



D E R R Y  
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C H U R C H

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January 22, 2015

Dear Friends,

By chance, I ran across an old edition (Volume II, Number 8) of The Derry Press. The front page included an article by a minister who wrote these words to the congregation:

*I believe that the Spirit of God guides and works through the voices of congregations to establish nominating committees that are representative, who "picture" the life and personality of their congregations. I believe that what I discovered in your Pastor Nominating Committee is a true picture of the warmth, the love, the talent, the energy, the excitement and hope for future ministry that is alive in the entire family of Derry Presbyterian Church.*

If you haven't guessed, I was the minister who penned those words, as your Nominating Committee's candidate for pastor, coming to lead worship at Derry on January 14, 1990. At the time, I wrote those words with a "prayerful hope" that they would come true. But now looking back, the words sound almost prophetic, because that is exactly the family I have discovered you to be in my years of ministry at Derry Church.

So it is with a deep and rich sense of gratitude – along with a wonderful mixture of great joy and excitement for the future – that I have decided it is now time for me to retire from ministry in the Presbyterian Church. Last night, at our meeting, I asked the Session to request that you, as a congregation, ask the Presbytery of Carlisle to grant me the status of "honorably retired," effective April 30, 2015. Our Presbytery Executive, Dr. Mark Englund-Krieger, attended the meeting, taking time to outline for Session members each of the "next steps" in the Presbyterian process of calling a new pastor. It is the Session's responsibility to lead the congregation through the coming interim time, and I know the Session will soon be sending you information and details about the calling process.

I have been greatly blessed throughout my forty-three years of ministry as a Presbyterian pastor – and, especially so, by all of you during these past twenty-five years in Hershey. You have cared for me and for my family, you have challenged and encouraged me to grow as a pastor and preacher, and you have surrounded me with a wonderful staff of colleagues who have all shared in the daily work of ministry at Derry. I am truly grateful to you for all of these blessings.

I am looking forward to the coming weeks as your pastor, leading up to my final Sunday on April 12. I am thankful for the opportunity to walk with all of you once more through the Lenten journey, and to celebrate again the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Grace and peace,

Dick Houtz