



November 14, 2007

Dear Members and Friends:

Two months ago, we celebrated the tenth anniversary of Julie Benson's service to our congregation—first as part-time Music Minister and eventually as full-time Worship Minister. Julie has done *wonderful things* for us!

So it is with great sadness that I share that Julie has submitted her resignation, effective January 6. After ten years of very demanding service, she is feeling led to step back to evaluate personal, family, and spiritual goals. She and her partner, Brent, have plans to start a family and need to take certain steps to make that financially feasible. More details are provided in the enclosed Q&A document that Julie and I have prepared. I have also enclosed a personal note from Julie.

I, along with others, have urged Julie to reconsider. She is a superb Worship Minister! But she feels strongly this is the direction she is being called—and it is important that we respect her decision and celebrate with her. Ten years is a long time to work at any job. She has poured her heart and soul into our church.

Julie asked me to share with you how enthusiastic she is about our congregation and our bright future. She and Brent will remain members of our congregation and plan to attend worship as their new work schedules allow. Thus, barring the unforeseen, we will continue to be blessed by their presence in our congregation.

As the old saying goes, "God never closes one door without opening another." Although none of us wants Julie to cease being our Worship Minister, we also know that God has mighty plans for the future of our church. God will not leave us without someone wonderful to serve as Worship Minister. We will launch a national search immediately.

**Changes like this are painful; Julie's leadership has meant so much to us! I'll be addressing this in the sermon this week. *Please be sure to join us this Sunday, so we can talk about this together.***

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff", is written over the typed name "Pastor Jeff".

Pastor Jeff

To My Dear Church Family:

I recently had the privilege of celebrating ten years in ministry with our congregation. During these ten years, I have been passionate about pursuing the highest quality of worship and music as our congregation has grown from 40 to 400.

I have reached a point in my life journey in which I feel called to turn a corner to see what God has in store for me next. There are several hopes and dreams I am aspiring to—the most immediate is starting a family with my partner, Brent. This decision has not been an easy one, but I am trusting in God's unique plan for my life.

Jeff and I have been actively working on a vision for worship and music and I feel the next chapter will be an exciting opportunity for creativity and growth. I believe this church continues to be one of the great churches of today and I support our vision and mission.

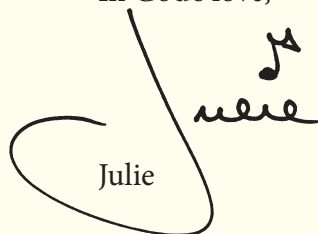
I have been blessed to serve in this congregation with fervent leaders, dedicated ministry participants, outstanding musicians, and compassionate friends. Thank you—each of you—for making such a great impact on my soul.

When I came here almost twelve years ago, I was seeking a place to worship and to lift up my praise. Regardless of who is leading that worship, worship itself should be the reason we all gather on Sundays. Whether I am on the platform leading us into worship, or another one of God's children has that privilege, I exhort you to just worship God.

I invite you into further conversation and dialogue with me as we make this transition together.

I will miss serving as your Minister of Worship, but look forward to continuing together as a family of faith.

In God's love,



Julie

## **Worship Minister Transition: Questions & Answers**

---

### **Why is Julie resigning?**

Julie has served our church for ten years now. Week-in and week-out for ten years (with only a few brief vacations), she has led worship. Although worship leadership is a glorious endeavor, it requires enormous creativity—and also requires the leader to be “on” for three services every Sunday, leaving little room for personal worship and renewal. Often it can be hard for a worship leader to fully “let go” in worship when she feels responsible for the worship experience of an entire congregation. After ten years of faithful service, Julie feels a need to rest and renew.

Beyond that, she and her partner, Brent, very much want to have children. Before doing that, they need to achieve certain financial goals. Although serving our church has many wonderful rewards, we are not yet able to pay our staff anything close to market-rate salaries. Our giving level runs at about half the amount of similarly sized churches in central Indiana, and our staff salaries suffer accordingly.

Brent is an over-the-road truck driver. Julie will soon complete a course to obtain her commercial drivers license, then plans to join Brent on the road. By driving together as a team, they can make significantly more money than if either were driving individually. This will allow them to meet their financial objectives, after which Julie may become a stay-at-home Mom.

### **Will Julie still be part of our church?**

Yes! She and Brent will remain members of the church and continue to be an important part of our church community. Please understand that, as over-the-road truck drivers, their work schedules will be demanding and unpredictable. But they plan to continue attending worship on Sundays as their work schedule allows. That means we will continue to be blessed by

their regular presence and by Julie’s tremendous musical gifts.

### **Will this affect the rest of the team that leads worship?**

We have a wonderful team that has supported Julie in leading worship – Jason Saylor, Jim Nelms, Galen Moore, Diana Lowhorn, Laura Inniger, Julie Lang, Donnie Hyso, Doug Messinger, and our choirs. They are sad that Julie will no longer be their leader, but they intend to continue serving in their roles.

### **Is it unusual to lose two staff members in one year?**

As noted above, Julie has served for ten years. Earlier this year, Pastor Tammy resigned after serving for five years. Both left for personal reasons, having reached important turning points in their lives. By typical church standards, both Julie and Pastor Tammy served unusually long terms. In many churches, a five year term is considered quite long. At Jesus MCC, we have been blessed with a very stable staff. Pastor Jeff has served for 11 years, Julie for 10, David Squire for 8, and Pastor Tammy for 5. Our average staff tenure of 8.5 years is almost double what most churches experience in our increasingly mobile culture. Going forward, we will continue to strive to recruit employees who have the potential of serving long term, so as to minimize the number of staff transitions we go through.

### **How will we recruit a successor?**

With the Thanksgiving Holiday coming up, it will probably take the Search Committee a couple weeks to prepare an application packet. But once that is ready, a national search will be launched immediately. Our opening will be published on multiple web sites that Christian worship leaders and musicians across the country regularly access. We will also publish our opening throughout MCC, within our

*continued* ►

church, and at nearby music schools and seminaries. Although it is possible that we will find the right person already within MCC, it is just as likely that the right person is now serving a non-MCC church somewhere. We ask for your faithful prayers that God will get word of our opening to the right person, wherever she or he now resides.

### **What will our search process look like?**

Under our church's system of governance, the congregation elects the Senior Pastor and then the Senior Pastor is authorized to hire staff, including the Worship Minister, subject to review and approval by the elected Board of Directors. Of course, hiring decisions must be consistent with the budget approved by the congregation. The process will unfold as follows:

- Within two weeks, we will announce the official launch of our national search.
- The search will be lead by the Personnel Subcommittee of the Board of Directors, which consists of Pastor Jeff (staff director), Nancy Duncan (personnel expert), Todd Cox (an experienced senior manager), and Sarah Randolph (one of our newest Board members).
- Because music is such an important part of the job of Worship Minister, and because none of our Board members are expert musicians, they will consult extensively with Jason Saylor (our accompanist) and Durwin Griggs (a senior member of our choir) in the search process.

- Once the search is complete, the Personnel Subcommittee will present a recommendation to the full Board of Directors for review and vote.
- If the vote is affirmative, the position will be filled. If not, the search will resume.
- Although we will move through this process as quickly as possible, we are determined to take whatever time it takes to make sure we find someone who is outstanding. Typically, a search process like this takes three to six months.

### **How will we get by in the meantime?**

Julie will continue full-time through our Christmas Music Program on December 16, and then serve part-time as worship leader through January 6. Thereafter, our worship team and both of our fabulous choirs will pull together to support our worship during the transition process. We will ensure our choirs' spring season occurs without interruption. Pastor Jeff will work with Julie during her remaining weeks to put together plans for worship leaders during the transition.

We will miss Julie's leadership greatly, but are comforted that she will continue to be an active part of our congregation. We know that God has wonderful plans for her and for our church. Let's all be sure to take time in the next couple months to express our deepest appreciation to Julie. On her last Sunday as Worship Minister (January 6), we will have a special celebration of her ten and a half years.