

**Dear Church,**

Young and zealous, I sold my truck and a bunch of my stuff and moved hundreds of miles away to live in a converted barn on a former chicken farm to learn about Jesus. At the time, it was romantic. I felt like I was doing something radical, something necessary and real...Maybe I was. Now, I look back with very mixed feelings. There were some wonderful things that came from the experience, above all meeting Jane and starting a family. But there were also some very serious misses along the way- distorted ideas and twisted actions. Like I said, it was a mixed bag. But I don't regret taking the risk and making those decisions. . I've come to see we're always taking a risk one way or the other- the risk of acting, the risk of not acting . The only choice we really have is deciding how we are going to risk it?

In this coming year I am asking each of us at Grace to take a specific risk: the risk of aligning our hearts and actions, intentions and imaginations with a new way of practicing Church together. Through a lot of prayer, reflection, discussion, and study, we feel this is what God is calling our community to. Whether you've been involved every Sunday or it's been a long season since you've been part of Grace, this invitation is for you. It is for us as individuals and for us as a collective.

This risk involves a renewed commitment to practicing our faith together as a church community. It involves moving to a new place for our Sabbath gatherings. It involves getting to know a new neighborhood and part of our community. It involves orienting our time in a fresh and ancient way using the liturgical calendar. More than anything, it involves a renewed commitment to authentically lean into Jesus' proclamation that "the Kingdom of God is among you" and more closely align all of our affections, allegiances and affiliations around that truth.

As we finalize the purchase of the Sycamore Street Property and begin this new season as a church, these are our priorities:

- Moving into and renovating the property
- Intentionally learning and listening to our new neighbors
- Practicing new rhythms of gathering, giving and serving
- Centering our teaching and formation practices around the concept of the seasonality of the Biblical story and liturgical calendar.

Is this risky? Absolutely. Is there risk in not doing it? For sure. As with any and all change, we will all experience a level of discomfort, but we are not taking this risk alone. While I'm confident and excited about this new season, my confidence is not in our plan, but in the God who calls us to risk following him and sustains us every step of the way.

Grace and Peace y'all,

**John Ray and the Leadership Council**

P.S. While we will be talking about this on Sunday mornings, I know there will still be many questions. If you would like to talk more about what all this new season entails, please reach out to me or a Leadership Council member.