



June 21, 2017

Dear Church Family,

Greetings in the Name of our Precious Savior, Jesus Christ.

It's been quite a 2017 already. I must admit, this year's been more than I imagined. I'm so grateful for this Body as daily I get to watch, and even participate in, what our Lord is doing among us.

As we approach Birthday Sunday, my mind has been full of praises. I could never list them all, but please allow me to highlight just a few.

- **The Spirit of this Church Body.** We've been doing some, shall we say, switching around of things. Having been in churches all my life, I've spent significant time in two churches. I, like everyone else, grow very attached to all the things of Church. Little things take on meaning and preciousness. So, when we do something like change pews for chairs, it's a bit of a sad day. *"This was where I sat and learned of God's goodness and felt the Holy Spirit's conviction."* There's then an attachment to this pew, carpet, etc. I commend you all in your understanding and support even through this time of transition.

Add to this a change in our name. Again, not easy. Perhaps even more difficult. Yet as a whole, we as a Body have looked forward and moved in a direction that we believe will remove some potential hurdles to reaching our community and friends with the Gospel. This church hasn't reluctantly moved forward, but wisely, grateful for the past, and reflectively moved forward. I personally am heartened by the maturity in this process.

- **The Warmth of this Church Body.** We've been seeing an increasing number of new guests. I'm amazed at how so many are warmly embraced, encouraged and how many of you have taken it upon yourselves to share the gospel. Thank you. We've seen many new families choose to make this their new church home. May we deepen our relationships with these new friends.
- **The Ownership of this Church Body.** As we continue to work together, we become more invested in the church and in our relationships. Whether it's putting together a Women of Hope Conference or a Men's Workday, the involvement and love to come and work reflect our love for our Lord. We not only accomplish tasks, but we learn more about each other in settings that can't be duplicated on Sunday mornings. Thus, our relationships deepen. We are more than random people worshipping at the same place and time, but real family, brothers and sisters. Shades Mountain is not just a place to worship. No, it is a local Body of Christ.

I could clearly go on and cause a data usage overage. Suffice it to say that you all amaze me and I for one am happy I have you all in my life. I am proud to call this church my home and family.

My love to y'all,  
Rick

Romans 15:1-6