

Dear Family & Friends,

Nearly seven years ago, God put a vision in the hearts of a small group of people to form a new community of believers in Beijing called Oasis Christian Fellowship. Since that time, we've experienced a multitude of blessings, the greatest of which has been growing in relationship with God and one another. We've also faced a number of challenges – including three venue changes, many heartfelt farewells, and most recently the coronavirus outbreak. And yet, through all these mountain-and-valley moments, we've continually witnessed the unchanging faithfulness of God. By His grace alone, we've continued to grow, multiply, and reach even more of this city that we love as He has expanded our vision over the years.

It has been my privilege to serve as the pastor of Oasis since the very beginning, and I've been blessed beyond measure in doing so. Since early 2019, as I've continually sought God's direction for our church, I've sensed that He wants to lead us into a new season. I've also come to realize that, for me personally, an important part of this new season means taking a sabbatical – an extended time of intentional rest, reflection, and prayerfully seeking God for the future.

As I shared this with our elders, there was a clear sense of affirmation about this idea. Rather than simply seeking an interim pastor, however, we all felt that both the church and I would be best served by permanently appointing a new church leader who could carry on the vision and values of Oasis, while also bringing new gifts and experiences to bless our church family.

After prayerfully considering different candidates, we approached Matt & Tia Monkemeier in December of last year and asked them to consider this role. In just a few weeks, God confirmed this decision to them and to us in some truly miraculous ways, which we are very grateful for. As a result, **we will be officially installing Matt Monkemeier as the new Oasis pastor and church leader on Sunday, April 5th, as part of our morning service.** After that time, I will continue to serve in a supporting eldership role for Pastor Matt until the end of April, when my plan is to return to the United States to spend some time with family and begin the sabbatical period.

Having shared that, I want to assure you of two things: first, this is not a sudden or reactionary decision based on the coronavirus situation, or any other external circumstances. In fact, our original plan (made in December of last year) was to

complete this transition in February. I chose to extend my time in Beijing out of a desire to provide some stability for our church family during this challenging season, and to help facilitate a smooth transition for Pastor Matt. I truly hope I've been able to accomplish some of that.

Secondly, I want to emphasize just how strong and evident the unity of our elders and the peace of God has been throughout our decision-making process. Even with the recent disruptions to plans and schedules, God has reassured us at each step that He is still in control, and that we can fully trust Him for the future of our church. This is not to say it has been an easy process – after all, Beijing has been my home for almost 15 years, and Oasis has been my church family for nearly half that time – but His peace which goes beyond our understanding has been a constant source of encouragement and comfort through it all.

I realize this news may seem surprising to some, and it is unfortunate that our current circumstances have prevented me from sharing in a more personal way. However, I want each one of you to know how grateful I am for the love and support you've given me over the years. You have been an important part of my life and growth during this season. Words cannot fully express my gratitude to God for all the relationships and experiences I've been blessed with during my time in Beijing, and particularly as part of the Oasis family.

Farewells are never easy, but the pain of parting is a sure sign that you have loved - and been loved - well. It's also a comfort to know that, through the finished work of Jesus Christ, our relationships are not bound by time or space, but they will carry on into eternity because of our shared faith in Him.

'May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace.' -Numbers 6:24-26

With Love,
Pastor Jason