

DEAR MENLO FAMILY,

We have been so grateful for your prayers as we seek to discern the Lord's guidance on how best to uphold the mission of Menlo Church — to lead our generation into a transforming relationship with Jesus and authentic community with each other, so that everyone in the Bay Area and beyond can flourish.

During this challenging season, we have been walking with many of you in your pain, responding to hundreds of emails and calls from volunteers, parents, students, staff and community members. Some of you have been part of Menlo for just a few months, others multiple generations, some are deeply connected in our community, others are questioning whether you can stay. You are all part of our family and your voice matters. Thank you for sharing your heart, your stories, and what our church means to you.

We acknowledge we as elders are imperfect people — and for those who believe our investigation, decisions, or communications have been insufficient, we are sorry and humbly ask for your forgiveness. We have done our best to collectively pray, seek and act on the will of Jesus Christ, and to uphold integrity and compassion in everything we do. At every step, we have collaborated with and sought the counsel of our denomination, ECO Bluewater Presbytery. Our eyes are on God, and we are leaning into him to determine the next steps forward to build a church that has and will continue to bring him glory, and draw people to the saving grace of Christ's love.

As leaders called by the congregation to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and his Church, the Elder Board and John take seriously Paul's counsel in Acts 20:28 to *"pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood."*

In this spirit, John shared with the Elder Board on several occasions his love for the church and his willingness to resign if the elders believed his presence had become a distraction from the mission of our church. In recent days and after a process of mutual discernment with John and in consultation with the Presbytery, it is with a heavy heart that the board unanimously concluded that John should resign as Senior Pastor of our church. He agreed and tendered his resignation last week.

Our decision stems from a collective desire for healing and discernment focused on three primary areas. First, John's poor judgment has resulted in pain and broken trust among many parents, youth, volunteers and staff. Second, the extended time period required to complete the new investigation and rebuild trust will significantly delay our ability to pursue Menlo's mission with the unity of spirit and purpose we believe God calls us to. Third, in this coming season John needs to focus on healing and reconciliation within his own family. For these reasons, we believe Menlo Church should return our focus to our ultimate mission: helping people find and follow Jesus.

In making this decision, we also wish to gratefully acknowledge that during John's tenure at Menlo, many have come to know Jesus, and through John's teaching they and many others have matured in their faith and embraced the life of the Christian mind in the midst of an increasingly secular world. Our church has grown to include five additional campuses reaching from South City to Saratoga as we together labor to make the gospel known in the Bay Area. We are so grateful for John's many contributions to Menlo and to the Christian community around the world. As we look to the future, we fully believe in the redemptive testimony and witness God has planned for him, his family, his ministry, and our church. We have spent years praying for and loving the Ortberg family and ask that you continue to keep them in your prayers in the days ahead.

We know that this announcement may raise many questions about the next steps for Menlo Church. We don't have all the answers, but we want you to be aware of the decisions and actions we have taken to this point:

- **Staff Leadership.** John's last day with Menlo Church will be Sunday, August 2nd when he will be addressing our congregation. Following the recommendation of Presbytery, we will hire a Transitional Pastor to serve as interim Senior Pastor. The Transitional Pastor will provide leadership and additional support to our talented staff and ministries as we commence the work of searching for a new Senior Pastor.
- **Presbytery Involvement.** Consistent with our accountability to our denomination, we have invited Presbytery leadership to provide guidance, moderate the Board and the Annual Congregational Meeting and have a member included on the committee leading the Supplemental Investigation. Menlo Church is not an independent church and is blessed to operate under the authority and counsel of our Presbytery.
- **Elder Board Composition.** The Elder Board acknowledges that it is ultimately accountable for creating an environment of trust and mutual respect which has been sorely tested these last few months. We feel called to provide stability to Menlo Church in this time of significant transition but are working to add new and diverse voices on the board. To this end, board membership is refreshed annually with rolling turnover due to staggered terms with new elders elected by the congregation at annual meetings. The Transitional Pastor will serve on the board and we will continue to invite staff to speak into specific issues based on their expertise and role as need arises.
- **Annual Congregational Meeting.** At the recommendation of Presbytery, our virtual 2020 Annual Congregational Meeting, originally scheduled for Sunday, August 9th, will be delayed until Sunday, August 30th so we can present all pertinent action items to the congregation for vote. This will include a vote to dissolve John's call as Senior Pastor (the vote, as required by our denomination, is a formality since John has already tendered his resignation). As part of our board refresh, the congregation will vote to elect any nominated elders at this meeting. We will reserve time during the meeting for a Q&A with the congregation and invite you to submit questions in advance to governance@menlo.church.
- **Supplemental Investigation.** We are in the final stages of confirming the members of the advisory committee that will be responsible for vetting and recommending a new, independent fact finding firm with expertise in child safety and sexual abuse to conduct a supplemental investigation of Johnny Ortberg's involvement in Menlo Church and Church-sponsored activities. The five-person advisory committee will be composed of a staff member, a volunteer, a parent, a former elder, and

a representative from our denomination for additional oversight.

- **Child Safety Audit.** The Elder Board has directed staff to seek an external, independent audit of our existing child safety policies and procedures. We will provide an update on the expected start of the work as soon as we know more about the timing.
- **Communications.** Many of you have expressed the importance of more detailed communication from elders about the decisions we have made and our prayerful deliberations. We have vowed to do better, and are providing more detailed responses to potential questions you may have [here](#). Additionally, we plan to host a series of Fireside Chats over the coming months to provide important updates and more touchpoints for answering your questions. We will notify you on dates when they are finalized.

The author of Hebrews reminds the church in difficult times, *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* Our community has been built around a passion to follow Jesus, and we grieve that our focus on Jesus has been distracted by these events. We have been humbled and inspired by our campus pastors, staff and volunteers who have continued to faithfully minister to our congregation and community during these extraordinary times. They are a daily reminder that “church” is not a building. It is not a single person. It is the people of God, caring for the community together.

Let us move forward, unified in our greatest calling: to help others find and follow Jesus.

In service,

THE ELDER BOARD

