

TRUST IN THE LORD

Proverbs 3:5-6

WELCOME: Joy of a unified service. Importance of faithfulness in LCGs and worship this summer.

Introduction: Paul said to his dear friend and son in the ministry Timothy, "The time of my departure is at hand." Paul was referring to his approaching death. Now as far as I know, I am not dying soon, and I do not in any way compare myself to Paul.

However, Karen and I must say to you, our dearest friends, "The time of our departure is at hand." Karen and I are retiring from our full-time positions of ministry.

We are not leaving the ministry. We are leaving full-time work in the ministry.

- I hope to preach and teach God's Word for many more years.
- Karen wants to continue ministering to children.
- Our plan, the Lord willing of course, is to do those things on a much more limited basis than we have for the last 50 years.

My first full-time ministry position began 50 years ago this month.

- It paid so little that Karen and I both had to drive school busses on the side,
- and I threw 380 newspapers every morning, seven days a week, each of which had to be on the front porch by 6 a.m.

This has not been a quick or easy decision. But folks, I am 71 years old. Karen, as you know by just looking at her, is a little younger than I am, but we both feel the effects of age. Although this is a painful decision, it is one that we have made with full assurance of God's leadership in it.

We will be with you four more weeks.

- Yes, we will be with you for Vacation Bible School!
- June 12 will be our last Sunday.
- June 17 will be our last day in the office here at St. Andrew Baptist Church.

- Sometime after that date and the sale of our house, we will be moving to Louisville, KY, where most of our grandchildren live.

It has always been my practice to be upfront with you. Whenever something significant happened in our lives that affected you, we have told you or the appropriate leadership about it. We told you about good things, and we told you about some very painful things, but we told you.

So I want to take a little time to talk with you about this decision, to be up front with you, and help you understand as much as is possible.

People are prone to guess why others do what they do. I do not want you to have to guess as to why we are making this move. First let me tell you ...

These are not the reasons we are leaving:

- **We are not leaving because of the hurricane or the pandemic or the effects of either.**
 - I hope this is obvious, but just in case, I am saying it.
 - Actually Hurricane Michael delayed our retirement just as Hurricane Katrina delayed our coming here to Panama City.
 - Katrina delayed us about seven months. Hurricane Michael has delayed our retirement between two and three years.
 - Although we had not set a date, we were seriously considering retirement when Michael blew into town. After that happened, we knew it was not God's time for us to leave.
 - Leaving before the church recovered was never an option we considered.
 - Frankly my desire and initial plan was to stay until the new Worship Center was completed. I really wanted to preach in that new building! It is going to be beautiful, and it will glorify God.
 - As the delays stretched on, I began to pray about whether it was better for the church for me to leave once construction had begun but before the building was complete. At first, that was a very uncomfortable prayer to pray. Even as I wanted to be a part of the re-design of our Worship Center, I wanted to be a part of at least supervising its construction. And as I said, I really wanted to preach in it.
 - After praying for months, the Lord brought me to a place where I believed it was better for the church to be looking for the next pastor while the Worship Center was being

constructed. That would allow the completion of the Worship Center and the arrival of a new pastor to be closer together. I believe the Lord led me to that.

- **We are not leaving because of a problem.**
 - No one has or is pressuring us to leave.
 - There is no hidden problem either with the church or with us.
 - Things are better here now than they have been for some time.
 - The unity is stronger,
 - the fellowship sweeter,
 - the finances better,
 - the buildings in better condition, and on and on.
 - And that is the way I want it to be at the completion of my pastoral ministry.
 - And that's the way Karen wants things to be in the Kid Zone.
 - There is no hidden agenda in this move. I am being totally open and honest with you.

So let me share with you ...

These are the reasons we are leaving:

- **We are retiring simply because of the physical need that comes with age.**
 - As I said earlier, I am 71. Karen is younger, but still it is remarkable that at her age she continues to effectively do Children's Ministry.
 - But full-time ministry is getting much harder for both of us physically.
 - Before we came here, on Sundays I taught a Pastor's Class, preached two morning services and one evening service. It was not unusual to have a Committee Meeting in the afternoon. I had the energy to do it, and I didn't think twice about it.
 - Karen has always matched or exceeded me with schedule and energy.

- The simple truth is that neither of us can come close to our former pace. It is time to move over for younger folks.
- **We are retiring because we have sensed the strong leadership of the Lord.**
 - We have been praying about this now for four years. Now that construction has begun on the Worship Center, we are confident that the time is right.
 - I was 55 when the church called me as pastor. I thought that I might be able to pastor for 10 years if the Lord permitted. God has given me six years beyond that, and I am grateful for each and every one of them. We completed 16 years with you last month.
- **We are retiring because we know God has a good plan for both us and St. Andrew moving forward.**
 - That is the way God works.
 - Part of the goodness of the Lord for us is that we will have some grandchildren time that we have lacked.
 - The good thing for St. Andrew is that God has already picked out your new pastor. You only have to find him!

Who knows, maybe God will send you the perfect pastor.

The results of a computerized survey indicate

- the perfect pastor preaches exactly 15 minutes.
- He condemns sin but never upsets anyone.
- He works from 8 am until midnight and is also a janitor.
- He makes \$500 a week, wears good clothes, buys good books, drives a good car, and gives about \$250 weekly to the poor.
- He is 28 years old and has been preaching 30 years.
- He has a burning desire to work with teenagers and spends all of his time with senior adults.
- The perfect pastor smiles all the time with a straight face because he has a sense of humor that keeps him seriously dedicated to his work.

- He makes 15 calls daily on church families, shut-ins, and the hospitalized.
- He spends all of his time evangelizing the lost and is always in his office when needed.

So, the article says, if your pastor does not measure up, simply send this letter to six other churches that are tired of their pastor, too. Then bundle up your pastor and send him to the church at the top of the list.

In one week, you will receive 1,643 pastors and one of them should be perfect. Have faith in this letter. One church broke the chain and got its old pastor back in less than three weeks.

Now let me share with you

THE FOCUS WE WANT YOU TO HAVE DURING AND FOLLOWING OUR DEPARTURE:

Proverbs 3:5-6 NKJV 5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

Trust in the Lord.

- The Lord can and will work through the leadership of the church.
- The church adopted updated bylaws seven years ago. They clearly layout the transition process. Mature Christians are already in leadership in all the Ministry Teams that will help the church work through the transition. God is in charge. Trust Him.

Trust Him with your whole heart. Do not say, “I trust the Lord, BUT...” Say, and mean, “I trust the Lord!” with my whole heart.

- Not half heartedly
- Not partially but completely

Lean not on your own understanding.

- Sometimes in life, things catch us by surprise. But God is never surprised. “His thoughts are higher than our thoughts and His ways higher than our ways.”
- The right way to lean is to lean on Jesus, lean into Jesus, not on your own thoughts and understanding.

- Although Karen and I have a deep love for this church, it does not compare to the love the Lord has for it.
- I cannot begin to tell you everything we love about this church, but let me recount a few things.
 - You warmly received both Karen and I and made us feel a part of a great church with a long history.
 - As I tried to lead you based on God's Word, you have always been willing to follow.
 - I don't think I ever heard one member say THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF THE CHURCH: "We never did it that way before."
 - You are serious thinkers without a critical spirit.
 - You are resilient. You trust the Lord, even in tough times, knowing He will bring you through and make you better and stronger.
 - You are eager to stand on biblical standards without developing a judgmental attitude.
 - You are compassionate. You genuinely love those who are hurting, and you do all you can to minister to them.
 - In that ministry, you recognize the importance and centrality of the gospel, so that your ministry does not just become social assistance.
 - You are cooperative which has led to strong unity. Almost every major decision the church has made in the last 16 years has been unanimous!
- It has been such a joy to serve the Lord with you. We treasure our time with St. Andrew Baptist Church. We love you.
- But Jesus loves you even more!
- This church belongs to Jesus. Jesus WILL take care of His church.

In all your ways, know Him, and make Him known.

- That is the meaning of the Hebrew here, often translated "acknowledge."
- In everything you do, know God experientially applying His Word.

- In everything you do, make Him known to others.
- In other words: trust Him, obey Him, declare Him!

He will show you what to do.

- God has a plan for you, and it is a plan for good.
- Leadership is already seeking the Lord in this, and they will have a transition plan in place before we depart.

CONCLUSION: My desire is that each of you will commit to make Proverbs 3:5-6 your focus, knowing you can trust Him to direct your paths.

Lord, we love and trust You! You are ever-faithful! You love this church. You will care for her and lead her!