

Good morning Bridge Church,

I am speaking to you today on behalf of all the Elders to communicate what we have been doing over the past few months, since we last spoke to the congregation, and to let you know what our plans and hopes are for The Bridge Church as we move forward in 2019.

As Elder's we want you to know that we have struggled on knowing how much to share and how to communicate with you regarding the removal of our pastor. We have had countless one on one meetings, met with Small Groups, and have responded to numerous emails, phone calls and texts regarding this issue. But it has become clear that it is important for us to clarify some misinformation that is out there and to address the congregation as a whole.

Even though we have had numerous requests to divulge additional information and details, we have remained firm in our belief that we would only cause more harm to those involved. We are standing on Ephesians 4:29 which states; "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." We believe that what we have to say today will be beneficial and helpful to you.

We want you to know that the decision to terminate our pastor was a unanimous one among the Elder Body. Our decision was not rash. We agonized, prayed and fasted before making our decision. We were thorough in our fact-finding and based our decision on several factors, not all of which were addressed in the letter that Matt wrote and read to our congregation on Sunday, Dec. 2nd. If you were not able to attend services that day, please know that his letter is still available for you to read on the church website.

We have also answered many questions related to The Bridge Church's use of legal counsel throughout our process. We think it is important for you to know that our decision was NOT based on the threat of a lawsuit. We sought legal advice throughout the process to make sure that we were proceeding correctly in all areas, but have never hired legal representation with the intention of initiating or defending a lawsuit.

The Elders want you to know that as a group, we have fully forgiven Matt. We do not harbor any ill will for the consequences his actions have brought upon God's church. We have been working with the Day's since Mid-December on a severance package that will help ease the financial burden as they transition to whatever it is that God has next for their family. Although the elders have met personally to discuss the severance with the Days, they have not yet accepted our offer. We do remain hopeful, however, that we can have the process completed very soon.

So, what can you expect moving forward?

We are looking ahead and continuing to focus on our mission of making disciples for Christ, sharing the gospel and growing in community. We are continuing to trust God's leading and His timing. We have been thrilled with Pastor Steve's willingness to step up in this time of transition, but we also realize that it is not fair to put the responsibility of teaching solely on Pastor Steve's shoulders, as he continues to serve our church body as our Discipleship Pastor.

It is our intent to form a search committee from within our leadership and our congregation to begin looking for a teaching pastor who God has prepared to join our church family and staff, and we trust that God will give us direction and clarity in finding the person He has already chosen to fill this new role for The Bridge Church.

In the meantime, we have had a few gifted pastors who have graciously offered to serve as guest speakers to our congregation and we have begun to schedule these speakers to deliver The Word in the weeks ahead. You are also likely to hear from some of the other pastors we already have on staff, to bring Sunday morning teachings to our congregation.

I would also like to let you know that the Elders have met with and retained a church design-build firm with extensive expertise in master-planning and church development. They are also certified church consultants. We have been working with this firm since October of last year, and their representatives have come and worshipped with us, met with our staff, and are now assisting us in developing a master-plan for a permanent

church home. We also have established a Venice Area Search Team from within our congregation, who will be working closely with this firm, to search for and acquire the best property or facility for our future church.

Finally, the Elders want you to know that we are here and available to help you in any way that we can. Please continue to pray for The Bridge Church, for our staff and our leadership as we seek to carry out the task that God has chosen for us. We love our church community and together we will move with unity into the bright future God has for us.

I hope this message has helped and encouraged all of you. As the apostle Paul wrote in many of his letters to the churches of his time, I would encourage all of you to stand firm, and leave you with Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians Chapter 2 Verses 16 and 17:

“May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word”