

Text: 2 Timothy 3:14, reading 3:10-4:4

Title: Jerry Wichert Retirement Service

Truth: As Hiawatha Bible Church commends its minister to retirement, it must resolve to continue to steadfastly follow close after God.

Date/Location: Sunday June 28, 2026 at Hiawatha Bible Church

Introduction

I know some of you feel a sadness today. But this is not the mourning of the Egyptians! The sadness though is a consequence of the temporal world in which we live. Change is inevitable and we acknowledge that we are facing something new and different. It may be that a church experiences no more momentous a change than when a good pastor retires. It happens not for a bad reason, but for a necessary one.

It will no longer do to say, “Well, that’s how we have always done things.” That is an expression of tradition and by itself is not a good reason to do anything. Today you are forced to change because of the end of a cherished tradition—having Pastor Wichert leading and preaching from the pulpit, and urging you to pray and hear the word and change your hearts, and be actively involved in your church. It is the end of having Mrs. Wichert always at the organ and leading the ladies meetings and encouraging the downcast. It is the end of “business as usual” and challenges us to look to the Lord for what He would have you to do next.

But many things do not and cannot legitimately be changed—we have one Lord, one baptism, one God and Father of all, one Spirit, one church, one doctrine, one Bible, one mission, the Great Commission, one commandment, to love God above all else and to love our neighbors as ourselves. These things cannot change and you should contend for them without fail.

I. Reminders

A. I thought about sharing with you from Acts 20 because it is Paul’s last time with the Ephesian church elders. He reviewed his own faithful ministry to them as he maintained humility in his manner, a thoroughness of teaching and evangelism and a mindset of sacrifice. He was a faithful minister because he took heed to

himself and his flock, because Christ sacrificed Himself for the flock, because he warned the church of the dangers facing the flock, and he knew the blessing promised to those who give of themselves for the Lord.

Although humility would prevent Pastor and Mrs. Wichert from saying this about themselves, I believe Pastor has been like Paul in this way, a good minister of Jesus Christ. You are to be commended, brother and sister at arms, for a work well done, for preaching the word, for delivering the whole counsel of God, for labor expended, for weariness endured, for sticking at it in this church for 48 and a half years. You were here for the ups and downs, the weddings and births...and terminal illnesses and deaths...and baptisms and new members...and people leaving and even lifting up their heel against you. In this, you shared in the experience of our dear Savior and learned more what it was like to be like Him.

B. I thought about sharing from Isaiah 6 after the long 52-year reign of Uzziah was over and the changing of the guard was underway. The times were no doubt gloomy and sad for the people, but prospects turned out to be good with his good son reigning 16 more years. Sadly, however, the grandson Ahaz did not follow in his ways. But then the great-grandson Hezekiah reigned 29 years and did right in God's sight. But during the time of transition, Isaiah was confronted with a vision of the LORD in the temple and responded to God's call to serve Him in the prophetic ministry.

Likewise, Hiawatha Bible Church needs to be reminded in the midst of a changing of the guard to keep your eyes on the LORD who is high and lifted up. He is holy, and your lives and ministry and membership needs to focus on that and be ready at His beck and call. "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" These words echo down the corridor of time to your ears and call you to serve the exalted Christ. Will you do that no matter who your pastor or pastors might be in the future?

II. Commendation for Pastor Wichert and the Church

A. And then I thought about sharing with you 2 Timothy 3:14. Read.

B. Paul wrote his final words to Timothy in this letter. We can be sure these are important matters.

C. The minister...

1. Must have sound doctrine and a godly manner of life. His purpose and focus should be on the things of the Lord, not on worldly things. His faith should be strong.
2. Will face trials and persecution in his ministry. Indeed, the Lord showed Paul how much he had to suffer for the name of Christ.

I can safely say that your under-shepherd fulfilled both of these qualities. And any future pastor you seek must do the same.

D. The church...

1. Will also suffer persecution from time to time.
2. Will face a worsening society. These things ratchet up the pressure so that it is more difficult to live for the Lord and do what Paul asks next.
3. To face this kind of situation, Paul's concern is to ensure that Timothy carries forward the truth, because Paul cannot do so any longer. So, he reminds Timothy to "continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of..." To *continue* means to remain, to stay, to persist. Timothy must not get the idea that now that Paul is gone, he can contextualize and change and adapt and improve the gospel or the method of delivering it.

Timothy can confidently continue in those things because (1) Timothy knows the character of the man from whom he learned them. (2) And, he knew them from childhood—they are not new. (3) And he knew them from the God-breathed Scripture, that completely reliable witness to the will and way of God. There is nothing new, nothing particularly creative. It is all old, ancient truth.

Today, we need a reminder of the same as we enter a dangerous and difficult period of transition: The church must CONTINUE in what we have learned. (1) We too know where the truth came from. It came from a godly and sincere minister, a

good servant of the Lord, and (3) it came from the completely reliable Bible from a totally trustworthy God. (2) Many of you who have grown up in this church can say that you are like Timothy—you have known the Bible since youth. Praise God.

But you must continue. Not change. Not give up. Not grow weak and weary. You must persist. Ask God for help to do that. When the temptation to veer from the good path comes, ask, “Does this agree with the command to *continue* that we remember from the retirement service in June 2026 and 2 Timothy 3:14?”

The church must continue by preaching of the word. There is no substitute. Whatever the world does, and however bad the society goes, you persist in giving them what they really need.

III. Reminder for the Discouraging Days

- A. Do you think Paul wondered if he actually accomplished anything for the Lord in all his years of ministry? Should he have thrown in the towel earlier? Was it all for nought? Did anyone listen? Did he labor in vain? Was all the persecution worth it? After he is gone, will his people turn aside quickly out of the way that he commanded them? Will they forget God, or the gospel?
- B. Pastor and Mrs. Wichert, be assured that your ministry has not been in vain. You have been faithful, including through difficult trials. And faithfulness is never in vain! If God has used you to bring one soul to salvation, it was worth it all. If your ministry rescued one person from the path of sin...one tempted soul from succumbing...if one child was encouraged in dark times...if one young couple raised a godly family...if one person was helped through illness to die well...it was definitely worth it. God has done all those things through your ministry, and more. He has encouraged other churches, namely ours, and other pastors, namely this one, because you have continued in the things you learned and have been assured of. You preached the word. Keep on as long as you can. And pray for us who remain in the full-time service, please.

Conclusion

Pastor and Mrs. Wichert, The Lord bless you and keep you; ²⁵ The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." ' (Num. 6:24-26)

Hiawatha Bible Church, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen. (2 Cor. 13:14). Rather than living in the past or being swallowed by sadness, strengthen yourselves in your God and move forward boldly. Continue in what you have been taught by your undershepherd for the past two generations. Do not sell it for the bowl of stew offered you by the world.

And...to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, ²⁵ To God our Savior, who alone is wise, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24-25)

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