



Grace United Methodist Church

420 California Drive
Coal Center, PA 15423

Office Phone: 724-483-4448

Church Web Site: www.come-to-grace.org

To: The Grace Church Family

From: Pastor John Smith

Life is a book comprised of many chapters. Some chapters are long, and some are short. Some are easy, and others are difficult. But every chapter has a beginning and an end. On July 1, 2007 Pat and I opened a chapter of life and ministry with Grace Church. On July 1, 2012 that chapter will close, so that another chapter can open, for us and for Grace Church.

After a long process of prayer and spiritual wrestling, Pat and I have determined that after 45 years it is time for me to retire from full time pastoral ministry. Please know that this is not because of any dissatisfaction with our Grace Church family. To the contrary, our love for you, and our sense of your love for us, has made this a very difficult decision. We deeply love you, and love being here, but also hear the call of God to a new chapter for us, and for you.

We came to Grace Church during a time of difficulty and upheaval. We knew that our calling here was to minister healing and hope. While there is always more to do in the ministry of a church, we believe that we have accomplished the purpose of our coming. Grace Church is healthy and whole, and poised for a new chapter of growth and ministry.

We have a capable and committed Staff-Parish Relations Committee who, under the leadership of Dan Meharey, will be working with our District Superintendent, Eric Park, to bring a new Senior Pastor to Grace Church. This work will begin immediately, with the SPRC meeting next Tuesday with Superintendent Park.

We are blessed to have Randy Landman as our Assistant Pastor. My decision in no way affects his position here, and I am sure he will give the same support and assistance to your new Pastor as he has to me.

I have two goals for the next six months. First, to work with the leadership of Grace Church to assure a positive transition to a new Pastor. But at the same time to continue to give leadership and care to Grace Church right up until midnight of June 30th. I am, and will continue to be, your Pastor until the moment I pass that responsibility on to another. The ministry of Grace Church will continue without missing a beat.

While Pat and I will be moving to live closer to family, as to our plans for our future ministry, we have received a call like Abraham's in Hebrews 11:8 - *By faith Abraham, when called to go, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.* We know we are being called to a new chapter, but at this point it is not clearly defined. I know I have a call to spend the last chapter of my ministry more personally involved in mission work, but am still awaiting God's leading as to what that will mean.

For now, Pat and I ask for your prayers. Please know that we have made this decision with firm conviction that we are being led by the Spirit of God, and that therefore God will bless this decision for the good of Grace Church.

We have seen God do marvelous things at Grace Church over the past five years, and we believe the best is yet to be for this congregation. As Paul affirmed to the Church at Philippi, I now affirm to you, that:

I am confident of this, that the One who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I hold you in my heart. (Philippians 1:6-7)

With deep gratitude to God and to you for the privilege of being your Pastor...

Pastor John Smith

Senior Pastor
Grace United Methodist Church