



St. Peter's First Community Church

Reverend Zen Hess

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Dear friend,

At the conclusion of worship on March 21, 2021, I made an announcement regarding my family's future move to Waco, Texas. The announcement is on the other side of this paper, and I meant every word of it.

I am confident that the Pulpit Committee will find an outstanding new minister. These are the members of that committee, which was established by Council per our Constitution's guidelines: Dave Morrison, Becky Lyons, Jenna Strick, Cassie Miller, Adrian Halverstadt, and Josh Nicholson. Each of these folks are faithful and wise congregants, who are committed to the flourishing of St. Peter's First Community Church. Additionally, Richard Strick will serve a consulting role during the process, much as he did in 2017.

Here is the intended timeline put forward by the Pulpit Committee:

March: Preparing the process

April: Promoting the position

May: First round of interviews

June: Second round of interviews

July: Recap of process; bring pastoral candidate(s) to meet the congregation

August: Install new pastor

The Pulpit Committee will provide regular updates to the congregation, on Sunday mornings and through digital communications. If you have questions along the way, you can send an email to pulpitcommittee@spfcc.org or call the office at 260-356-7728.

I hope you will set aside time often, even daily, to pray for this process. Don't be shy about it. Let the Pulpit Committee members know you're praying for them (and ask *how* you can pray for them!) The staff, Council, and ministry teams will take on additional work because of all this, too, so make sure you offer them encouragement and thanks whenever you can. Everyone has a part to play in this process, and each of those parts matter.

What an honor it has been to serve a congregation like this one. Thank you for the opportunity.

Every blessing,
Zen

Announcement Regarding Pastor Zen's Departure

March 21, 2021, at the conclusion of congregational worship

<https://youtu.be/ut-ijASloho?t=3777>

When we left Huntington in 2014, Jessie and I did not expect to come back to Huntington, let alone to worship and serve in the building where we got married. God surprised us by calling us here.

We love this church community, more than we can say. And we are so well loved by you all. For nearly four years, we've made this our home, and what a special home it has been.

Yet, God is once again surprising us. In July, we will move to Waco, Texas, where I will pursue a Ph.D. in New Testament at Baylor University.

Many of you know how I love to learn, and I am deeply grateful for an opportunity to return to the classroom. This time, the school will even pay me to study!

My tenure here at the church will officially end on May 30th. We won't leave Huntington until sometime in July. Jessie and I plan to continue worshipping here with you all until we leave town.

Some have asked what we will do afterward, if we might even return to Huntington. Our goal is to keep our hearts and minds open to God's leading. I have loved serving as a pastor, and would gladly return to pastoral ministry. I also think I'd like to teach at a university. But, who knows? The program is five years long, so we've got time to figure out what is next.

It is almost impossible to overstate how much we love this congregation. I've loved serving you all, and will continue to put my heart into my work here until I am done. Jessie has grown in so many ways through friendships and experiences here at SPFCC. Emmalyn and Dietrich have had countless honorary grandparents and aunts and uncles and cousins.

The most difficult part about making the decision to go is that we love you all and this place so much. Why would you leave a good thing? But as you all know, when God calls you to something, it is in your best interest to do it. As we prayed together and with others, we felt confident that God was calling us to take a risk, to step into an uncertain future.

As we think about leaving, we are caught in the ebb and flow of joy and grief. We grieve leaving this community; but we rejoice knowing that you will give us courage and confidence to go where God is leading, through your prayers and support.

Now, Dave Morrison, our Council Chairperson, will give you all some of the logistical details about the transition.