

January 2, 2022

Dear Justin,

Greetings to you in Jesus' name. Justin, I am so conscious, in this my 37th year of paid pastoral ministry, of this being my final year. It was a good fifteen or more years ago when I first laid out a plan to the elders (at LEFC) for me to "pass the baton" to a younger man. At that time I thought of that taking place at LEFC but such was not to be. But now at Burning Hearts the same plan is becoming reality.

Seeing this year then as my final year, the idea of making use of these Heartbeat editorials to write you letters pertaining to life and ministry seemed like an interesting idea. The elders agreed with the idea and so here we go. For this and the next 51 Sundays you are going to be receiving, via this format, letters from me. Some of them will be of a very personal nature while others will deal with abstract ideas, theology, and maybe even some warnings. But all will be to the end of encouraging you as you "take over the reins" at Burning Hearts.

I am excited for you. I believe the manner in which God has brought us together has been really good. I like the succession plan. For me personally the plan is quite simple: to end well, leaving the church in as good order as I am able. For you...oh man...this year must seem overwhelming. Just to think of being married with three young children, working a full-time job, taking seminary courses on line, and then, on top of all that, trying to integrate oneself into the life (and leadership) of Burning Hearts Community Church. That sounds exhausting to me! But then, you are young. When I was in seminary I had a roommate (Lem Tucker) who used to say, "We're living off our youth." I took that to mean when you are young you simply have more energy. It is good you do.

My desire is to not overburden you in this year. Yes, attending the monthly elders' meetings would be good. But if you can't make it to all of them, don't worry about it. Probably attending the annual elders' retreat (just one day long) would be of greater importance as at that retreat we discuss pretty much everything: the good, the bad, and the ugly. Fortunately the "ugly" list is extremely short, if anything at all.

As I said to you once before, I think your greatest pastoral challenge for 2022 is your pulling in younger leaders to take over leadership positions in 2023. The last thing you want to have happen is that the baton of leadership is passed to you on January 1, 2023 and you have no church leaders (elders, diaconate, treasurer, trustees) serving with you. So this is the year to make certain that come 2023 you have a team in place to help you. I will do what I can to help you in this regard.

That's it for now. Pace yourself. Live for Christ,

Pastor Doug