

Good afternoon, everyone,

Today, I have the privilege of sharing something important—but I want to begin by saying this: I am deeply grateful, and my heart is full.

I've had several ophthalmology visits and have met with my optometrist, all while prayerfully seeking the Lord regarding my vision. As some of you know, I've managed vision challenges since childhood, including blindness in one eye. At this point, being on my laptop eight to ten hours a day is unsustainable for my long-term visual health.

After wise counsel from my doctors, and much prayer and reflection, it has become clear that it's time for me to step into a new season.

So, I am announcing my retirement.

And I want to say this clearly—this is not an ending I'm mourning, but a season I'm embracing. Because in the Kingdom of God, we don't retire from purpose—we transition in how we serve.

I want to sincerely thank Pastor Keith Battle for his friendship and mentorship, and for being the pastor I've needed. I am especially grateful for his honesty—always speaking the truth in love. He is more than a great orator; he is a compassionate, caring, and kind spiritual leader.

I also thank him and First Lady Vicki for being such a powerful example to Kim and me.

To Zion—I've been part of this church since it was just 18 months old, and on staff since January 2006. Words truly cannot express my gratitude. This place is special. This is home.

I'm deeply grateful for the C-Suite team—what a blessing it has been to serve alongside such an exceptional group of leaders.

And to the staff of the external division and our incredible volunteers—serving with you has been an absolute joy.

I will continue serving through July 31, and I am fully committed to ensuring a strong and smooth transition.

I was so encouraged after reading this scripture:

Numbers 8:23–26 (NLT):

“The Lord also instructed Moses, ‘This is the rule the Levites must follow: They must begin serving in the Tabernacle at the age of twenty-five, and they must retire

at the age of fifty. After retirement they may assist their fellow Levites by serving as guards at the Tabernacle, but they may not officiate in the service. This is how you must assign duties to the Levites.””

We see that even in biblical times, God established seasons of service and transition. What blessed me most is this: even after stepping down from one role, the Levites continued to serve in meaningful ways.

That reminded me that in ministry, seasons change—but our calling to serve never ends. As long as God gives us breath, there is always a way to serve His Kingdom.

So today, I stand in gratitude, joy, and expectation for what God will do next.

Being part of Zion has been one of the greatest blessings of my life.

I celebrate this season. I celebrate this church. And most of all, I celebrate our Great God!

God bless you,

Pastor Darrell Townsend
Chief External Connection Officer
Zion Church