



April 13, 2023

Hey Surge Team,

Just a note to let you know I came back this week.

Thank you for the prayers and encouragement while I was gone this last month. I really love our Surge community and it is so clear to me that the Lord has blessed this team with a lot of depth, wisdom, and love. Over this last month, I took a lot of time to pray for each of you, the work you are doing, and the work we are doing together. We have been given such a special gift in this city and I am convinced the Lord has much more abundance of love, vision, and friendship in store for Surge and all the different work and leaders connected.

This letter is to update you on some pretty substantial challenges in my leadership that I have been navigating. Many know that there was a controversy around a book that a pastor at Redemption Temple wrote. The pastor's name is Josh Butler and has been a friend of Surge and mine for many years. I was involved because he used my name to endorse his work in ways he has confessed lacked integrity. The book is something I would not endorse and is on a topic that I have had a long history of navigating with some of the original founding churches in Surge.

This has been one of those moments where the idea of our mission and commitment to reconciliation has been put to the test for me in very personal (and public) ways. Josh Butler has now resigned from his church and is shifting into a season of promoting his book and I am continuing in a process of engaging in prayer, discussion, repair, and reconciliation with Josh and various parts of Redemption Church. Aaron Dailey (the one and only), Tyler Johnson (Surge co-founder/ leader of Redemption), and Vermon (my husband) have been sweet gifts to all of this as they have navigated the entire process with me. And most of all, Jesus has been present in mysterious ways that are beyond human understanding.

What we are committed to in Surge is the fostering of a community that is built on a shared mission to display Jesus in Arizona. This is not just through our jobs or even the particular roles any of us have in Surge, but it is primarily through our lived practices of love in every part of our city and every part of our lives. Agreement, culture, theological convictions, gender, church worship styles, church sizes, jobs, race, and part of the city we are in, do not hold us together. It is our deep, abiding love for Christ and a desire and commitment to see Jesus displayed in every part of our city, every part of our lives, and through every one of God's people that brings us together. We are committed to crossing all kinds of dividing lines for the sake of Christ, his mission, and in pursuit of a visible union with one another.

None of that is really possible from good ideas or great leadership, it requires something much deeper from us that has to flow out of a rootedness in the love of Christ. This can only be formed through the cultivation of a deep life with God and long-term practices (or habits) of love for others. Surge's mission is not sustainable apart from each of us being committed to seeking God's voice and aligning to it in every part of our heart and lives in ways that build our desire for a radical obedience to the ways of Jesus. I think I often know this, and say this, but this season has revealed the truth of that for me in unique ways.

I can only say I believe more than ever before who we are to Christ and our ability to remind one another, of our belovedness is at the absolute core of what we are able to do together. This is most especially true when there are ruptures in relationships. Being able to live out that love consistently requires a faith that doesn't grow overnight, but a life of developing habits in the school of Jesus. My hope is that the Lord continues to bless us with a deep desire to display Christ and his love—not just in theory or words, but in actions and truth.

All that said, this has impacted me at a pretty substantial level—physically and emotionally— and has affected my capacity. In order to make space for recovery and leadership discernment, I have taken a leave of absence from my national role with City to City, resigned from some other national roles; and am re-entering Surge at a slow pace because our local mission has always been my primary calling.

Right now, I am only re-entering on 3 fronts:

- (i) co-leading the executive team with Aaron;
- (ii) fundraising and overall grant management
- (iii) healing and continued discerning of leadership decisions with Redemption Church

Aaron, the Executive Team and the Team of Team leaders are holding the rest of my responsibilities and will continue in their primary responsibility of supporting you! They are around to reach out, pray for you, and help connect you to resources to ensure your vision and leadership is supported. They are all happy to answer any questions and are seeking to be transparent and direct with anything that is helpful to know, but we also respect that many of you are disconnected from this conflict and that is actually a gift to Surge as well because we do not want to center this momentary challenge in the midst of all our other good work together.

And, beloved, I will see you all at the quarterly coming up on **April 27th** at Roosevelt! I look forward to being together!!

With the kind of great Love that is eternal,

Dennae Pierre