

June 3, 2018

Dear Quest Family:

It is with many emotions that I submit my resignation as Lead Pastor at Quest Church. I shared this resignation first with the Elder Board on May 1 and I now share this widely with our church family.

Over the past few years, I've been meeting (in person and virtually) with other founding lead pastors for the purpose of mutual encouragement and discernment. One of the conversations that has emerged has been around the question, "*When is it time to step aside?*" We began to have this vulnerable conversation because we acknowledged that, as the founders of our respective churches, it was highly unlikely for our congregations or leadership to remove the founding pastor—unless there was a major issue of moral failure.

Let me assure you, there is no moral failure! There is no crisis, conflict, or tension—though, certainly, all of us are aware of the many ups, downs, and emotional toll of leadership.

This has truly been an incredible journey. In fact, it is more than we could have ever imagined. Minhee and I feel so privileged and humbled that we had anything to do with Quest. Indeed, God has been so faithful and gracious. It's hard to articulate the depth of the awe and gratitude that Minhee and I have in our hearts. We have witnessed the presence and power of the Holy Spirit through the past 18 years; since beginning this journey in July 2000 and then later launching the church in October 2001.

It's for these reasons that this has been one of the most difficult decisions of our lives. Quest is a dream church for us, and I'm so privileged to serve this church with such incredible leaders whom I deeply love. So, why step down? To help make some sense, there are three main reasons that have led us to our decision:

1. I've given my best and my all to Quest. Minhee and I have poured out over the years, and we're extremely grateful for what God has accomplished through our shared and collective leadership. I had wondered if it was time to step aside a couple of years ago, but I sensed the Holy Spirit clearly urging me to lead the church through the relocation, capital campaign, and transition. In other words, I have sensed that my assignment here at Quest is complete and believe it's now time for new leadership with fresh vision, passion, and energy to take Quest deeper and further in its mission.
2. As much as I've tried, it's been increasingly challenging to juggle the numerous convictions and roles that I have at Quest and One Day's Wages, in addition to traveling, investing in pastors and leaders, writing, and of course, my commitment to my family. The other pastors have been so gracious, and they wouldn't share this with the elder board or the congregation, but it needs to be acknowledged that in the last couple years, I haven't been able to honor my responsibilities as the lead pastor. As such, some of the burden has trickled down to the other pastors, which simply isn't fair to them, our staff, and to the church. **For me, this is a principle of personal integrity.** The church needs a lead pastor who can be fully invested and drive the vision and mission of the church into the next season of Quest. This has been a painful but necessary self-reflection. It's

ironic that “Deeper,” the very theme that I selected for our teaching this year, has been personally very convicting and challenging. Oh, I so wish our theme was “Coast,” “Shallow” or “Complacent,” but this decision is necessary—for both the church and for me to go deeper.

3. Over the past couple years, my health has also become an increasing reality in my life. There is no grave urgency, but with the return of my ulcer, I am choosing to embrace a season of *slowing down* to prepare for the marathon of leadership and discipleship. I know that God’s not yet done with us.

Despite this major transition, my passion for leadership, ministry, and the whole Gospel remains the central focus of my life. In other words, I’m not burnt or spent; I am as passionate and committed as ever to the person and mission of Jesus; to the whole Gospel. This will always be the foundation for Minhee and me. While we grieve this transition, we anticipate that we will be filled with expectancy for what lies ahead!

For the foreseeable future, we hope to maintain our presence in Seattle. Minhee will continue her practice as a therapist, and I will continue my part-time role at One Day’s Wages. I am grateful to be able to be more intentional about investing and encouraging churches, NGOs, pastors, leaders, and missionaries throughout the world. We won’t be taking a staff position anywhere in Seattle but if God relocates us to another city or country in the future and if God opens a door, I may join a church as a part-time teaching pastor but we don’t want to limit God with our ideas.

Out of respect for the new lead pastor, Minhee and I have chosen to take an indefinite pause from attending Quest and hope that you’ll understand the wisdom in that decision. It’s our desire to do all that we can to help the new lead pastor and Quest thrive in the new season and we don’t want our presence to be a distraction. That being said, our high school and college-aged kids have made it clear to us that they intend to keep Quest their home church. Honestly, we couldn’t be happier because we can’t imagine a deeper place for their ongoing spiritual formation and discipleship.

Minhee and I have wrestled and prayed through this decision for some time now. We love this church so much. It will be difficult for our family to adjust to this new season when our identities are so interwoven with Quest. And honestly, we have wondered at times if it’s wise for me to forego the stability that our current circumstances afford with two of our kids in college this fall. But we have always sought to live in faith and obedience - whether in moving to Seattle in 1997, planting Quest, starting Q Cafe, navigating the incredible merger between Interbay and Quest, birthing The Bridge Care Center, launching One Day’s Wages, relocating our church to our current space, and now, embracing this new chapter. **Yes, we want to be faithful and obedient!**

As a pastor, one can only pray and hope that whenever a transition happens, it takes place in the midst of a thriving and flourishing church. While far from a perfect church, it gives us great joy to sense the current health of our church, especially because we believe that it will serve as an important springboard for the future. Some of my pastor friends from around the country have asked me, “*Eugene, are you crazy? Why would you step down from Quest when it is the*

model church that we are aspiring to become?" It's precisely for this reason that we have so much peace.

I am recommending September 30 as my last day as lead pastor so that the elder board, pastors, and staff can use the very important fall season to transition to a new chapter. I also want to use the next few months to keep teaching through the Gospel of John, answer any questions that you may have, and to do whatever I can to assist our leadership with the transition. We can all acknowledge that the transition of the founding pastor will only happen once, and it can be both exciting and challenging for numerous reasons. I'm hopeful and prayerful about this transition because our church has always been about a conviction that it's not about us - or about our building, our programs, or a single charismatic leader. We've always sought to focus our vision and mission on the One who spoke this church to life.

In recent years, I have had numerous comical conversations with Questers and visitors who had no idea that I was the lead pastor. In a way, this speaks to the manner in which I've sought to lead but it's also because we have an incredible team. I want you to know - clearly and directly from me - that the church is in the good hands of wise leadership. The lay elders who will be the main drivers of this transition are gifted, humble, prayerful, accessible, and trustworthy leaders. We also have an incredible team of pastors. In my opinion, this is the best pastoral team in the entire country. Furthermore, we have an incredibly life-giving and committed staff. And finally, Quest has each of you who constitute the body of Christ. **Remember, you are the church!**

Church experts say that when a transition happens with a founding pastor, anywhere from 10-30% of the church automatically move on. I genuinely hope that's not the case. I pray that Quest will defy this assumption and statistic. Over the years, I have heard people talk about impossibilities; that it's impossible to plant a church in urban Seattle; that it's impossible to become a thriving multi-ethnic and multi-generational church in our polarized culture; that it's impossible for a church to be about the whole Gospel; that it's impossible or foolish to engage difficult conversations, and the list goes on...*but see what God has done!* By the grace of God, Minhee and I pray that Quest can defy the skeptics again. **We believe God has more for Quest. We believe the best is yet to come!**

For Minhee and I, it has been a once in a lifetime honor to have planted this church; for me to serve you and this church as your lead pastor, and for us to become family with each of you as your brother and sister in Christ. And it's been the greatest honor to point you, direct you, teach you, and exhort you to the One who makes all things possible - Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Together for the whole Gospel,

Pastor Eugene & Minhee Cho