

Dear Chapel Family,

As those of you in attendance at our worship gatherings this morning have already heard from me, I'm writing to let you know about some developments in my family. Both Edie and I believe that we have a responsibility to our aging parents – and this responsibility requires us to move our home closer to them. This coming August, after 22 years in Buffalo, we will be moving to Georgia. But keep reading...this isn't bad news.

I know this decision may come as a surprise to you, but hopefully what doesn't surprise you is our desire to obey the Lord. Edie and I have been seeking the Lord's leadership for quite some time. Even before COVID, we began contemplating this potential outcome. Those conversations (and prayers) intensified about a year and a half ago, and we are confident that our next step of obedience right now is to move closer to them so that we are accessible to both sets of parents in this season of their lives.

Before we rush ahead to the many logistical questions you are probably asking, I want you to know how we arrived here. We gladly received the words of God about honoring father and mother. We have talked with our siblings, none of whom are located near our parents. We have sought the wisdom of some trusted friends who walk closely with the Lord. We brought in our Board of Overseers for prayer and counsel early on, along with some of our pastoral leadership. As we have all prayed and asked for the Spirit's direction, Edie and I are confident in the Lord's leadership related to this decision - and we are glad to do it.

That raises a pretty glaring question: if we are relocating our home to Georgia, what about my role here at The Chapel? Well, I'm also glad to tell you that I will remain in my role as the Lead Pastor of The Chapel. Let me explain:

While we are so confident that the Lord is asking us to relocate, I also sensed that the Lord had not released me from the ministry of The Chapel. So, as we prayed together with our Board of Overseers, we've arrived at a creative (albeit, somewhat unique) solution that will allow for me to remain as Lead Pastor while simultaneously honoring our obedience to the Lord by being physically accessible to our parents. As we have talked this out, we have all sensed God's leadership in it, and I believe we have mitigated as many barriers as possible. Starting in September, I will be in Buffalo about ten days per month where I will continue to preach at The Chapel. Right now, I preach (roughly) 60% of the Sundays. Heading into the Fall of 2024 and beyond, I'll still preach 50% of the time - which amounts to only about 5 less Sundays per year. And with the strong teaching team we are blessed with here, I know there will be no lack of spiritual nourishment for our souls - no matter who is communicating.

I will still provide leadership to our staff, give attention to our church's role in WNY, and give specific attention to some of the national and global ways in which we extend our church's mission. The blessings of technology provide real-time access even when I'm not physically in Buffalo. There certainly will be some change and even slight disruption; we're not ignorant of that. But I believe we have the leadership pieces in place to keep that disruption to a minimum. As the Lord leads and allows, we believe this arrangement will serve us well moving forward.

I'll share more with you as I have the opportunity, but allow me to remind you of a few things. There are no goodbye parties or farewells. I am not retiring. There are no greener pastures. There's no job offer waiting in the wings for me. This is not my way of slipping out quietly. This is really as simple as it sounds: we are obeying the Lord's direction to be accessible to our parents in this season of their lives while still remaining in my role at The Chapel. "Moving, but not leaving" is the motto we have been repeating.

I would so appreciate your prayers over this entire situation: first, for our church - that we would be faithful to our mission to give every man, woman, and child a repeated opportunity to see and hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we would also appreciate your prayers for us, and for our families, as we make this transition.

I am grateful to serve a healthy and mature church, and I am grateful that God has provided us an opportunity to continue serving the Lord together. I love you with the love of Christ, and I am excited for the next season of ministry and mission in WNY and beyond.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Jerry

P.S. If you'd like to stay connected to various updates throughout this season in our life and this ministry, you can check out thechapel.com/movingnotleaving. There, you'll find a video that Edie and I recorded with our pastoral leadership that gives additional context to this decision, along with some FAQs.