

Why This Megachurch Pastor Just Resigned After Nearly 40 Years in the Pulpit

For 39 years, David Chadwick served faithfully in the pulpit of what has become one of North Carolina's largest churches, Forest Hill Church. Now, he's stepped away in a move he calls "re-firing."

That means he's not retiring, but shifting his energy to getting fired up about new things. Chadwick will turn 70 this July.

"I love to build things," Chadwick tells the *Charlotte Observer*. "With God's help, I built (Forest Hill) from 180 members to however many thousands it is right now ... It's in great health. So I asked myself: 'Do I want to continue to oversee this, or do I want to build something new?'"

According to a statement posted to the Forest Hill Website, the church had 180 members when Chadwick first took up the pastorate nearly 40 years ago. Today, it has 4,000 members with 12,000 visitors across six campuses around the Charlotte area.

"There's some grief for me," Chadwick says. "just because of the relationships and all the years (at Forest Hill). But there's also an excitement."

Chadwick tells his church:

Looking ahead, through discussions with my family and the Council of Elders about the future of the church, I have concluded Forest Hill would benefit from new leadership. So today, I want to let you know that I will no longer serve as senior pastor of Forest Hill Church.

Marilynn and I feel called to the opportunity to expand our ministry through the work of Moments of Hope, which is positively affecting lives nationally and internationally through our media outreach. We also feel the continued call to serve the Charlotte region where we have spent our lives in ministry together.

As I approach my 70th birthday, please know I am as excited about sharing God's Word today as I was in 1980 when I came to this church. While I will broaden the focus of my ministry, I will remain in Charlotte and faithful to God's direction in His service so people everywhere may know and grow their relationship with God through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Chadwick also tells the *Observer* that he has some doubts about the multi-campus model that streams his sermons in the different sites.

"Churches all over the country are doing it, with videos shown on the screen in other places," Chadwick tells the paper, "Elevation (Church) is probably the primary example here in Charlotte. You know, I just began to wonder more and more—how effective is that?

"I know I'm a good communicator ... I can have people come and listen. But doesn't a pastor need to speak to his people? So I began to struggle with that, too."

Chadwick tells the *Observer* that the elders discussed a slow transition out of his role as senior pastor.

"The campus pastors will be sharing preaching responsibilities and will work collaboratively with senior leaders to continue to lead Forest Hill while we format the next leadership structure of the church," Forest Hill spokesperson Stacey Martin tells the *Observer*.

"We talked about a six-month strategy with (the church elders) and slowly easing out," Chadwick said. "And I thought, *That's just going to make it harder on us and probably for the congregation too. Let's just move on, that would probably be best.* So maybe in a couple of weeks Marilyn and I will both just get up and say, 'Hey, we've had a great ride. We've loved it. It's been wonderful. But we feel led to go do something else.'"