

Students and Parents,

On Saturday, May 28th, 2011, I drove 671 miles to Thomson, GA for a job I knew little about, and to work alongside people and students I knew even less about. It was a scary time, but one full of hope, promise, and a chance to allow myself to grow into what God might have for me.

I was excited... Excited at the new chapter God was writing in my life. I would find out how to properly say "y'all," how sweet Sweet Tea needed to be in order for it to be legit Sweet Tea, and I would meet my wife. I would work alongside top-notch adult volunteers, and I would serve and love students who continue to amaze me with their depth of understanding of who Jesus Christ is, and their willingness to let me peek into their life and share that relationship with me.

Which is why it makes it so hard to leave.

Today, this is a scary time. It is full of hope, promise, and another chance to, yet again, allow myself to grow into what God might have for me. But it's difficult to be excited when my heart is so pained.

This week, I accepted a position at Wesley United Methodist Church in Evans, GA as their Director of Student Ministries.

This has not been an easy decision to entertain or to make, primarily because Heather and I love Thomson and love all of you so much that it has always been almost inconceivable that we might leave. This is home, for us, and there is a part of us that will always want to stay here.

But as our life changes, so must others things. Over the last month, it's become clear that God has been working in the background and our family to a new adventure, much like the one I began when I first started here many years ago.

A few thoughts I that I feel I must share with you as I'm sure there will be many questions about why Heather and I have made this decision, and what will happen here in the future.

1) This was something unexpected. We had not been looking for another job or another church. We've always been happy here, and there is a part of us that will always love Thomson, and would have been entirely happy here forever.

But sometimes, God works in ways we do not expect, and when this opportunity presented itself, we began to think about our family, and how this opportunity would change things for Heather, myself, and our baby.

2) I'm not leaving because I don't care, am unhappy, or because I do not love all of you. Leaving all of you is BY FAR the worst part of this whole process. I wish it didn't have to be so painful, but I know it is this way because I love all of you, and I know you share those same feelings for Heather and I.

3) I'm committed to doing all I can to make sure our ministry here doesn't stumble after I'm gone. It's important to me to find someone who, with all of your help and with the help of our counselors and church staff, can take the baton and continue the important ministry we do here.

4) This is not goodbye forever. Heather and I care too much for that to be so. As much as I can be a help to you, I want to be. But also realize that it's my desire for you to love the next person just like you've loved me... and to do that, I may need to love you from a distance.

5) I want to finish well. I don't want the awkward hug. Nor the stares. I want to spend time with you and celebrate all we have done together. I want to share stories and talk about all the goofy things we have done. And I want you to know I treasure and value both those times and those conversations.

Our last event with Thomson FUMC will be Fall Retreat, October 13-15.

All of you have been the best part about serving here, and I thank God that He chose us to serve at Thomson FUMC, and to be in community with all of you.

*Aaron & Heather Talbott*