

SPEAKING IN THE LIGHT WITH PASTOR RUDY IT'S TIME...

My move to Cape May County happened 24 years ago, in the summer of 1997. And for me, it was also my return back home to the Garden State. Although I was born and raised in the northern part of New Jersey, I had always felt a holy pull to this portion of our state and I just knew that someday God would allow me the chance to fulfill that calling. It all became reality when the Leadership of The Lighthouse Church contacted me where I was serving as a Pastor out in Omaha, Nebraska. They had asked me if I was interested in coming to join what they sensed the Lord was doing in this area and become their Minister. I knew the moment that I first met in person and got to share ideas with Gerald Stout, Art Hall, Paul Brant and Jim Carpinelli that this was a very special invitation from God with my name upon it. I actually saw in my heart the clear vision of where He was going to take our church before any of it had ever happened! I wasn't even sure if this group of people could pay me, but it was a clear no brainer for me to tell my family to fasten their seatbelts because we were all heading east!

If you want to know the exact words from the Lord that caused me to leave a big and wonderful Church Family in Omaha to come to a place that not only didn't have a building, they didn't even own a copy machine! I was standing on the Boardwalk in Wildwood and the Lord shared John 11:40 with me: "Then Jesus said, 'Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?'" As we get ready to celebrate the 30th Birthday of The Lighthouse Church next weekend, I can assure you that God has kept His promise. We have seen His Glory and His Power in our midst. And as the lyrics of the classic Andrea Crouch songs sings, "If there be any praise, let It go to Calvary." What God has done before, God will renew and redeem it in an even better way in the times to come! It is just that the Lord will use another Senior Pastor as I believe it is time to pass the baton to a younger Man.

A week ago last Tuesday, the District Superintendent of our denomination the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Kelvin Walker and His Assistant Bryan came down to meet with me first and then stayed for our regular Elder Board Meeting. The simplest way to summarize the day was that we all came to the conclusion that it is time.

I have always known in the back of my heart and mind that this day would eventually have to come. I truly anticipated it to be a very emotional decision and it is. Being the Senior Pastor of the Lighthouse Church is what I have dedicated the very best years of my adult life to as I was 37 years old when I came here and will be 61 years young as I depart.

I have never doubted for a moment that God had my name on this precious work and it has been an honor and privilege to be not only the Pastor of Lighthouse but also a Pastor of Cape May County. I have always made it my goal to take the love of Jesus beyond any man made walls and I have loved every thing about serving our precious Savior by showing them Jesus whether you were church bound or not. I believe God has blessed us all beyond what we could have ever hoped, dreamt or imagined when I came back home to New Jersey from Omaha all those years ago.

I am humbly grateful for the many ways the Lord has shown up for all of us through the years as we have experienced together the miracle that has become this unique Body of Christ that still allows

no perfect people to join. We have all tasted of so many adventures and God moments that we will have all of eternity to celebrate and cherish these memories together with Him!

As many of you know, I have desired to be very cautious, careful and sensitive to the Lord to know when it was time for me to move on and faithfully let go and get out of the way so that our God could continue to build up this anointed work His way in His will for the days to come. Through 2020, as we all experienced the chaotic pandemic and now in 2021 as I am presently battling through prostate cancer, it has certainly left its mark! In these changing times we are now living in, it has become quite obvious to me that there will need to be many more adjustments and creativity in how to pastor this church in the strategic days that still lie ahead. The Lighthouse Church needs an anointed man in his prime with a sold-out heart to Jesus to answer the call for such a time as this! I need to be realistic about what I know God wants me to do and what I need to let go of and trust God with.

After lots of prayer and soul searching, I believe that now is the time to begin the important transition for the future. I truly thought I could be part of the process to turn it over to the new Senior Pastor, but the Lord has challenged me that I can better serve everyone by getting out of the way and trust God to do what He does best! I firmly believe that my hanging on would only be holding the Lighthouse back and I won't do that!

For me; I am far from done in ministry but I believe that I must adjust my responsibilities because while I expect to win this battle against cancer, my high blood pressure is a very real threat. I am already seeking the Lord to show me a church and community like Lighthouse was when I first arrived in 1997. A Church that wants to reach its Community and may have experienced some hard times but they believe that it is not over. You wouldn't believe how many churches there are like that in the C&MA in Pennsylvania alone. Yes, I will be relocating but I am hoping to minister somewhere in between our Kids here and my Son Rudy's family in western Pennsylvania. I have a peace and am not worried about it. God knows and it is His Presence and Power we must follow obediently.

For Lighthouse; the Metropolitan District will be officially involved in the search for the new Senior Pastor. The C&MA already has a tried and true structure in place for this and they have given me their word that Cape May County will be a priority for such a time as this.

I tried everything I could to find a way I could stay. I want to move now like I want a hole in the head. But God has made it clear and it has been affirmed by our District Leadership and our Elders here that it is time. Pray please. I will never do anything that would hurt God's work here. It is not about me or you but it is all about Jesus. Lighthouse is His Church.

Thank you for everything. I love you all. As Barry Manilow sings, "Letting Go Is Just Another Way to Say I'll Always Love You So." We are not home yet and there are still many people who need to experience the amazing grace of God and the transformational love of Jesus. There are more adventures to come so we look up before we look out because we know the best is yet to come! For now, it is just, "I'll see you later!"