

November 30, 2023

Dear Pastors, Churches, and Praying Friends,

Thank you for your prayers and support for our family and ministry.

I am writing this letter to inform you all that we believe the Lord has closed the door for us to return to Sweden at this time of our lives. As we have mentioned multiple times in multiple letters, one of our children was falling drastically behind in the Swedish school and was receiving very limited intervention while there. Although this was not Sweden's fault nor the school's fault, it became apparent, even while there, that the path to healthy and necessary intervention was going to be a long one spanning many months and possibly even years. When we returned to the United States last year, we truly believed that we would be back in Sweden by now. We were convinced that a transition to an English-speaking school was the obvious answer to our situation. But as we talked to various people that work in these schools, we were led to believe otherwise. Extra intervention and special classes is not something that these private schools are really able to offer. The only other option was a "customized school." Nearly every sizable community has one. But when we looked into what was required for entrance into these schools, we learned that we would have to make some compromising decisions that we felt we could not make in good conscience. Since returning to the United States, our son has made significant strides and made tremendous progress. He has proven, as we knew that he could and would, that although he needs some intervention, he is capable of performing the same tasks as any other child. In fact, the primary reason for him being behind has nothing to do with his inability as it does with the language barrier that he was up against for the first three years of his education. And although many immigrant children tend to pick up on second languages with limited difficulty, this is not the case for everybody, and it did not appear to be the case for our child. Only God knows how our other children would have fared in the same situation. But to further clarify, homeschooling was not an option for us in Sweden as it is strictly outlawed. To attempt homeschooling in Sweden would only lead to serious legal troubles. So in light of all of the above, we find it best for him, as well as the rest of our children, to remain in the United States and receive their education here.

Even if we had found a healthy educational path for our child/children, we knew we were faced with the task of moving to a new location in Sweden and transitioning once again. As some of you know, we have a home in Sweden that we witnessed God provide in a miraculous way. We still own it to this day and praise the Lord that He has provided guests/tenants to stay in our house and occupy it in our absence. This helps pay for our expenses over there as well as general upkeep. At this juncture, it does make it somewhat complicated, but we are fully persuaded that God could and would provide all necessary requirements for us to sell our home and either purchase another one in a new area or provide a place for us to rent. However, since the end of 2022, Sweden's economy has been on a steady decline. As of the writing of this letter, Sweden has entered into a recession. Interest rates are way up and house prices have bottomed out. What's more, people purchasing homes in Sweden are bidding at even lower prices. From a purely practical and financial standpoint, we do not wish to suffer a loss on our

home, only to repurchase one in another location at a higher interest rate. Also, houses are sitting on the market much longer than they ever did when we first arrived in Sweden in 2019. At that time, houses would go on the market one day and be gone the next day. Prices were up and demand was high. When we purchased our home in 2019, we contacted the realtor as soon as we saw the listing and requested to make an early, private bid on the property. And we still had to compete with one other buyer even at that. But after we won the bid and purchased the home in November of 2019, we were not able to actually move in until May of 2022. The buying and selling process is simply different than it is in the United States. There is nearly always a 3-6 month gap between purchase date and move-in date. Our hopes were to return in June of next year, sell our house, and find lodging in the new city. And we were hoping to do this over the summer and be moved in before school started. In recent months, we have come to the realization that that is simply not going to be possible. Even if every single detail were to fall into place (again, we believe in an amazing God and have seen Him work in mighty ways), our family is simply unable to go through that process again at this time. It's beyond what we can undertake right now as a family.

I am letting you know of these things because I want all to understand that the issue of education is not the only reason for our remaining in the United States. There are several factors that have led to this decision.

Since August of this year, our home and sending church, Grace Baptist Church, has been without a pastor. I (Don) grew up in this church, was saved as a result of this ministry, was married there, ordained there, and have always viewed it as my "home" church. The faces that make up its membership are not just faces to me; when I see them I see my family, the community of believers that have loved me since I was a child, have helped and supported me develop and grow into the person that I am today. Many of them were my Sunday School teachers. Some were my babysitter. And all of them are my friends. In September, the newly-formed pulpit committee asked me if I would be interested in being an interim pastor while they searched for a new lead pastor. I told them that I was willing to help the church in any way that I could and was willing to do so without having a title or being referred to as anything other than a member of the church. I was home, I was available, and I was willing to serve to the best of my ability. But I was really set on returning to the life and ministry that I believed God had called us to in Sweden. As the weeks progressed, the pulpit committee and many in the church grew more interested in me as a pastoral candidate. It was also during this time that we began realizing that the window of opportunity for us to return to Sweden was growing much smaller. Additionally, after we crossed the one year mark into our furlough, a certain discomfort and uneasiness started mounting in our hearts. Even though all of you, our supporters, have stood by us through thick and thin and helped encourage us along the way, the weight of everything was beginning to mount in our hearts. It did not feel right to live on mission support while not living and ministering overseas. And when we came to the realization that returning to Sweden was going to be more than we could undertake, and more than our family could handle, that uneasiness only grew. Towards the middle to end of October was when the pulpit committee approached me regarding my interest in the pastoral position at our church. And even though I was so hoping to return to Sweden, I couldn't help but recognize that perhaps God was indeed

closing one door and opening another. After much talk with the pulpit committee and sensing the growing response among our church membership, I was presented to the church as a pastoral candidate on Sunday morning, November 12th. The announcement was made that a formal vote would be taken on Sunday morning, November 26th. When that day came, the church voted with 96% in favor of me being the next pastor of Grace Baptist Church. And I accepted the call.

I want you all to know that I struggled immensely in the weeks leading up to this decision. The struggle that I felt within, and the struggle that I internalized, was not with God's will or with what I believed was right for our family and church. The struggle revolved mostly around how I communicate this to our supporting churches. Specifically, I did not know whether I should send out an email/notification prior to November 26th or after. A large part of me was convinced that an email needed to be sent prior to that date. But when I considered everything that was happening, I never could pull myself to do that. It seemed to me that doing so could have jeopardized the integrity of the situation. If the church was going to call me as their next pastor, and if I was going to leave Sweden indefinitely, I wanted to make sure that it was entirely of the Lord. And whether it was right or wrong, for the better or for the worse, I ultimately waited and chose not to notify our supporting churches until now. Although I believe I made the best decision, I want you to know that I am truly sorry if you are convinced otherwise. I believe in maintaining transparency and openness with our supporters and believe that to be the best way to maintain healthy partnerships. But this was unlike anything I had ever experienced and I simply never had a strong sense of peace to go about this any other way.

Our church will be sending out a separate letter indicating the transition of our family and ministry from Sweden to the United States. In that letter, it mentions that they will continue to receive support in lieu of our family through the end of February 2024, after which time any and all donations towards us will be returned. There is certainly no obligation on your part, and no request from us, to continue support through that time. If you choose to do so, it will of course only help us in this time of transition. But if you choose to cease support effective immediately, that is perfectly understandable as well. Please do as you feel led of the Lord and as a church.

Regarding Sweden, it is a nation that we found somewhat challenging at first, but ended up loving and appreciating to a very great degree. The Swedish people are some of the most friendly, hospitable, and care-free people we have ever encountered. Although they come across as somewhat reserved and quiet at first, when you learn to know them, you almost always find that they love and appreciate life to a great degree. Their pace of life is generally much slower than that of the average American, and they take time to enjoy the small things in life. Every winter, as you drive through villages and neighborhoods, every Swedish house has a Christmas star shining its light through the windows. Most families eat a candle-lit dinner and spend time with one another as they talk about the day. And of course, a fresh pot of coffee and a plate of cookies is shared at various points throughout the day. We had hoped and anticipated that we would be graced with 15-20 years in Europe's beautiful Scandinavian region. For all of its natural beauty and accommodating and welcoming way of life, it is a place very much in need of gospel preachers and evangelists. Christianity in Sweden is often used as a cultural

identification rather than a religious or spiritual one. This is why it is not uncommon for a Scandinavian to refer to himself or herself as a Christian while at the same time denying the existence of God or the truth of Jesus Christ. Please do not let our experience in Sweden deter you from considering supporting other missionaries to Scandinavia. We know of other families that have been there for decades and are thriving. Jesus has commissioned His people to go into all the world, Scandinavia included.

From our family to yours, thank you for supporting us and praying for us over the years. You all are the best and have treated us as if we were the best. Your grace and understanding has always left us in awe. We have learned so much from you as we have watched you stand by us and encourage us, even in spite of difficulties. Never did we expect the journey to be easy. Challenge is not something that we run from, but something that we expect and prepare ourselves for. It is a part of the human experience, and certainly a part of the Christian dynamic. Through this, we have, at least in a mild way, tasted the pangs of death, only to see the Lord raise us up again, put us on solid ground, and show us a clear path forward in the midst of darkness and confusion. Through our various circumstances in life, it is the power of the gospel that dominates the life of the believer. Not only does it provide our salvation, but the repeating experience of loss and gain, of death and resurrection, only help conform us more to His image (Philippians 3).

In the forthcoming weeks, I will be personally reaching out to each of you by phone. You are due at least that and I am set to do as much. But the sending of this letter, and communicating this information in this manner, was the only way I knew how to inform our supporting churches in a timely manner. You needed to know as soon as possible. Even though I will be calling each of you in time, you are more than welcome to call me or reach out to me through email, or by any other means (Facebook, social media, etc.). My phone number is: 513-549-0213.

Thank you so much and may God bless you richly.

With love and appreciation,

Don Sixt