



communityofhope.church

2341 South Military Trail, West Palm Beach, FL. 33415

June 5, 2017

Dear Good Shepherd Family,

I write this letter to both introduce myself to everyone, and re-introduce myself to many! My name is E. Dale Locke, and beginning June 5th, I will step into the role of your new Lead Pastor.

By now, most of you have heard the news of a pastoral transition. Pastor Todd has completed his tenure as pastor of Good Shepherd this past Sunday, June 4th. Like you, I honor this man of God and the work he has done during his season of leadership at Good Shepherd. Even as I write this letter, your church is planning to celebrate and honor Pastor Todd and Christina's work among you. My wife Beth and I throw our names and our love in on these celebrations for this family. With you, we will be praying for the Stube's in this time of transition as they seek God's direction for their next steps, and plan for a wedding later this year!

Beginning the week of June 5, I will begin serving as Lead Pastor at the former Good Shepherd campus, while continuing to lead the Community of Hope campus. I feel very privileged to serve in this role. Many of you know that Good Shepherd holds a very sacred place in my heart, life, and ministry. My family moved to West Palm Beach when I was just sixteen. We quickly settled into the Good Shepherd family and made it our spiritual home. It had a very significant role in my family's spiritual journey, and it is from this church that I received a call to full-time Christian ministry in 1984. In 1984, I joined the ministry staff of Good Shepherd as its first College pastor under the leadership of Pastor Frank Edwards, and Pastor Tom Ruehl. These men had tremendous influence on my walk with Jesus, and my decision to become a pastor. In 1985, I transitioned to Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, KY., and eventually became an Elder in the Florida Conference of the UMC. After serving two churches – FUMC, Stuart as an Associate, and FUMC, Monticello as a pastor, I returned to Asbury Seminary to study for a Doctoral degree in Biblical Preaching and Christian Church Leadership. After completing the course-work for the degree, Beth and I accepted a call to plant a new church in mid-western Palm Beach County which we felt led to name Community of Hope. We began our church with a Bible study in our rental home off Palomino Drive in Lake Worth, a former parsonage of Good Shepherd. And so, it is true that Community of Hope literally started its existence on Good Shepherd property! Currently, Community of Hope worships around 1500 people each weekend, in four services, and has been recognized two years in a row as the second-fastest growing UMC in the denomination. God is blessing our church! And to think that so much of what we practice and I learned began during my time in the fellowship of Good Shepherd Church. And this brings me to the next part of this transition I want to share with you.

Earlier this year, I had a conversation with my District Superintendent Gary Spencer, and our Bishop Ken Carter, and they asked if I would be open to considering a merger/adoption opportunity with Good Shepherd. Pastor Gary mentioned to me both Good Shepherd's powerful legacy, and Community of Hope's current growth and vitality, and sensing a spiritual opportunity, asked if we would be willing to adopt Good Shepherd, and merge both churches into one church – Community of Hope – in two locations. And now with this spiritual opportunity in front of us, we began to walk toward this new opportunity. And so, over the last few months, I have hosted several meetings with groups at Good Shepherd to explore this possibility, while at the same time meeting with people at Community of Hope to explore the possibility and impact on Community of Hope. And on Sunday, May 7th, both Good Shepherd and Community of Hope voted overwhelmingly to step into this spiritual opportunity. And while all of us, (me included!) are tender and nostalgic about the completion of Good Shepherd's ministry in our community, we are spiritually optimistic about rebranding Good Shepherd as a second campus of Community of Hope – and in this way inviting the legacy of Good Shepherd to continue in a new and powerful fresh expression.

With this said, I want to highlight a few things to keep everyone informed as we take our initial steps into a future with hope:

1. Beginning Sunday, June 11th, I will preach at the former Good Shepherd campus. It is important not to think of this Sunday as the launching of the Community of Hope campus. In fact, little will be different, other than I will be preaching at the campus, and Billy Langley, our Executive Director of Creative Arts will be leading the worship. What this day does represent, however, is the initial step toward what will ultimately be a rebranding and rebirth as a new campus.
2. On Sunday, June 18th, you will have a chance to meet Pastor Trevor Johnston. He is my Associate Pastor, and a Provisional Elder in the Florida Conference. He will be preaching on this Sunday, and you are going to love Trevor and his wife Leah and their kids Cade and Tessa! Trevor is an important part of the team I have assembled, and in the beginning stages will accept slightly more of the preaching task at Good Shepherd. I will handle the leadership task, and will be working to raise up a new leadership team at this campus.
3. Across this summer, we will begin to bring all the ministry “processes” over to the former Good Shepherd campus. These processes include: Preaching and Worship, Discipleship, Leadership, Family Ministry, and Guest Services. Additionally, we will begin the task of cleaning, refreshing and repairing the campus. **There will be lots of work to do, and I am asking that we all do this work together.** And due to this need, we will initially trim some of the outreach ministry of the former Good Shepherd campus to focus on the facilities and the refreshing work. We believe this will be a fun and exciting time as we all work together.
4. Across these important months, we will also be working to bring the two congregations together as one church family through combined worship and prayer nights, and some additional times to gather as a combined church family.

5. As the refreshing and repairing work comes to a close, and the other systems are in place, we will begin to prayerfully consider together the moment we will officially launch as a new campus to the community.

As you can imagine, there is a tremendous amount of work in front of us. There will also be huge need for prayer as we move forward and for each of us to be patient with the process, and supportive and available with our time. If this is to be done efficiently and effectively, it will take all of us. I genuinely believe, that regardless of our own individual capacities, there will be a place for each of us to serve in some way, either through physical work, financial support, prayer and emotional support.

In addition to all this work, I will be hosting a **Transition Update Meeting** once a month, following the worship service to update everyone concerning all the plans, and work taking place. This will be your place to “stay in the know” concerning everything taking place at the new campus.

In closing, I want to again express how called we feel to this work. I hope too, each of us will be willing to support this unique and Kingdom-centered opportunity before us. As a leader, I know that change can be difficult. As human beings, we all tend to be supportive of change until something actually changes! At Community of Hope, we are genuinely aware of the significant changes about to take place at the former Good Shepherd campus, and we are neither insensitive nor cavalier about this. We are praying for this newly adopted part of our family, and will walk alongside you, love you and welcome you into our family. We ask the same from you. We come to offer a helping and supportive hand, and to invite you to dream with us the godly dream God gave to our church in 1996. And as your new Lead pastor who has served in both locations, I uniquely understand the spiritual connection these two congregations have with each other. I believe God is up to something quite powerful, and if we will be open, prayerful, helpful, supportive, and willing, God will increase the influence of our churches in this part of His vineyard. Both locations will thrive in an interconnected yet distinctive way, as together we seek to ‘interest dis-interested people in Jesus Christ, and grow together into fully devoted followers of Him.’”

I look forward to serving you, and I look forward to meeting each of you personally beginning June 5th.

Yours for His Glory!



Dr. E. Dale Locke, Lead Pastor
Community of Hope – a united Methodist congregation