



To my Beloved Community at Shepherd of the Hills,

I write this letter to you with a heavy heart as my time on staff at Shepherd of the Hills will come to an end in August of 2022. In May, I'll graduate from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and plan to begin a Hospital Chaplain Residency in September.

I feel ambivalence because of the tension of a deep sadness in transitioning out of a role I love, and yet a great joy and excitement as I look to the future and see what God has in store.

I want to express my gratitude for this congregation, yet it's difficult to find words to describe the magnitude of my thankfulness. Four years ago, you welcomed a young Youth Minister, fresh out of college, with little experience, into your community with so much love and grace. Whether it was gentle teasing during worship or lunch together after church, immediately, you made me feel so at home. As I transition to the next chapter of my life, I know for certain that I'll cherish the relationships I formed and the memories I made in my time on staff.

Since we have several more months together before we say goodbye, there will be plenty of opportunities to share my gratefulness for you. And I intend to do just that! For now, I'm soaking up the coming months that will be filled with youth group gatherings, children's events, summer trips, retreats, and more.

My time on staff here has been so formative. This place has nurtured my calling and has given me space to develop my pastoral voice. The Spirit was, and still is, at work in this place, preparing me for the next chapter of my life journey. I'm forever grateful for each of you.

After my departure from staff in August, I'll remain in Austin for some time and will continue to be a part of this beautiful community. So I'll see y'all around!

Grace & Peace,

Joel Timmons

Director of Youth Ministries

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*Please continue for a note from Pr. Lauren*



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Dear ShepHills family,

Our whole congregation has been extremely blessed to have Joel and his leadership among us! I know we will all feel a deep sadness saying goodbye to him later this summer. At the same time, how can we not be excited for where God is calling him to use his gifts in this world? Now we prepare to send him in God's grace to serve others.

Our youth & children's ministry is a high priority for our congregation. It always has been in the history of ShepHills, and it will continue to receive excellent staff leadership. We have already begun a search for a full-time Director of Faith Formation who will lead our children's & youth ministry. This staff member will hopefully begin their work with us in the summer (overlapping for a bit with Joel before he departs).

Please keep Joel in your prayers, as well as whoever God is calling to serve our youth in the future. We know that God has exciting things ahead for our young people—new experiences, memories, and growth in faith.

But it's not time for goodbye yet! What a gift to have several more months to enjoy Joel's energetic spirit, his compassionate heart, his deep faith, and his love for our children and youth. Please take advantage of these months to tell him what he has meant to our family of faith and to you personally!

Please reach out to me if you have any questions at all about our new staff search.

In Christ,

+Pr. Lauren