



July 25, 2024

Dear First Free,

If you were at our gathering last Sunday, you have already heard the news that Maggie Johnson, our Director of Worship and Youth, will be transitioning off staff in the coming weeks, with her final Sunday on August 4th. It does no good to pretend that this isn't sad news, as Maggie has become a beloved part of our community over the past three years. She has poured herself out in ministry to our youth and lead us all in worship on Sundays. In her next role, Maggie will be serving at a behavioral therapy clinic in Wilmette for young children with autism.

Maggie's leaving will create a void in our life together, but in faith we trust that God will fill it. It's good and healthy to mourn the loss of Maggie, and not everyone's timeline with grief will look the same. Change and transition is always hard, but it also has the possibility, if we let it, to open us up to God and one another in fresh and meaningful ways. Loss can create space for something new to begin to take shape.

I encourage you to allow yourself to experience three movements of the heart over the coming days, weeks, and months — grief, gratitude, and hope. Take the time to grieve this loss, even if only for a moment. Next, think of a moment of gratitude that you may have from Maggie's time with us, and if your comfortable doing so, I encourage you to share it with Maggie on August 4th, in person, in writing, or in an email. Finally, spend some time in prayer, dreaming and hoping for what may be next for us as a church. God is holding us and will not let us go. Christ is with us and will be until the end of the age. The Spirit is breathing upon us, and new life is just around the corner.

Grace and peace,  
Pastor Matt