

I wasn't sure if I should start this letter by saying, "Hey Church!" or "Hey family!" And that's one of the things that makes LifePath special. We are both.

I'm eager to reflect on the depths of Jesus' love on Good Friday tonight, and then celebrate the indescribable hope of his Resurrection on Sunday with you all.

After Sunday, my sabbatical will officially begin, and I will be away from my role as pastor of LifePath until July 7th. Even though we've talked about it quite a few times, I wanted to send you a simple encouragement before we enter this season. Since LifePath began 13 years ago, I haven't been away for any real length of time, and you've never had a break from me! But for both myself and our church to be healthy, this rest and renewal time is crucial. When a "founder" of a church is around that long, it's very possible that they become so deeply entrenched in the church's DNA that they actually hinder fresh movement of the spirit. I'm excited for the new ways the spirit of Jesus will move among you all... And in me! I am so excited to listen for God with fresh ears and eyes as I rest and explore. You need this, and thanks to the constant support from our leadership, I know that I do too.

Some of you may be very excited, some of you a little apprehensive, and others may not be sure how to feel. All of that is fine. Without a doubt, some things will feel a little bit different, since I have a significant role in our church. But in many other ways our culture, our spirit, our leadership, and our Jesus-centeredness won't be changing at all. In fact, I expect that those things will grow and expand in new ways when I'm gone.

Our Sunday gatherings, in most ways, will remain familiar. A variety of teaching will come both from our trusted pastors and other voices that you don't yet know, whom I cannot wait for you to be encouraged by! Our pastoral team of Duane and Sabrina have been prayerfully preparing to guide us through these weeks, along with Tori and our Vision Team.

But there will be some wonderful different experiences during this time as well! You'll be invited to participate in an overnight solitude retreat with Jesus. We'll be hosting a Sunday workshop about compassion and trauma. We'll be hosting a day retreat to reflect on body image. And you'll have fresh chances to share stories with each other about how you're growing and being shaped by Jesus.

I want to name a temptation for some of you. If your relationship with me is one of your central connections to LifePath, you may be tempted to withdrawal a bit for these months and just kind of wait it out. I urge you- do the opposite! Take fresh steps to make new friendships, learn names, and step out on your growing edge with Jesus and your LifePath neighbors. Perhaps this is the exact season you need for new relationships to emerge!



And to all of you, I want urge you to work together and make things happen. Often when a pastor leaves on sabbatical, another full time associate pastor takes over, and singularly plays the exact same role as the pastor did. That's not our story. This is a group effort. Duane, Sabrina, and Tori will all be stepping up in big ways, but LifePath will thrive this season if everyone sees themselves as contributors to our community and God's kingdom.

I'll be mostly out of touch throughout this whole season, whether I'm traveling or not. The Vision Team will keep you roughly updated of some of my adventures, which will take me to Puerto Rico, Minnesota, Scotland, England, and North Carolina. I'll be in group counseling with other pastors, learning about the Jesus-centered movement worldwide, reading lots of books, visiting inspiring churches, connecting with old mentors, running a 100k trail race, walking prayerfully along the paths of the ancient Celtic contemplative Christians, and (hopefully) living with some Franciscan monks for a bit. All with the goal to find rest and renewal and listen for how Jesus wants to shape me for the next season of pastoral leadership. This is truly a gift, and I am so thankful to our amazing team at LifePath for making this possible. Equally, we are thankful to the Lily Endowment for the Clergy Renewal Program grant that is funding special experiences for our family as well as for LifePath.

On July 7th, we will have a catered lunch reunion with a storytelling space for Bethany and I to share some of our experiences, and for us to hear about some of the beautiful moments that we missed. I'm already excited for good food and good people and good stories during that time. Make sure to write down things that are worth sharing!

So above all, sisters and brothers- love each other deeply, for love covers a multitude of sins. Forgive each other, and notice the best in each other. Look to Jesus in prayer and in conversations with each other. Don't be afraid to grow and change as a church! Participate in the life of our community together. Grow in gentleness and compassion. Seek Jesus. Meet the needs that arise. Make, "how can I help?" one of your regular questions. Encourage each other when someone is suffering. Laugh together, and never take things too seriously: after all, we're just a foolish, ragtag group of Jesus-loving saints and sinners trying to express God's beautiful kingdom together.

I truly love each of you and I'm filled with gratitude that you are choosing to share life together a a church body. Now it's time to wrap up, because I'm feeling a whole lot of feelings coming on.

I am praying that you meet Jesus in a new way this spring.

In the love and peace of Jesus,
Keith