Thank you!

This Sunday, after 17 years as your Lead Pastor, and 36 years of ministry, I'll retire from full-time ministry.

Sunday morning, I'll share some thoughts based on my favorite movie, *It's A Wonderful Life*. For many years I've related with George Bailey's struggle to see if my life had any real meaning. It isn't that George didn't see the value he had added to so many lives, but sometimes it is easy to forget- especially when life is hard.

George Bailey received a gift that most people will never experience. He was able to see what life would have been like if he hadn't been born. Lives of loved ones, lives of people far beyond George's immediate context would have been forever impacted- often in negative ways.

As I reflect on my time among you, and the other congregations that I have been privileged to serve, I am confident that my life made a far bigger impact than I will ever know this side of heaven. Thank you for sharing your stories and recounting ways that I've helped you to navigate life with faith.

Like the Apostle Paul, writing to Timothy, my prayer is that you will 'continue in what you have learned' from me. (2 TImothy 3:14) I pray that not only through my sermons, but through the personal conversations we've shared, that I have imparted some wisdom for your life. And, I pray that you will pass along to others what you have learned.

While it would be nice to think that my life has only had a positive effect on people, I'm human just like you. So, if I've offended you or discouraged you at any point in my ministry, please accept my apology. And where I can look at life through the rearview mirror, I confess that there are regrets- things I would have done differently and things I wouldn't do at all. So please know that I have done my best to navigate life for the sake of the Good News of Jesus.

As I say 'good-bye,' please warmly welcome Pastor Rachel and her family. I firmly believe that Pastor Rachel will be a great pastor to lead Linglestown Life in this next season. Be gracious to her in the same way you were to me all those years ago. Follow her leadership. Support and encourage her. Most importantly, pray daily for her and seek ways that you can use your gifts alongside her.

When I walk out the main entrance this Sunday, I will no longer be your pastor. I will cheer you on as a community of faith. I will pray for you all. But I am not your pastor, Pastor Rachel is the person you need to depend upon.

If our paths should cross at a local store or my favorite chicken restaurant, please ask me how I'm doing. Please share with me about the exciting things in your life, but I will not engage in conversation about the church out of my respect for Pastor Rachel.

Thank you again for the opportunity to have been a part of your life and your faith journey for the last 17 years. I have enjoyed the moments when we celebrated a birth, a baptism, a wedding. I will treasure the precious moments when we have walked the darker paths of life. Through it all I am thankful for every moment I have had with you.