



Friends, there is some hard news I need to share with you that I delivered this afternoon at our Core Meeting.

I will conclude my role as Willow Crystal Lake's Lead Pastor and leave Willow on December 1. The decision to depart was mine and it was accepted by Senior Leadership.

No doubt, this is a surprise to many of you. And it may be hard to understand what has been such a long, deep, and difficult process. Over the past 20 months, it has become increasingly clear to me that my heart and values are not in full alignment with Willow's current direction. I cannot pastor and lead to the best of my ability without being fully aligned in these fundamental areas. I've longed for and encouraged Willow to pursue a different path toward healing. But due to a difference of opinion on what that path should be, I believe I must depart. While this is immensely difficult for me, because I love and will miss you all so very much, I do have a peace that my departure is appropriate and necessary.

Upon my departure, Dave Smith will assume the role of Interim Lead Pastor. Dave has worked closely and tirelessly with me as our Executive Pastor for over 9 years. I strongly endorse and have the highest respect for him. He knows and loves you and has served our church faithfully, with great diligence and uncompromised integrity. I hope you will offer your full support and encouragement to Dave and the staff, and pray diligently for them as they pastor and shepherd in the days ahead.

My prayer is that the emotions you may feel as a result of my departure will in no way negatively impact your love for and commitment to Jesus and His Body, the Church—or negatively impact your love for Willow Crystal Lake.

I hope you will be a part of our services on Sunday, October 20, when I will share the full announcement I delivered during today's Core Meeting.

Praying for God's comfort,



Marcus Bieschke | Lead Pastor

 @WCLMarcus | willowcrystallake.org



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Willow Crystal Lake
100 South Main Street
Crystal Lake, IL 60014
224.512.1737

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