

To: My Element Church Family  
From: Your Lead Pastor, Jeff Maness  
Date: 08-15-2021

With sadness and heavy hearts, but also with genuine gratitude and praise for all that God has done and all you have meant to us, both Sabrina and I feel that God has confirmed in us that it's time for something new. So, effective January 10<sup>th</sup> of this coming year (2022), I will officially resign as Lead Pastor of this church we dearly love. Just as God called us to start Element 14 years ago, He's now asking us to let her go.

I know this may come as a shock to many people, as it was for us as this process began. In many ways, we've had to let some plans, hopes, and dreams die as we processed what God was doing in us. But if there's one thing I've tried to hold out as a standard for all of us, it's our core value: *Obedience is our success*. Success is not determined by the outcome but by our obedience to God. And I hope you know me well enough to know that I wouldn't make a decision of this magnitude if I did not believe God was leading us to it.

In February, God kept bringing Sabrina and I back to one specific phrase from Deuteronomy 6, repeated multiple times in different ways. It began to stir our hearts in a way we couldn't ignore: "The land you are about to enter and occupy." (Deuteronomy 6:1, 3, 10, 18, 23)

So, on Monday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, Sabrina and I began to pray a dangerous prayer. "God, if You want us to be somewhere else; if You want us in a 'new land,' then we surrender to You. Please put us where we can do You the most good and where You can do the most good in our family and us."

Since that time, and after many hours of prayer and fasting, consulting family, friends, and colleagues, and following dozens of confirmations through Scripture, books, sermons, podcasts, and friends, we believe it's time for us to step down and step into God's new land for us. At this time, we aren't sure where that land is. I don't have a job waiting for me on January 10<sup>th</sup>, but we are confident God will provide one.

Towards the end of March, we were made aware of a church in Texas which was beginning a search for the successor to their soon retiring founding pastor. We did not seek this out, but feeling released by God to do so, we submitted our names to their search committee and are currently in an interview process with them. Pastor Derek, our Executive Pastor, and Jay Forseth, our Conference Superintendent have been walking with me through this process since that time.

While we do feel a strong pull and connection to this church, they won't be ready for a new pastor until early Fall of next year and we do not know for certain that this is the land God has for us. All we know is that our time at Element is ending, and allowing Element the space to move forward into their new land seemed to be the most honoring and prudent next step.

I'm aware this brings up so many questions that our leaders nor I have answers to right now. Many of our answers in this season will be, "I don't know," or "I can't say." In no way are we seeking to hide anything about this process, the people involved, or our potential destination. We desire to be as transparent as we can through all of it.

As to the potential destination, we need to protect their anonymity as they have yet to tell their congregation of the succession plan. As to the process and people involved, you can rest assured that I am writing this from a place of deep love and respect for all the staff, leadership, and people of Element. I have not been asked, nor was I required to step down for any reason outside of my desire and obligation to follow the Spirit's leading.

While we are confident God led us to it, I'm also aware that this decision can cause emotions like hurt, anger, confusion, and betrayal. Knowing the disappointment and pain I may cause is one of the most complex parts of making this decision. Every week I try and say these words, and I mean them from the bottom of my heart, "I love you guys so much; it's my honor to be your pastor." The thought of hurting you or harming you in any way is heartbreaking to me.

I'll end with the verse God used to bring final confirmation to my heart that we should do this:

Psalm 138:8 The LORD will work out his plans for my life- for your faithful love, O LORD, endures forever. Don't abandon me, for you made me.

I don't know the ultimate plans, but God does, and I'm trusting in Him. He has plans for my family and me, for yours, and Element Church. He has plans we can't even fathom, and He invites us along for the adventure.

Thank you, Element, for 14 incredible years of ministry. Every life that's been changed by Jesus, the deep connections we have made, and the impact that has happened through this place will never leave my heart and mind. I'm so proud of you.

Lord willing, we have a few months left together. I'm asking that each of us double down our efforts to pray, stay united, and remain committed to God and His Church. It's His Church, not mine, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

I love you guys so much, it's my honor to be your pastor.

Til the end,

Your pastor – Jeff Maness