

Some years ago the Lord spoke to me, through a member of our church, with a clear and memorable command. He said this:

“Two times now you have mentioned from the pulpit that you are thinking about retiring or stepping down from your role at Bethel. Don’t say that again. I called you. I’ll let you know when it’s time to go.”

Since that time I haven’t, at least as I recall, publicly mentioned such a possibility. But I will confess, a question which I thought was quite natural has crossed my mind a time or two. “How will He let me know?” One of the men with whom I share such things told me, “Don’t worry. When the time comes, it will be very obvious.” That wasn’t much comfort. Yes, it would be nice if He made such a pivot point very apparent to me. It wasn’t so uplifting to consider the possibility that it might also be very obvious to everyone else that it’s time for me to step aside.

With that background we might appreciate what I’m about to announce today.

The Lord has let me know that it’s time for me to go.

He has confirmed that message in many ways. I’m grateful to Him for that.

Now some of us may have some natural questions 😊: Here are a few of those and some partial answers.

1. What does that mean?

It means that my role as senior pastor here at Bethel will be coming to an end. At this time, I don’t know what the Lord has next for me, but I trust Him. But I want all of us to know, regardless of what the future holds, this church body has been and still is one of the Lord’s greatest blessings to me and my family. Linda and I are not planning on moving anywhere and would love stay associated with you, our life-long friends and co-workers in Christ.

2. Why?

One of the reasons is that I believe it’s time for a younger man to lead us into the next phase of the Lord’s plans for Bethel. I still have energy and I still love you all, but I’m getting old. The leadership baton needs to be passed to the next generation.

3. Who will take my place?

The Bethel elders will be employing a search firm to help us as we seek a new senior pastor. We have generated a profile of the person for whom we’ll be looking which includes the kind of character and gifting we believe the Lord would desire for our new man to have. Lord willing, with our prayers, we could have our new senior pastor in place before the end of this calendar year.

4. Then what?

My hope is to have some time of overlap between the time when our new man arrives and me stepping down. We’re not sure yet how long that overlap season might be. We’d like to make it long enough for me to be helpful to our new leader, but not so long as to dampen his enthusiasm and vision by me looking over his shoulder all the time.

5. What happens now?

I’m still around for a while and I’m still grateful and excited about the Lord’s kingdom and the privilege it is to serve Him among this wonderful body of people. Cue the music! What? We’re about out of time? I was planning on singing the chorus of the Whitney Houston song, “I will always love you” at this point, but I see that our time is about up.

From this point on we are going to make every effort to communicate as thoroughly as we can where we are in the pastoral search process. We are planning on membership emails, an informational website and Sunday updates as appropriate.

As an elder board we're asking all of us to pray that the Lord will bring us the man He has chosen to lead our church body with passion and vision into the future He has for us.

As your brother in Christ, I'm asking you to pray for Linda and me. The Lord hasn't let me know yet what assignment He might have me going "to" but I am committed to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. And if I can do that in a role in which I can use some of the gifts and experiences He's given me in these last almost 30 years with Bethel, that would be great.

Thank you for your prayers. And all the people said, Amen.