



*"God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped his people and continue to help them." Hebrews 6:10*

*July 27, 2020*

Dear Bethany Family,

As I sat down to prepare this letter, I opened a file on my computer called "Bethany Correspondence." Sometimes before sending a letter like this, it's helpful to look at what we have communicated before.

In December 2018, we sent you a letter announcing that Michael Sexton would be our new Junior High Pastor. I was so excited to give you the news! I remember that Mike stood out from all the other candidates. What was evident to me seemed evident to everyone else, as well: Mike's big personality was only matched by his even bigger heart. He was transparent and vulnerable, authentic and respectful. At the time, I had no idea what a gifted public speaker he would be nor what meaningful contributions he would make beyond student ministries. I had no idea at the time that he would bring such joy and laughter to an already incredible team.

Words seem insufficient to express my gratitude for Michael and all that he has brought to this position during his time here. He has pursued our students, loved our families, proclaimed to us God's truth, and has been faithful in his ministry. I would also be remiss if I didn't recognize his wife Hannah and the many contributions she has made in the service of Bethany Church. She has shared her giftedness in photography and graphic design to not only support our student ministries but also our church as a whole. But more than that, she has shared her heart and opened her life to our students. Together they have been such a blessing to Bethany. Only when we get to heaven will we see the full extent of their eternal investments in the life of our body.

On July 7, 2020, Pastor Mike informed me that he would be resigning. After much prayer and after the birth of their daughter Rhodes, Mike and Hannah have decided to return to Washington to be with family. During a global pandemic that has kept us all away from so many that we love, we have all come to realize the importance of family. While they will be deeply missed, I am excited that they and Baby Rhodes will be surrounded by grandparents and extended family for extra love and snuggles. As much as this is painful for the Bethany family, this is the right move for the Sexton family. Please be praying for their transition back to Washington in the coming month.

Pastor Mike's last Sunday will be August 9, 2020. We will honor him and pray over his family in our 9 AM live stream. Because during this time saying goodbye is complicated by social distancing, we will be hosting a car parade at 11 AM that same day. We invite you to drive through the church parking lot to briefly say farewell and drop off a card with words of encouragement for the Sextons.

Of course, this is a great loss for our church. But this does not surprise our great God and King, who is already preparing the heart of whom He will bring to serve in this important role. Until then, we will be working with the current student ministries staff to support our students and their families. Please be praying that God would guide us and give us wisdom as we identify the path we're going to walk and look for the next leader God is going to call.

If you have any questions please contact me at [jeff@bethanylb.org](mailto:jeff@bethanylb.org).

Grace,



Pastor Jeff Levine

P.S. If you plan to stop by the Sexton's Farewell Car Parade, would you also consider taking part in our Canned Food Drive for the Long Beach Rescue Mission? After you drive through to say goodbye to Mike & Hannah, our team will be available to transfer bags/boxes of non-perishable food items from your trunk directly to the LBRM collection van. Your donations will make a difference for many in need.