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If you were at Upper Room at the beginning of October, you heard me speak about the importance of every follower of Jesus identifying that “one thing” or “one cause” or “one injustice” that breaks their heart. I challenged people not only to identify their one thing but also to step out and devote themselves to taking action on it. To stop playing it safe and instead start stepping out into places and spaces where their lives can make a difference.

For the past 11 years my one thing has been the Upper Room. A community that was born out of my longing to see those I love connect to Christ. I longed to be part of a community that didn't just want to intellectually learn about Jesus but instead desired to experientially follow Him.

But then something happened in December of 2009 when I walked by a food pantry. I started to become more and more troubled by another “one thing.” My unshakable discontent centered around the large numbers of hungry people, not on the other side of the world, but right here in Minneapolis. It seemed like every time I turned on the TV or opened a newspaper I heard about another food shelf that was about to go out of business. So as part of an Upper Room experiential during worship, we decided to ask the community to help start and maintain an innovative food club that we would call the Minneapolis Market. In typical UR fashion, the response to this issue of hunger was completely overwhelming. In one night we gathered 250 monthly food sponsors, 100 volunteers, and over 4,000 different foods.

A growing tension for me has centered around my love of the UR and my growing heart for the hungry of Minneapolis. I have found it more and more challenging to fully devote myself to both of these important Kingdom causes. This tension has led me to engage in a year-long journey with God, Jeannette, and my inner circle that has led me to feeling a sense of confirmation that it is time for me to step down as the Lead Pastor of UR and devote my full energy to the further development and multiplication of the Minneapolis Market.

As I write this letter I carry both a sadness in my heart over leaving a community I love, along with an excitement over where God is leading me. Some have asked if my decision to step down as Lead Pastor has anything to do with any kind of internal stress within the church. I am thankful to say that there is no hidden reality to my departure. I love this community and its people and I thank God for the privilege of having been its Lead Pastor for the past 11 years.

I will be speaking at both our 5 PM and 7 PM gatherings this Sunday, November 20th, to further describe my journey with God over these past 12 months. In addition, the Upper Room Board will share their plan for the transitional period between my departure and the hiring of a new Lead Pastor. Thank you for your continual love, support, and prayers during this time.

Sincerely,

Kurt Vickman

A Community
Loving God
and Others
in the Rhythm
of Jesus.