



THE RIVER

CHURCH COMMUNITY

March 30, 2025

River Family—

I am writing to let you know that my time as one of the pastors of our community is coming to an end. I am working with Brad and the Board to determine the exact timing of my departure, one that serves this season of transition best, but I expect to end my tenure as a River staff this summer.

It has been with a deep sense of invitation from God and welcome from you that I have ministered at The River for 26 years. I love this church and its people with a love that has only deepened over those years, so it is with an intense mixture of emotion that I make this decision. I feel a lot of sadness in letting go. I also feel enough clarity to let go. And, as I always have, I continue to feel confident that God holds the past, present, and future of The River with great love and hope.

The last 4 years have included very difficult terrain for us as a church and for me as a leader. In the difficulty, I have repeatedly felt confirmed in my sense of call to help lead and shepherd us. Nonetheless, I have also been aware that my own experience of pain in the midst of a trying season was accumulating. As I have tried to stay attuned to my soul and its needs before God, I have heard two primary whispers from the Spirit. First, that as God provided for the Israelites in the desert with enough manna daily, I, and we, would have enough as we walked forward each day. That has been my experience of the faithfulness of God in this time. And, on one particularly grueling day when my energy and my hope was fading, I also heard God say, “At some point, you will need a convalescence.” Convalescence is sort of an old-fashioned word, but it conjured for me that a set-apart season and space for recovery would be necessary. I had hoped to hold my leadership through to the end of this season of investigation in our church, but as that season has stretched, it’s become clear to me that it’s unwise to wait much longer.

I don’t know with much specificity what the future holds for me vocationally. I only know that I’m stepping into (at least) a year of rest and recovery which necessitates me and Mark to be apart from The River. I sense this is all I need to know for now. I trust God to lead beyond that.

As we enter into this season of transition, I want you to know that it has been one of the greatest privileges of my life to be invited to bring my gifts as a shepherd to The River. I will always treasure this community and pray for its thriving. And, I know the God who has seen us this far has much more goodness in store.

Warmly—

Michelle Manley
Pastor of Spiritual Formation