

Rick Warren's Final Sermon Signals a New Season for Saddleback Church

True to his word, Pastor Rick Warren and his wife Kay gave the promised 40 years of service to Saddleback Church, and then some.

After 43 years of pastoring the megachurch in Lake Forest, California, Warren has officially stepped down as lead pastor. Andy Wood and his wife, Stacie, the former pastors at in the San Francisco Bay area, will replace the Warrens.

The commissioning of the Woods as the new leadership will take place on Sept. 10-11, with Sept. 12 being Andy and Stacie's first day as the lead pastors of Saddleback Church.

Transitions are often difficult for the members of a church, but the Warrens announced this new chapter in June 2021, allowing their congregation to prepare their hearts for transferring the mantle of leadership.

As Warren took the stage for his final message to the church as their lead pastor, he was greeted with applause and cheers. It was a thank you from the congregation that the Lord grew from around 50 parishioners, to the globally recognized church it is now.

"You're going to make me cry," he told them. "Have I told you lately that I love you?"

"As you know by now, today is my last message to you as your senior pastor. For 43 years, it has been my privilege to love you, to pray for you, to serve you, to encourage you, to be at the bedsides, to be at the gravesides, to be at the counseling when you're going through a tough patch in your life; and to

teach you," he said.

"And during these 43 years, I have preached 6,500-plus messages, sermons and studies. But in this ... our final, our last farewell message, I have decided that of all those 6,500 messages plus that I want to share with you, to repeat and re-preach, the very first message I preached to start this church, word for word, 43 years ago.

"One of the values—purpose-driven values—that we hold on to here at our church is, 'Begin with the end in mind.' Whatever project you're starting, begin with the end in mind. That's called being purpose driven. You know your purpose in advance. And we knew from the very beginning what kind of church this was going to be."

Warren shot to international fame with the publishing of his book "The Purpose Driven Life" that went on to sell over 50 million copies worldwide by 2020. {eo}

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