

Belvedere Family Community: Justin Okamoto will be replaced by Kazuhide Kikuchi as Pastor

Justin Okamoto
May 14, 2026



A Message from Pastor Justin

Dear Belvedere Family,

This is a difficult letter to write and a difficult announcement to make. It feels bittersweet.

At the same time, I want to say from the beginning that I do not see this as a sad or negative announcement. In my heart, I actually feel that this is a joyful step from the perspective of God's providence. I truly feel that God and the Spirit have been moving in my heart through this process, and that this transition is part of where Heaven is guiding both my life and our community.

I wanted to let you all know that I will be officially moving on from my role as Head Pastor of the Belvedere Family Community.

Some of you may have heard that this was coming, and for some of you, this may come as a complete shock. Regardless, I want to begin by expressing my deep gratitude to this community for the years I have had the privilege to serve as your pastor.

To give a little background, this is something that has been in the works for several months now. We have been in talks with Pastor Naokimi, our regional director, and our local council. Throughout this process, we have done our best to make this transition in partnership with local, regional, and national leadership.

Some of you may be wondering why this change is happening.

The simple reason is that over the last six months, my regional responsibilities have been growing and becoming a bigger part of my focus. As Pastor Naokimi has been stepping up more and more in his national role, he has been relying on me to handle more of the management and operations of the region. I feel it has reached a point where I need to focus my energy there.

At the same time, I believe this wonderful community deserves someone who can give their full-time attention and whole heart to the role of pastor. Belvedere deserves someone who has the time and capacity to invest deeply into this community.

I am truly grateful to Reverend Kikuchi for agreeing to step up into this role. I am also grateful to True Mother for appointing him and asking him to move his life and his family to America to support the Providence here.

We will be having a farewell service for me on May 24, and then an installation service for Reverend Kikuchi during the regional service on May 31.

There are many things I would love to say, and I don't think there are enough words to express how grateful I am to all of you, to our Heavenly Parent, and to True Parents for this amazing journey I have been privileged to be on as the pastor of this wonderful community.

I am leaving this role with nothing but appreciation, gratitude, and pride in all the things we have accomplished together as a community: the relationships we have built, the love we have experienced from one another, and the love we have experienced from our Heavenly Parent.

I will carry all of that with me into my next chapter as I continue serving the region and supporting our leaders across the region.

I will also continue to play a mentoring role for Reverend Kikuchi for the next few months. The exact timeline is not 100% set, but I have full confidence that he will be an amazing pastor for this precious and historic community.

I will share a few more words of appreciation and reflection during the farewell service, and I hope to see you all there.

Thank you very much.

With gratitude,

Justin Okamoto

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