

Dear Session of Westminster Reformed Presbyterian Church,

I first want to begin this letter expressing my great love for you as elders and for the congregation of Westminster as a whole. I truly believe I could not have asked for a better situation to be put into when being called to my first pastorate. What I am about to say does not stem from anything that happened nor from a dissatisfaction with my position as the minister here. It comes from many months of fervent prayer, seeking the Lord's will, and being willing to make the next step no matter what it may entail. It is in that spirit that I write this letter of resignation from the pastorate of this congregation. It is out of love for this congregation that I am writing this letter as well. It continues to become more and more clear that I am not equipped to be able to minister to this congregation in the way that they need me to.

Ever since the Spanish-speaking group joined us nearly three years ago, I have felt this great sense of inability to shepherd and minister to them in the way that they need. I thank the Lord for them, and I thank the Lord that Westminster is a diverse congregation seeking to have a bilingual ministry. However, having a pastor who is not bilingual does not work well in that context. When Gina was in the hospital and I was with the Fernandez family trying to minister to them, I felt like such a failure because I was not able to minister to Frank and Gloria as they needed. I know that others who were there, and Frank and Gloria themselves, would say that my ministry at that time was helpful, but that does not mean that it was to the extent that they needed. I want to make it clear that this letter is not a result of feeling defeated or like a failure; I am simply trying to convey what I believe is a real lack of ability in this matter. I have sought over the last three years to improve my Spanish skills, but I believe I am still many years away from being able to actually minister to anyone in Spanish. This is one reason why I believe the Lord is urging me to move on from here so that another who is more able to fully minister may come in and shepherd the hearts of all members in this congregation.

Another thing that has been weighing on my heart greatly and is a factor in writing this letter is something that should not come as a surprise to any of you because I mentioned it to you all in very direct terms. My wife continues to hate being here. She loves the people at Westminster, but she has no real community. She has mentioned several times how she does not have friends here, just fellow church members. This is not due to a lack of trying on her part or on the part of anyone in the congregation. It is more than likely a result of the congregation being so spread out geographically. She is also a southern girl through and through, and I am unsure if anything could ever make her be okay with the culture and the climate here in northern Illinois. I am commanded by the Lord to love my wife as Christ loved the Church. I cannot see how keeping my wife in a place where she says she hates it is being loving to her.

With all that being said, I would not be writing this letter if the Lord had not made evidence of His will clear to me that He desired me to move to another harvest field. As you all know, I have a heart for evangelism and church planting, and I also have a heart for my kinsmen according to the flesh, the South. An opportunity has developed that would see me potentially laboring in church

planting efforts in North Alabama. There are several people in my hometown area who are desirous to have an RP congregation. The means of being able to do this have, by God's providence, come available because of Brooke's grandparents' house being offered to us to live in free of charge. Also, there is the opportunity to teach at a local Christian school (affiliated with the local PCA congregation) which would provide some additional income. There is also the possibility of using the local American Legion post as a meeting place free of charge. I was also put in touch with the owner of an historic church building in Sheffield who is interested in letting us meet there free of charge. The Lord seems to be working all the details together in such a way that I cannot ignore His providential hand in this.

I know this is a difficult letter to read, and I want you to know it was difficult for me to write. When I took the call here, I said I had every intention of dying here. I did not come to Westminster expecting it to be a steppingstone to something else. I have tried to pour everything I have into this congregation, and I have sought to labor in such a way that whether I was pastor for four years or forty, my ministry would be the same. I love being here with you all, and I truly do love being your pastor. I pray the Lord will continue to bless Westminster Reformed Presbyterian Church, that you all would continue to seek out reformation both individually and corporately according to the Word of God, and that you would all grow in grace and love towards one another and towards Christ Jesus. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18)

My request is that this letter of resignation be accepted by the session and forwarded to Presbytery for their decision, with the resignation to be made effective July 12, 2026.

With all brotherly affection,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joshua M. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rev. Joshua M. Smith