

Dear Lighthouse Family,

In May 2018, God said something to me that altered the course of my life and that of my family. I was living in Modesto, CA, pastoring a church, and God said, “You’re not going to be here”. This word from God initiated a 3-year journey of prayer, searching the Scriptures, and beginning to dream about what God wanted to do in our lives.

God began to reveal a vision of a ministry that was dynamic and exciting because it was powered by the Holy Spirit and built on the Word of God.

A vision of a ministry that was connected to and engaging the community (our Jerusalem). Discipling those within the church for ministry and educating the community to not only shape the spiritual needs, but the social ones, as well.

A vision of raising up leaders who would continue their education through internships in this ministry and eventually go on to lead other ministries or further education in Seminary.

A vision of a ministry that planted other churches and spread the gospel to the ends of the earth through financial giving and the giving of time through mission trips.

The vision of this ministry is to clearly live out Acts 1:8 –  
*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

April 23, 2023, God took another step in making this vision a reality when I received a phone call from Lighthouse. A church that I had never heard of and had not applied to, but was inquiring about my interest in the position of Pastor.

This was an answer to prayer for us because we asked God to move in a church that we had not applied to, that this would be all the Lord’s doing.

As God moved through the process, we continued to see God’s hand all over it and He repeatedly confirmed that Lighthouse in Murfreesboro was where He was calling us!

As we arrived in Murfreesboro and began to serve at Lighthouse, the process of learning began. Asking questions, learning the history, and understanding the challenges that already existed at Lighthouse (decline, debt, aging facilities), were all a part of the process to pray through and to follow God’s vision.

I spent time with staff learning about their history, their families, their gifts and how God had already been at work. Praying for each staff member, their families, and that God would continue to move to put the team together that He wanted to enact His vision has been a regular component of my time at Lighthouse.

I was excited to see how God would use my previous experience to help Lighthouse move forward. Having spent 15 years as a Business teacher (accounting, economics, graphics, web design), previously running my own business, accounting and consulting experience in a construction corporation for almost a decade, coupled with a degree in Business, it didn't take long to find ways to make financial and organizational improvements.

We were paying for two internet accounts. We cut one that was costing on average of \$470 per month (over \$5,000 per year).

We were paying \$75+tax per month (\$987.75 per year) to livestream our services to Facebook. Now we are streaming for free to Facebook & YouTube.

We had only been using Planning Center to organize worship services, but now have taken the funds that were spent on a Church App (over \$2000 per year) and put it towards managing people data in groups, giving, registrations, events, and better communication. Planning center includes a Church App at no extra cost. This tool helps us to measure the engagement and steps of discipleship that people connected to Lighthouse are taking.

Any time that a decision has been made to implement something new, evaluation has been given to how to cut costs from something that does not need as much financial support or areas that are not pushing the vision of Lighthouse forward.

For example: the recent change to QuickBooks Online gives more oversight and transparency to our financials, but did not increase our costs because other portions of Planning Center were cut that were not being fully utilized.

While making these financial and organizational improvements, there have also been areas of a new investment. We implemented a check-in system for our children's ministry to increase the safety of our children and the peace of mind of our parents.

We made upgrades to our internal network infrastructure to allow for future upgrades to our facility, such as cameras for security, electronic door access for security, and improved access to online resources for training and discipleship.

We also updated our lights in the Sanctuary and made improvements to the look of our stage because our online presence is the front door of our church. The feel of our service online is impacted by these resources.

We have added staff to improve our communication, our online process, and our reach through social media to widen our front door.

While these positive changes have occurred and we have seen 18 new families in the last two years, change does not come without its challenges.

Change brings the challenge of letting go of the past. Because of the discomfort of change and our consistent financial challenges, the response often becomes fear.

*The place you try to control the most is often where you trust God the least.*  
- Craig Groeshel

Lighthouse is at a crossroads. A church that has the potential and the opportunity to see God do some awesome things must choose it. The choice is to live by FAITH or to live by the FINANCIALS. God is not bound by the numbers we see, but God does respond with blessing when His people OBEY.

I still believe that God has given a great vision and He has the power to do mighty things when believers follow by FAITH not FEAR.

*<sup>7</sup> For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. 2 Timothy 1:7 NLT*

However, the next season of Lighthouse's journey will continue without me and my family. I am heartbroken to see people hurting and being hurt. I also don't believe that my ministry here can continue with what people have come to believe about me without taking the time to speak with me.

Therefore, October 29, 2023, will be my last Sunday as Pastor at Lighthouse.

Heather, Matt, and I want to share our gratitude for the ways many of you have shown us love during our time here by praying for us, sharing in ministry with us, and allowing us into your lives.

I am thankful for the kindness of the Deacons and Trustees to care for my family as we exit Lighthouse.

It has been my joy and my privilege to share in the joys of salvation and baptism as well as in the hard parts of life during end of life hospital visits, phone calls during a crisis, or sitting and listening to the struggles we all go through.

May God bless you,

Pastor David