



January 29, 2024

Dear Immanuel Family,

Greetings to you in the name of Christ. It was sixteen years ago that my family and I answered Christ's call to leave Douglasville, GA and venture out to Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Tucson, AZ. What an amazing journey this has been with you all! After prayer and seeking spiritual counsel, I have sensed Christ's summons to a new challenge and have accepted the call to become the Pastor and Head of Staff at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in our presbytery on the northwest side of Tucson. I will be asking our congregation and the presbytery de Cristo to release me from my call to Immanuel Presbyterian Church as of March 3, 2024.

Our family has been filled with gratitude for your love and kindness throughout our time here. You have seen our children grow up and have loved, encouraged, and mentored them. I am a fortunate pastor to have served alongside such a great staff, session, and deacons. Thank you for generously and sacrificially giving of yourselves to Christ's ministry "in here and out there." Thank you for your heartfelt hospitality as you so warmly welcome guests, members, and angels unawares. In the years to come when I'm asked about Immanuel, I will be able to say with great affection what an honor and joy it was to know all of you and to be your pastor.

Sarah and I will always cherish our times of worship together and all the baptisms, confirmations, weddings, anniversaries, memorial services, and other special events over the years. We've sang, prayed, read, pondered, and shared God's sacred word together with hearts aflame. We've been through much: Immanuel's fifty-year anniversary, my twenty-fifth year of ordination celebration, a pandemic, flooded and remodeled office buildings, hellos and goodbyes, joys and sorrows, laughter and tears, hurts and reconciliations. We've made and delivered carloads of bologna and PB&J sandwiches for Casa Maria, welcomed our neighbors to the coolest Trunk or Treat in town, sought to bring Christ's compassion to the border, and enjoyed many a cup of Just Coffee together! We've seen the sanctuary remodeled, new parking lots paved, introduced new worship expressions, new playgrounds installed, and so much more.

Through it all, we've bonded and grown in meaningful ways while experiencing a great deal of mercy, grace, faith, hope, and love along the way. The Lord has given us so many blessings to count and recount. We've seen the impossible become possible through faith in our living God.

Despite our chapter together drawing to a close, you will always be a part of me and I will always be a part of you. Thank you for all the patience, kindness, and goodness you have extended to me over the years! I will miss our times together and cherish the memories. You are an unforgettable group of people and my heartfelt prayers are with you in this new season you will soon begin. Your prayers for our family's new step of faith are treasured.

Our presbytery will walk Session and the church through the process of finding an interim pastor and eventually a new Pastor and Head of Staff at Immanuel. This season will be a time of growth, exploration, and new beginnings for you. Know that Immanuel, "God with us," will be beside you every step of the way.

Each Sunday a charge and a blessing is given at the conclusion of the service. Here is my charge: "Dear brothers and sisters. Be joyful. Grow in maturity. Encourage one another. Live in harmony and peace." (2 Cor. 13:12). And this is my blessing: "May the grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit be with you all." (2 Cor. 13:13). And all God's people said...Amen!

Grace and Peace,
Pastor John