

**December 26, 2016**

From Ryan Dunn, youth pastor

Dear St James United Methodist Church,

8 years ago, my wife, son, and I moved to Greenville, North Carolina, neither knowing very many people nor all that much about Eastern North Carolina. We followed God's call to step into the student ministry at St James United Methodist Church though it meant leaving our familiar lives in Illinois. St James welcomed us in and quickly became family.

We have again heard God's call to step into the unknown, trusting in His grace to lead and provide just as we were provided for in our move to Greenville. I entered professional youth ministry a decade and a half ago because it represented a tremendous opportunity to connect the church with a disconnected population. These many years later, I feel that call as strongly as ever, and have been called to pursue this ministry in a new way: I have accepted a position with United Methodist Communications, assuming the role of Minister of Online Engagement for the Rethink Church movement. The specific responsibility of this position is utilizing the open-air space of the internet to connect the disconnected to the local church. The new position requires us to move to Nashville, TN. We expect to move the week of February 20.

Being a part of St James has been a wonderful experience. Our family has shed tears over our decision and this announcement. We will dearly miss the friends we have made. We will always cherish the rich experiences we have shared with this special congregation. It has been indescribably rewarding to watch the growth of our young people. We have grown a great deal, too—literally, in Braden's case. Rest assured, our decision to move is not reflective of dissatisfaction with St James.

St James is a great church. Though our departure may leave us all with some feelings of uneasiness about what is to come, Gina, Braden, and I are confident that this is all in preparation for an amazing, God-inspired future—for both our literal family and our spiritual family at St James. We know that God is leading St James towards an even bigger role in building the Kingdom of God. We also know that St James will rise to the challenges the future holds—because that is what St James has always done.

We will continue to hold you in prayer, and appreciate you holding us in yours. In the meantime, I will be working alongside church leadership to lay out plans for as smooth a transition as possible for our student ministries.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ryan Dunn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ryan Dunn (on behalf of Gina and Braden, too)