

Midtown Community Groups

Member Meeting Talking Points and FAQ

May 7, 2017



Dear Midtown CG Leaders,

I trust that most of you were able to attend one of the member meetings today and that you were informed of Daniel Montgomery's resignation from his role here at Sojourn Community Church. If for some reason you were not able to attend the meeting today, please log onto *The City* to read more and be brought up to speed.

This is a sad day for all of us. We have all been deeply impacted by Daniel's ministry over the years and seeing his time here at Sojourn come to a close is difficult for us. Good-byes are never easy. I realize that many of you are still processing this news and I understand that it is going to take some time to let it "sink in." And I am sure that some of you have questions or concerns about Daniel stepping down and I want you to know that your pastors are ready and available to help you as you process this news. We (your pastors) want to be as present as possible to you and your group during this time. Over the next week, a pastor will be in contact with each of you, to set up a time for your entire community group to interact personally with some of our pastors (elders) and bring any questions or concerns that you/they may have concerning Daniel's resignation. We also want to do all that we can to equip and prepare you to lead your group this week and in the weeks ahead as you process this news together and consider the days ahead.

The purpose of this message from me today is simply to give you some basic guidance for your CG interactions this week:

1. **Expect the conversations.** The news of Pastor Daniel's resignation will likely be a dominating topic of conversation during your CG meetings this week and in the near future. I encourage you to let the conversations happen and see them as an opportunity to truly live out Romans 12:9-16 (In fact, I'd recommend reading that text to your group as a reminder of what it means to encourage, comfort, and listen to one another). As CG Leaders **you are on the front lines of ministry** here at Midtown and this news provides you with the opportunity to lead and invite others into true Christian community.
2. **Don't expect to have all of the answers.** You will be asked questions for which you have no answer, and that's ok. In times like these, it's so easy to try to speculate and then speak as if our speculation is "knowledge" or fact. Let it not be. I have found these two Scripture verses very helpful in recent days:

Proverbs 25:11 – *"The right word at the right time is like a custom-made piece of jewelry."* (MSG)

Ephesians 4:29 – *“Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.”* (NLT)

If at any point you find yourself unable to offer help to those in your group who have questions please feel free to direct them to any one of our pastors.

3. **Be hopeful, be patient and pray a lot.** Refer to Romans 12:12 as much as possible:

“Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying.”

You will NEVER lead your group astray by living out this verse. Don't forget that Jesus is building his church, He is on the throne, and He is coming back to make everything new! Our confident hope is what allows us to be patient when life is uncertain. Our confident hope means that we can listen to others with open hearts. Our confident hope is what emboldens us to pray constantly and with expectant hearts looking forward to the days ahead.

Pray for our church.

Pray for our leaders.

Pray for the Montgomery's (*Daniel, Mandy, Elijah, Stella, Levi, Georgia*).

4. **Remember these exhortations:**

- **Grieve – be willing to experience the emotion**

Let yourself and let your group grieve the loss that our church has experienced with Daniel's resignation. There are people in your group (perhaps even you) who came to Christ under Daniel's preaching. God has used Daniel and his family to further His Kingdom in our hearts, in our church, our city and the world. This is indeed a great loss for our community. Be sure to acknowledge this with your group, don't run away from the grief but embrace it and take it to Jesus. *“Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.”* (1 Peter 5:7)

- **Embrace Faith and not Fear**

There is no reason to be afraid because we are moving forth with God's presence, and word before us.

*7 “But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD,
whose confidence is in him.*

*8 They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.*

*It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.*

*It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit.” -Jeremiah 17:7-8*

- **Embrace Speech that Honors the Lord**
Fight against gossip and division.

*A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; gossip separates the best of friends.
-Proverbs 16:28*

Use the **THINK filter** for your group discussions, private conversations, and social media.

T. H.I.N.K

T-rue

H-elpful

I-nspirational (edifying)

N-ecessary

K-ind

- **Where do we go from here?**

We will continue to gather as a family on Sundays to sing gospel saturated songs and preach Christ exalting sermons. We will continue to gather in our community groups and live out the “one another’s.” We will continue to make disciples and plant churches and send our people to the nations.

We will remain STEADFAST. We will trust God to continue to grow us up together as his church.

*For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.
If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. – James 1:3-5 (NLT)*

We will continue to trust, support, care for and pray for our Elders:

Midtown Elders

Jamaal Williams

Luke Barker

Robert Cheong

Nathan Sloan

Jared Kennedy

Clif Roth

Luke Skeen

Josh Thomas

Justin Karl

Nathan Ivey

James Westbrook

Andy Cook

Simon Groce

Brandon Hochhalter

Nathan Quillo

Paul Sridhar

Timothy Paul Jones

5. Refer often to this FAQ guide:

Why is this happening? How did we get here?

Last December 2016 the Sojourn Leadership Council asked Pastor Daniel Montgomery to take a guided 9-month leave of absence to address some issues that had affected his ability to lead the staff and elders of Sojourn. Daniel shared this news in a letter to the congregation, saying in part, “I need some time to rethink how I lead ... I’ve not been leading well and have hurt others, and I need to fix that.”

For the next five months Daniel met with a team of elders and counselors who journeyed with him as he reflected, rested, prayed, and began steps to pursue reconciliation with those hurt by his leadership. Then Tuesday, May 1, 2017 Daniel met with the Full Council of Elders and decided to voluntarily offer his resignation to the Leaders of Sojourn Community Church. Daniel said that “this decision may sound sudden, but it is not impulsive nor is it being done without much prayer and counsel.

On this date Daniel formally submitted his resignation, and the Full Council of Elders unanimously affirmed his decision.

What does “leadership issues” mean?

The issues leading to Daniel’s decision to resign were surrounding his leadership of the staff and elders. They involve his use of authority and power. There is nothing scandalous hidden here—nothing sexual or financial—but the issues were significant.

Is this church discipline?

Because of Daniel’s expression of willingness to repent and to work through sinful patterns related to his leadership, even to the point of resigning his position because he firmly believes it is what’s best for his soul and for the church, the Leadership Council does not believe Daniel to be “persistent in sin.” As such, he is not being disciplined in accordance with the spirit of 1 Timothy 5:20.

Was he asked to resign?

In early March, Daniel began to realize that it might be best for himself and everyone involved if he resigned. This topic came up during care sessions with Christian counselors outside of Sojourn, and then later with friends and fellow elders within Sojourn. This was not a hasty decision, but one that was increasingly affirmed by the restoration team and Leadership Council the last couple weeks, just as it was increasingly clear to Daniel that God’s will was for him to resign. Over the past two weeks, Daniel initiated formal discussions with the Restoration Team and Leadership Council about his desire to resign. In the end, it was Daniel’s decision.

What does this mean for Sojourn Community Church?

We will be forever grateful to Daniel for his role as our founding pastor. Thankfully we are guided by a plurality of nearly 50 pastors, with Jesus Christ as our senior pastor. Several of these pastors have been foundational to Sojourn from the very beginning, while God has graciously added many more from diverse races, age groups and experiences -- all with the same commitment to the gospel.

Our mission remains the same: **Reach** people with God’s gospel, **Build** them up as His church, and **Release** them into the world. With God’s help, we will continue to carry out this mission. And we will continue to do so in ways that are distinctly “Sojourn.” For instance we remain committed to preaching expositionally through the Bible, to loving and caring for each

other and our neighborhoods through community groups, to seeking the good of our city, and to spreading the gospel through the planting of churches across America and around the world.

What does this mean specifically for Sojourn Midtown?

Jamaal Williams will continue to faithfully serve as Lead Pastor of Sojourn Midtown. The rest of Midtown's staff and elders will continue to faithfully serve, prayerfully supported by East, J-Town and New Albany.

No doubt, Sojourn Midtown will especially feel the weight of Daniel's resignation. This is a loss, and it is normal to mourn. We pray that this church will not let the enemy divide us. We hope that you will also make this your own prayer for Sojourn Midtown.

What will Daniel do next?

We believe God is inviting Daniel into a time of growth and healing. This does not mean God is done with him—much the opposite! The elders are confident his best days are still ahead of him. We don't know what that looks like or where it will take place -- and neither does Daniel. But we have agreed to support his family through this transition. We've also provided additional funds for Daniel and his family to receive care, as they continue this process. We believe that, in God's timing, the church of Jesus Christ will be well served by a healthy Daniel.

What can we do for Daniel and his family?

This is an extremely difficult time for them, as you'd imagine. Pray for Daniel, Mandy, Elijah, Stella, Levi, and Georgia. If you are friends with them, continue to be their friend. If you would hang out with them or text with them in the normal course of life, please continue to do so.

So what exactly is Daniel resigning from?

Per our bylaws, Daniel is resigning from the following church positions or bodies:

- Lead Pastor of Sojourn Community Church
- President of Sojourn Community Church
- Leadership Council
- Full Council of Elders

Will we see the Montgomery's or will they be allowed back at Sojourn in the future?

During this process, Daniel was asked to step away from Midtown for a time. His family was still welcomed to participate in various Midtown ministries, such as S2. While we asked Daniel to refrain from gathering with Midtown, he was encouraged to attend other Sojourn Churches in the area during this season. For this season, Daniel is still invited to attend Sojourn East, Jtown or New Albany.

What should I do if I am contacted by someone outside of Sojourn (news, media, etc.)?

Direct anyone from outside of Sojourn Community Church with questions to Brad House (bhouse@sojournchurch.com) or Luke Barker (lbarker@sojournchurch.com). Either can be reached by phone at 502-635-7053.

6. **Ask for help.** As the Pastor of Community Life, my primary job is to support and care for you, our group leaders. Please know that I would count it a joy to talk with you, answer your questions and help you, as best I can. You can email, text, call, or stop by my office at the Meridian Building anytime. My cell phone

number is (703) 986-7591. You can also reach out to any of our pastors and they too will be happy to assist you. Also, remember that we will be contacting you this week to set up a time to visit your group and offer our support and care to them as well.

Peace be with you all.

Clif Roth
Pastor of Community Life