Dear Central Family,

I'm deeply honored to accept the call to serve as your pastor. Central is a community of healing and refuge for so many people. It's a fellowship where we can celebrate our diversity. It's a household where we read the Good News through a lens of love. I'm grateful for the many years we have walked together already. I'm grateful for how you have taught me to minister through your love for each other. And I'm so grateful to continue this journey as we discover how God is calling us to love each other, our community, and our world.

It's been a long road to get to this place. There have been some steep climbs and some dark valleys. There have been some long nights (and even longer meetings). But not a single step of our journey is wasted. The journey is part of us now. We see things a little differently. We know a little more about ourselves and about each other. And we step through this threshold carrying light that you only discover in the shadows.

I know there's plenty of work ahead of us, but I'm excited. The work ahead is good work. It's hopeful work. We may be a little short-staffed at the moment, but that just means there are more opportunities to join in and share your gifts. Whether you can give rides, bake cookies, sing carols, teach youth, greet people, fold bulletins, lead prayers, write cards, or offer a smile, you are a vital part of our life together. In the new year, we'll make time to listen to each other, to share our visions, our hopes, and our dreams. We'll find more ways to serve each other and our community.

There's no such thing as a perfect church or a perfect pastor. We've known each other a long time, and we've seen each other's best selves and our difficult moments. That's why we have community. We're not made to be self-sufficient — we're made for love and belonging. I grew up hearing Matthew 5:48 quoted all the time, reminding me to be perfect just like my Heavenly Father. It was such an impossible task that it was deflating. However the New English Bible provides a much more generative (and accurate) translation, "There must be no limits to your goodness, as your heavenly Father's goodness knows no bounds." Our need for community, our need for one another, even our imperfection is an intentional a space for love. Love will fill in all of the gaps. Love will make stronger bonds than anything we could effort. This is how our weakness becomes our strength. If we do

anything, let's grow in love and watch our goodness go beyond what we could ever accomplish by ourselves.

As your pastor, I'm here to walk with you. I hope you'll share your questions, concerns, inspirations and ideas with me. I don't have all the answers, but I'm honored to make this journey together. After all, ministry begins and ends with presence, and we are all ministers to each other. I look forward to seeking God's way together as we live out the love of Christ in our hearts.

Peace and love to you, dear friends,

Aaron