

February 15, 2023

Dear First Pres family,

After much prayer and consultation with family, mentors, and friends, it is with mixed emotions I write this letter informing you of my plans to resign my position as senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Evanston, effective April 16, 2023.

My reason for resigning comes from a deep conviction that the Lord is leading me and Judith to a new ministry assignment.

While approaching my tenth year as senior pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of New Castle, PA, Judith and I discerned the Lord was preparing us for something new. By February 2009, we began exploring the opportunity to move to Chicago and serve First Pres. It was not an easy decision then, but we were convinced that the Lord was leading us to Evanston—a decision we have never regretted.

Now, we believe the same Lord is leading us to continue serving His kingdom in a different context as senior pastor in the National Capital Presbytery (churches in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Northern Virginia).

Leaving a congregation is hard because it feels like one is abandoning one's family. It is hard because the work of the church is never finished—people are in need and projects are pending. It is hard because change is never easy.

Some of you are new to the boards, or new to our membership, and we won't have the chance to serve and grow together. I regret I won't get that chance.

We love First Pres. Left to us, we would stay. However, when Judith and I pledged our lives to the Lord many years ago, we vowed to live a life of courage, faith, and obedience. It seems the Holy Spirit is challenging us to take the next step. When the Lord tells us to go or stay, we must obey.

Serving First Pres has been one of my greatest ministry experiences. I am a better father, husband, and pastor because of all that we have experienced here and by what you taught me.

Please plan on attending the congregational meeting on April 16 to dissolve the pastoral relationship, followed by a reception in Roy Hall. I will briefly take questions and offer what answers I can during this Sunday's Annual Meeting in the Sanctuary following the worship service.

We will hold you, our staff, and all the families of First Pres in our prayers.

With gratitude to each of you,

Pastor Ray Hylton