live each day surrendered to the will of God. He and his wonderful wife Cindy been such a blessing to our family in so many ways and I can't thank him enough for the way he has allowed God to use him in my life.

Another person that I need to thank is my wife. God has used her in my life to be a source of encouragement, counsel, support and strength. I can honestly say that I wouldn't be standing in front of you today, accepting this position if it wasn't for her influence on my life and her commitment to the Lord, our family and the church. In some ways I think pastor Jerry asked me to do this just to keep her around here. I love you Valarie and thank God for you.

As we move forward, my desire is to see NCC continue its unwavering commitment to the Word of God and trust in its sufficiency. My passion is to preach and teach God's Word in a way that communicates the truth of the passage in an understandable way and helps each believer make appropriate application to their lives. As Paul said, I don't come to you with excellency of speech, but I pledge to you to walk with the Lord and to work hard at feeding you from God's Word.

It is by God's grace and kindness that this church was started and has grown into what it is today. And it is by God's grace and kindness that we will continue to stay faithful to Him and to be a lighthouse in this community. Please commit to pray for leadership as we embark upon this transition, as we commit to continually pray for you as well. As we go through this transition as a church, it is important to remember that this church is not about Jerry, myself or any of us, this is all about bringing glory to God and to the head of the church, Jesus Christ. May that always be the legacy of New Community Church.