

Retirement Letter to Congregation

April 19, 2009

Dear First Baptist Family,

Fourteen years ago, you called me to become your pastor. Crystal and I moved to Hickory with excitement and a strong belief that this was the place to which the Lord was leading us.

Since then, we have shared in God's goodness, refining, and guiding. Now God is leading me into the "new land" of retirement. This is an official announcement that my final Sunday as your pastor will be July 26.

You have honored and blessed us by calling us here, serving beside us, encouraging and praying for us, and wanting so passionately to be God's people with us. You have truly been the church to us.

We are very excited about this church's future. You have a wonderful staff, wise and dedicated leadership, great resources, and a growing sense of Christ's future for this church. You also have the strongest combination of unity and missional vitality you have had during the past fourteen years.

The next three months will provide a time to say good-bye, to celebrate our years together, and for you to begin the process of moving forward into the future God has for this church family.

God has blessed me greatly with Crystal as my wife. We look forward to the future he has for us. We praise him for bringing us together with you, and we will hold you in our hearts.

In Christian love,

William W. Leathers, III, Pastor