



February 6, 2012

Dear Bridge of Hope family,

This past fall as I wrote the series of messages entitled "The Time is Now," I did so as a starting point for a vision God had given to me for Bridge of Hope. It was to ignite our faith, awaken us, and bring us alive for what was about to take place in 2012. My heart was committed to leading our Bridge family in the coming year to go, run, and live rightly, as we moved to the next level in a missional life here in the Mahoning Valley.

And now, looking back, I can see that God was saying much more than what I was aware of at the time. His call ran much deeper for both our Bridge family and ourselves. It reaches the very base of this wonderful body of believers as Jesus extends His call to our lives.

The time is now for Kandy and myself to go, to run, and live rightly. And the time is now for Bridge of Hope to send us forth in the power of the Holy Spirit and the unity of this family. We must obey the call of God, which after 23 years in this family, is very difficult to do. Our hearts always have been, and will continue to be, full of love for you. We consider you our home and family and always will. We love you!

It is with the heaviness of obedience I write this letter which sets a course for all of us in 2012 and beyond. We tender our resignation as the Lead Pastor of Bridge of Hope. It is with tears that I write this letter because you have made our lives rich and full in the Holy Spirit. Our relationships are deep and strong as they are built upon love and time together.

Please know that it is a joy to serve in this house. It has been with much pride that I have talked about you in meetings across our network of Assemblies of God fellowships. You are a wonderful family to belong to. As we move forward we do not see ourselves as separating from you, but being sent out by you. We are Bridge of Hope and always will be.

Bridge of Hope is in us, and we are in Bridge of Hope; this will never change even though the way we interact will. We have given our lives to the service of Jesus Christ and to the development of this family. But now it is time to move on to what Christ has for us to do next.

This is a step of faith for us; it is a big step of faith. We are not leaving because we have accepted another position in a different ministry. Rather, we are simply obeying the leading of the Holy Spirit and trusting God to provide direction in the days ahead. While we do have some vision for ministry, we have no place to go or a way to get accomplished what is in our hearts to do. What we do know is that it is time to step away from where we are and trust God for where we are to go.



This transition will begin to take place on Sunday, April 29, 2012, as we attend our last worship service with you in the role of Lead Pastor of this family. When it is appropriate in the future we hope to return and share all the good things God has done. There are sure to be good stories to share when that day finally arrives. As for now, we lead by example in a life that starts and ends in faith. In this journey we battle the fear that we feel with our faith in Jesus Christ. Our hearts are set as we have chosen to trust God, place our hope in Christ, and are determined to share the gospel with all who will listen. The Bible says that perfect love casts out all fear, and today we are learning more and more about this scripture as your love for us helps us live a life of faith. Thank you for loving all of us in the Bennett family over these many years. You are loved by us and will always hold a special place in our hearts. We are Bridge of Hope, all of us.

The process is already set in motion for what lies ahead. According to our constitution and by-laws the church board becomes the Pulpit Committee or Pastor Search Team. This means they are responsible for developing how to proceed in discovering the plan that God has laid out for this family of believers. Over the next couple of months we will work together to accomplish what we can to make this process the best it can be. Our board has good people serving; we have always had good people serving. They will do a good job as they follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Until April 29, 2012, things will run as normal. You will not notice much change as we continue on the path that is set before us. The plans that we made this past fall will continue to be followed in the days ahead. Our team is prepared to lead and minister the truth of the gospel. This didn't take Jesus by surprise though it may have caught some of us off-guard. He gave the plan because He knew what was ahead, and now we experience what it means to be led by the Holy Spirit and live by faith.

There is joy in our hearts knowing that this is what is best for Bridge of Hope and for the Bennett family. While we may not know the specifics, we do know that Christ is calling us to live as missionaries in this world. All of us have such a calling. The time is now for each of us to fulfill this call of Christ and to share the good news of Jesus as we build relationships with the people around us. As missionaries we discover the needs and ways of the people we are sent to, then figure out how to love them, and share with them what is most important in our lives. We are missionaries, we are Bridge of Hope, and we have been called to lead and pastor this community. That hasn't changed.

With much love,

David A. Bennett
Lead Pastor