

PETE HATTON – FINAL LETTER

REDEEMER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

RPC Family,

I just wanted you to know how bittersweet last Sunday was for me & my family. I couldn't get through what I wanted to say and was humbled & overwhelmed by the standing ovation. It has been an honor to be your pastor these past 14 yrs. Our little church has been through a lot, and from these experiences and the relationships we've shared over the years it has shaped and molded me to be a better husband, father, friend and pastor. At times I wasn't the pastor you needed. I have failed many times in my shepherding of you. I know that I have disappointed many of you — relationships are messy and because of sin, conflict is inevitable, but we've learned how to redemptively move forward in grace and forgiveness with each other. Thank you for sticking with me and loving me through my failures & shortcomings!

Five yrs. into planting the church I almost left the ministry, telling my wife, "I don't know how much more disappointment I can take." Why did I stay? Two reasons — First, the gospel changes lives!! Seeing people grow in their understanding of God's grace in Christ, seeing people become gripped by the gospel, and how it changed their marriages, the way they raise their kids, how they love their neighbors, how they deal redemptively with conflict. Seeing gospel fruit gave me encouragement, and a renewed sense of my calling & commitment to keep preaching the gospel. The people of Edmond need the gospel. And through the years, God was kind & compassionate to give me the grace to endure. I gained strength from Jesus enduring for me (Heb. 12:1-3).

Second reason was having Clay come up and be my Associate. Clay was not just the friend I needed, but a loyal companion who understood me, and the struggles of pastoral ministry. He was my sounding board, advisor, strength when I was weak, my encourager who always picked me up when I was down. Having such a dear friend in ministry helped me to endure. I cannot thank Clay enough for all that he has meant to me in my life. I will greatly miss ministering alongside of him. You can be confident in his compassionate leadership. You can be confident that he will feed you each week with the gospel. Be patient and gracious with him, because God will use his position to shape & mold him to be the pastor you need. Give him the grace to fail & encourage him often.

RPC is in great hands. You have TRUE shepherds watching over you - NOT butchers! Men who lead with grace and not the law. Men who are "real sinners", who understand sin and grace. Men who rest in God's grace. Men filled with compassion and love for the flock. I trust these men to shepherd and love you well. Andy & Charlie are God's gifts TO YOU. Honor Clay, Andy & Charlie!! Pray for these men regularly!! Encourage these men regularly, because they carry the weight of your burdens. They carry the weight of handling the things of God. Therefore, they and their families will be under attack from the Evil One. Help them to

hold up the shield of faith when they lose heart under Satan's attacks. Have their backs and be good teammates.

Also, you have a Deacon team of TRUE servants - Jon, Gary, Stephanie & Sandra. They are loving and serving you well. They don't need the spotlight or the recognition. They mostly serve behind the scenes, and most of their work goes unnoticed. They need your honor, prayers & encouragement. They do A LOT of work and sacrifice many things to serve you. I could not be more proud of the way they reflect & display Jesus to you!!

Lastly, LIVE LOVED!! Live under the banner of "IT IS FINISHED!!" And because it is, God will never FROWN upon you, He will only SMILE upon you! He delights in you. When you grow in your understanding of just how much God loves you IN Christ, you will become people who live for His glory, not your own. You will live, not for yourself, but for the good of others (Phil.2:3-11). Find your True Self by getting lost in the wonder that there is a Messiah who deeply loves and rescues messed-up people (Mark 8:27-38)! Thank you for loving me & my family well. I will greatly miss you and I love you.

Because of His mercy,
Pete