

July 16, 2023 Announcement

I know how to say this in a business-like way, but it wouldn't be honest. So let me say this as I would if I was talking to my friends, my family in Christ, because that is what you are.

September 24, our tenth anniversary as a church, will be the day that I conclude my ministry here as your pastor.

I can't believe I'm saying these words. Planting and pastoring this church is and has been the privilege of my life. Around 2012, we sensed a strong burden to plant a church in downtown Toronto. It became inescapable. As we looked for where to plant, Liberty Village kept coming up. We believe that God brought us here. We had the privilege of sharing our call with scores of churches all over Ontario, of sharing the vision, and of seeing God work to bring this church to life, and of watching it grow and change with all the ups and downs of starting a new church.

We came to this community with a clear calling to start this church, because we saw the need, and because we wanted to share the good news of Jesus with as many people as possible.

Some said it couldn't be done, but God has been faithful. It hasn't been easy, but it has been the joy of our lives to watch God at work in this church for these past ten years, and to be part of starting a church in one of the most unique communities in not just Toronto but our entire country. You have been part of that. You are an answer to the prayers that we prayed as we started this church.

I want you to hear this: we love you. Char and I love you. You are our family, our dear brothers and sisters. Every week, we feel so blessed that we have the privilege of serving here. Thank you for the privilege of being your pastor, of being so easy to pastor, for your hunger for God's word, for your constant encouragement to us. Char and I are beyond grateful for you. We can't say that enough.

We have so many things to say to you about how you have blessed us and encouraged us over these past ten years. I feel the same way that Paul did about the Thessalonians when he said, "For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy." (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20).

You may be asking: why? And I want to answer that question in two ways.

First, it's always been my hope that Liberty Grace Church would outgrow me. For a few years now, I've been praying that God would raise up a successor, someone who could take over and lead this church better than I can. Every pastor is temporary, and I knew the day would come that I would pass the baton on to the next pastor. I don't want to hold Liberty Grace Church back. One of the reasons I'm leaving is to make room for the next pastor to come and to lead this church. I am praying that God will provide this person who has gifts that I don't to help lead this church in ways that I can't.

But there's another reason. I've sensed a need, a desire, to shift my energies. I'm turning 56 this month. I'm right at that age where it's time to make a shift. It's time for me to stop doing some of the things I'm doing now and to start leaning into new kind of ministry, one that allows me to focus my energies differently. I'm praying that this will be good for Liberty Grace Church, good for me, and good for the church I hope to serve.

God willing, in October, I will begin as the senior pastor of Grace Fellowship Church Don Mills. We sense God's direction in leading to this church just as we did to start Liberty Grace Church. The same faithful God who brought us here is the same God who is working today, both in our lives and in the lives of these two churches. We are excited about ministry there just as we are sad to be saying goodbye here.

I want to challenge you: please dig in. Please step up. Please rise to the challenge of continuing to be the church in this community. Please continue to pray, give, serve, show up, and love. Keep praying for people to come to know Jesus. Keep praying for baptisms. Keep encouraging each other. Keep being the church.

You will not be alone. You have four elders, godly men, who will continue to oversee this church. More importantly, the same God who has led and cared for Liberty Grace Church will continue to lead and care for you. He will continue to help this church accomplish her mission in this community.

I close with this words from Paul in Acts 20 as he said goodbye to people from a church he loved from its earliest days: "And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

We love you. We are so thankful for you.

Much love,

Darryl