



April 26, 2021

LETTER TO CONGREGATION FROM ABE CHO

To my dear brothers and sisters at Redeemer East Side,

After many months of heartfelt wrestling with God in prayer, seeking the counsel of wise advisors and friends, and discerning God's calling for me, I have decided to step down as senior pastor of Redeemer East Side this summer. This has been one of the hardest decisions I've ever had to make because of the deep love I have for our church as well as the love I have received from you. Redeemer East Side has been nothing less than family to me — from our Session, to our staff, to dear members and attenders like you who have loved and supported me and my family so well. It has been one of our greatest joys and honor to serve this congregation.

Over the last several months, a sense of calling to teach and train pastors and ministry leaders in New York City has become more and more clear to me. God has placed in me a deep desire to take what I've learned from my experience in 20+ years of pulpit and pastoral ministry and use it to equip and train other leaders in the city. I pray that all the ways I have grown as your pastor — more often than not learning from my mistakes — would be used by God to bless and strengthen others for his kingdom. In addition to a calling to teach, I believe God is also calling me to be more directly involved in ministry in marginalized and underserved neighborhoods in the city.

While our sense of calling is clear, Jordyn and I do not yet know exactly what our next step will be. We believe God wants us to stay in New York and continue to be a part of Redeemer's big vision to see a gospel movement in the city. We still believe strongly in it and want to continue to labor for it. We are trusting that as I begin to explore opportunities to teach and train, God will provide for us according to his good, pleasing, and perfect will. We also feel that, as hard as this decision was to make, it makes most sense overall for us to find another church to attend. Our hope is to find a church in an underserved neighborhood that both preaches the gospel and works locally for marginalized communities.

All that said, I couldn't be more hopeful and excited for what God has in store next for Redeemer East Side. As we begin to come out of the pandemic, I know that so many Redeemer East Siders like you will emerge with a renewed sense of calling to love and serve our city in Jesus's name. We have already grown in tremendous ways as God's community of cross-cultural love and I look forward to the fruit that will be borne from that. We will also be starting construction on a beautiful new building on 91st and Lexington. It will not only root the congregation on the Upper East Side for generations to come, but it will also convey to our neighbors that Redeemer East Side is here to stay to seek the flourishing of all. It is a bright, new day and an exciting future.

There are no words to express the affection and gratitude I feel for Redeemer East Side. In the 14 years I have served at Redeemer, I have been deeply transformed,



both as a pastor and a follower of Jesus. As a church, you have shown me that the power of the gospel can indeed change everything. You have shown me what it looks like to live in a community of deep and genuine love. You have shown me what it's like to extend the hospitality of God to others, particularly those who don't share our beliefs. You have shown me what is possible when a community of believers seeks to love the world in the name of Jesus. For all of that, my family and I can't thank you enough.

I think of that scene in Acts 20 where Paul, feeling constrained by the Spirit to preach in Jerusalem, bids a tearful farewell to the church he so loved in Ephesus. It is a poignant picture of how the gospel both binds our hearts together in love but also sends us out for the sake of the kingdom. I am so grateful for our bonds of deep affection even as we all seek to follow Jesus — wherever he may call us.

With deep gratitude and love,

April 26, 2021

LETTER FROM REDEEMER EAST SIDE SESSION

Dear Redeemer East Side Congregation,

We know that Abe's announcement yesterday has left us all stunned and feeling a wide range of emotions, and we know that each of us will process this information differently. We still wanted to follow up as a Session (the elected elders of Redeemer East Side) to begin what will be one of more regular communications between the Session and the congregation in this season.

While we are so heartbroken that Abe has decided to leave Redeemer East Side, we want to acknowledge and thank Abe for his many years of service to our congregation. In his time as senior pastor, Abe helped build an incredible leadership team on the East Side, ushered us through the transition from Hunter College to Temple Israel, shepherded us to be a generative church by sending three of our pastors to plant and replant three churches ([Redeemer East Harlem](#), [The Well](#), and [Joy Manhattan](#)), led us in defining a renewed [vision, mission and values](#), and led us through one of the toughest times the city has ever seen. The earnestness and humility with which Abe has sought to reach the East Side for the Kingdom has challenged each of us to grow in our faith. On a personal level, Abe and the Cho family have become dear friends to many of us and while we are sad to see him go, we are incredibly thankful for all God has done through him in our lives.



Given the suddenness and gravity of Abe’s announcement, we realize that there are many questions and uncertainties that this brings to our church community. Many of those questions and concerns were raised (and hopefully answered) last night in our [church-wide meeting](#). The implications of such a change can feel overwhelming and daunting. While it might not always feel like it, we do know that none of these challenges are too big for God. He holds the whole world in his hands and he holds our church in his hands. Nothing takes him by surprise and he uses even the hard things like this for his glory.

We want to assure you that this announcement brings us to our knees in prayer. We have confidence in our staff, led by Bruce Terrell, Hector Sanchez, Lyn Cook, and Lindsey Schultz, and in the Session and Diaconate. We are taking steps to ensure that both our congregation and staff are cared for and have opportunities to process and pray — including Q&R times after worship services during the month of May and midweek open forums — until such time that we have a new senior pastor in place.

Consider this encouraging word from Joshua 1:9: “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

In Him,

The Session of Redeemer East Side

Alex Chou, Arvin Soh, Bill Gough, Bruce Terrell, Caleb Duncanson, Carter Hinckley, Dan Bitar, Dave Gurak, Glen Kleinknecht, James Herring, John Ellis, Sarat Chandarlapaty, Tim Wong