

9/18/2024

## To the Dear Saints of GTBC

**Proverbs 16:9** *A man's heart plans his way, But the Lord directs His steps.*

Warmest greetings in the name of our precious Lord & Savior, Jesus Christ. I count it a privilege to have been called by the Lord in 2022 to serve as your senior pastor of GTBC. And I am excited to see what the Lord has done in many hearts and lives over these last two years – only by His grace. To God be the glory! In addition, I am excited to see what the Lord is going to do in the future as the lost are evangelized and the GTBC saints are edified and equipped for the work of ministry God has for them. Our family has greatly enjoyed the fellowship and friendships we have experienced at GTBC.

As Nancy and I have prayed and talked much about God's leading and His future direction for our family, we concluded a while ago that we believe God was leading us to eventually land close to our son Ian's family in the Milwaukee area where they reside.

**What factored into this conclusion?** Like many of you, we want to be near our family, as well as close to a sound church in the last season of our lives, especially to be an integral part of our grandchildren's lives. The question was "when" would this move occur in God's timing, and "what" would this move involve? Also of great importance are Sarah's present needs and future care. While God has been gracious & faithful, the transition to GA has been much harder for us than anticipated due to Sarah's health issues. The healthcare system in Georgia is very deficient and challenging, especially for those with special needs, and all consider the Wisconsin medical system to be much better. According to the *Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality*, Minnesota and Wisconsin rank in the top 10 states nationwide. In comparison, on some websites, Georgia ranks in the bottom 10 states, even being ranked as the worst state for healthcare. Thus, Nancy and I have sensed a growing & pressing need, while we are still able-bodied, to establish a very good healthcare support system for Sarah. In addition, we need to make important preparations for the time when Nancy & I cannot care for Sarah as we presently do. I turn 70 years old in December, and Nancy is not that far behind with her body slowly breaking down and our present care situation in GA not being sustainable in the long run. Since we both believe that our family's needs must come first, we have been discussing and praying about the future for some time.

**Recent developments:** Nancy had been looking for possible apartments in the Waukesha, WI area over the last several months in anticipation of a future move at some future time. Then, three weeks ago, our daughter-in-law contacted us about an available townhouse in the very area where Ian's family hopes to eventually move upon selling their present house {it just sold last week!}. Because of this, they will need a temporary rental place to live in while they keep searching for their ideal location & home to buy. While looking for an apartment for them to rent, they found a duplex with a handicap-accessible apartment that was remarkably suited for what we actually would need for Sarah. The location was also in the area where they hope to

buy a house in the future. Nancy and I wondered, “*Lord, could this be the place and the time You would have us to move?*” We then decided to fill out the renter’s application to test the waters {not knowing who else might be applying before us}, and after a few days of the process, we secured the approval to rent from the owners. As we discussed and prayed even more about this decision before accepting the terms to rent, we became convinced this was from the Lord, and it was time to make our move. So, over a week ago, we sent the initial security downpayment and first month’s rent for this coming October. Thus, we want to share with you the news that I plan to help move Nancy & Sarah to WI in less than a month on October 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Moving forward:** As Nancy and I talked yesterday about this monumental decision, we both confess that this has been a needed but agonizing decision for us. I love serving our Lord as your pastor-teacher & I love you all, the dear saints of GTBC. Nancy and Sarah feel the same way and have appreciated both the fellowship of the saints and the opportunity to minister for our Lord Jesus Christ at GTBC. Yesterday’s Kids for Christ event was one example of this. But let me hasten to add that Nancy and I do not believe that my pastoral ministry at GTBC is over quite yet, and she supports me in continuing to serve here. She can see that the Lord is slowly building His church at GTBC and does not want to hinder this in any way while still recognizing that the present & future needs of our family need to be met.

**Meeting with the leadership team last Wednesday night:** It was only last Wednesday night that I shared with our team our recent decision to move our family to WI. I didn’t want to do this until this was certain and because it was such a recent decision & development. At that time, I proposed to the GTBC leadership team that, with their agreement & support, I would like to remain the senior pastor at GTBC through 2025.

Obviously, like you at this moment, they needed time to pray & process this news, though they stated their initial understanding & support of our decision to move on Wednesday evening. They all admitted that this decision occurred faster than any of us projected, which Nancy & I concur with. This morning, we met again via Zoom, and they confirmed their support of me continuing as the senior pastor of GTBC and the tentative plan I proposed to them Wednesday night.

**The Tentative Plans:** I submitted to our leadership team for their prayerful consideration the following tentative plans & arrangements to make all this possible for my family to move & my future ministry at GTBC.

- 1) I plan to move my family to WI, Lord willing, on Friday, October 18<sup>th</sup>. I will stay with them to unpack, set up the house, get Sarah on the WI waiver services, establish medical care for Sarah and Nancy, and interview potential caregivers to work for us. We would appreciate much specific prayer regarding each of these matters.
- 2) Lord willing, I will fly back to GA on November 1st to oversee and be involved as usual in our Fall Bible Conference and then return to WI on November 4<sup>th</sup>.

- 3) Between November 1- January 5<sup>th</sup>, I will spend my time primarily in WI addressing my family's needs and plan to return to GA for 3-4 weekends during that period to teach the WOG at GTBC. In addition, I will continue to use the phone or Zoom while in WI to keep in contact with the leadership team & the believers at GTBC as usual and as needed as I continue to serve as your senior pastor.
- 4) To address our Bible teaching needs from October to December, I proposed a specific teaching schedule involving Pastor Kevin, Dale Pearson, John Lewis, and myself sharing the preaching load, with some preaching more than others.
- 5) We also discussed waiting to restart GTBI till the beginning of January to give time for Pastor Kevin to help fill the pulpit at GTBC for the next three months and to prepare for the upcoming GTBI course on Church History.

**Pastoral & Bible Teaching / Writing Ministry in 2025:** Lord willing, starting on Sunday, January 5<sup>th</sup>, I would live primarily here in middle GA and plan to return to WI one week a month to be with my family through 2025 to make sure their needs are met and to give Nancy a needed break. This proposed schedule would allow me to continue to pastor GTBC for the next 15 months, including Bible teaching, pastoral care, administrative leadership, availability to assist in GTBI, doing some needed writing, etc. Lord willing, I believe that I will serve GTBC in this arrangement, by the grace of God, with even more opportunities & availability than I presently have while allowing my family to transition to WI and become established there until I join them permanently.

**The next Sr. Pastor of GTBC:** In talking with the leadership team this morning, we have no person in mind currently to replace me in the future. But whomever the Lord chooses to be, that man would need to be of the same grace-oriented doctrinal persuasion as GTBC, as well as meet the spiritual maturity character qualities & giftedness qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 & Titus 1:6-9. If this man could be identified in the near future and confirmed by the leadership and congregation, I could be personally involved in mentoring him as my assistant for several months in 2025. But we will not force this decision or process but will seek to wait upon the Lord in this matter. This approach would be the best way to guarantee the ongoing scriptural doctrine and future spiritual direction of GTBC. We can all faith-rest that the Lord knows exactly who He desires to meet that pastoral need in His timing.

**Projected Retirement from Pastoral Ministry in 2026:** I would then plan to retire from pastoral ministry, but not all ministry, in 2026 and live permanently in WI. If the Lord willed and only by His grace, I would love to continue to serve wherever the Lord leads me, whether at our home church, Word of Grace Bible Church in West Allis, WI, and /or by way of writing, podcasts, Bible conferences, Grace Global Radio, etc., especially connected with my *Grace for the Race* ministry.

Dear believers, these plans are in pencil, and we realize God has a big eraser. But nevertheless, we need to plan as a family and church. As Proverbs 16:9 states, “*A man's heart plans his way,*

*But the Lord directs His steps.*” We trust that you will understand our reasons for this needed move & that we can all trust God to direct and undertake the many details in keeping with His sovereign will. {Proverbs 3:5-6}

In addition, this projected plan & arrangement is contingent on Sarah getting on the WI waiver and finding caregivers, etc., in a timely fashion for me to be primarily in GA this coming January and throughout 2025. If this does not occur, it will facilitate my permanent moving to WI earlier than expected.

Nancy is agreeable to this projected game plan, but I stress again that the needs of my family must come first, and God must direct and provide accordingly.

Thus, I appeal to you to support us daily in specific and regular prayer as this next month of preparation to move, sell our house, and then locationally transition to WI will be very intense & taxing, though we know His grace is sufficient.

**Regarding Sunday School:** Prayer is appreciated as we will need to replace Nancy in Sunday School ASAP, a ministry she has dearly loved being involved in while serving our Lord and your children.

**On a personal level:** We plan to sell our house ASAP. I also plan to find asap a room locally to use as a base of operations for when I return to GA in the future.

**Closing comments:** I know that this has taken most of you by surprise, and that you will need some time to process and pray about these matters. But I am reminded in all this of the old saying that “God buries His workman but continues His work.”

In addition, I think of the following verse {historically applied to GTBC} ... “Pastor Kevin planted, I watered, **but God gave the increase.**” {1 Cor. 3:6} We must not forget this!

God does not need any of us, but He does want to use us to do His will as we walk in yielded dependence upon Him – only by His grace.

And let me remind you of something that I have stated over the years. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “I will build My Church” and He will, with or without me being your senior pastor. On the other hand, I will deeply miss you when that time comes. So, let’s keep praying, “Even so, come Lord Jesus!”

If you have any comments, questions, or concerns, feel free to talk with me, email me, text me, etc.

With a deep love for you in Christ,

Pastor Dennis Rokser

*Romans 15:13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Hebrews 13:20-21 *Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*