

Pastor, author Rick Warren tells retirement plans

LAKE FOREST, Ca. (BP and local reports) – Pastor and best-selling author Rick Warren announced June 6 that he is retiring from his role as senior pastor of Saddleback Church, the Southern Baptist congregation he founded in California in 1980 that is now considered a multi-campus megachurch.

In his Sunday worship service message titled, How to Discern the Best Time to Make a Major Change, the 67-year-old Warren said Saddleback will begin the official search for his successor in the next week and that when the new lead pastor is in place, he will transition to the role of founding pastor.

Warren recounted his pledge when the church was founded that he would give the next 40 years to leading the Saddleback family. Early in 2020, the church celebrated its 40th birthday.

“This is not the end of my ministry,” Warren told the congregation via video and in person at the Lake Forest campus. “It’s not even the beginning of the end. ...We’re going to take one step at a time in the timing of God. ...God has already blessed me more than I could ever possibly imagine. I don’t deserve any of it, and so this next transition in my life is something I am anticipating with zero regrets, zero fears, zero worries.”

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Warren said the church presently does not have a successor in mind, and that they would look both inside and outside the

church for “a leader who is already doing some ‘purpose-driven’ ministry” – a term synonymous with Warren’s life, leadership, and authorship.

In addition to pastoring Saddleback Church, Warren is known for his best-selling 2002 book, *The Purpose-Driven Life*, which has sold more than 50 million copies worldwide according to publisher Simon & Schuster. The book’s predecessor, *The Purpose-Driven Church*, was released in 1995 and has sold more than a million copies.

According to a 2019 article in the Orange County Register newspaper in Anaheim, Ca., the church averages 30,000 attendees and 7,000 small groups each week. The church has 15 U.S. campuses and another four around the world in Germany, Argentina, Hong Kong, and the Philippines.

In 2010, Saddleback announced the church had sent mission teams to every nation in the world. In 1991, the church started its Celebrate Recovery ministry, which is now used in more than 35,000 churches around the world. In 2018, Saddleback celebrated its 50,000th baptism.

According to biographical information available on the Internet, Richard Duane Warren was born in San Jose, Ca., and raised in Ukiah, Ca. At Ukiah High School, he founded the school’s first Christian club. Warren’s educational degrees include:

- Bachelor of Arts from California Baptist University in Riverside. The university is affiliated with the California Southern Baptist Convention.
- Master of Divinity from Southwestern Seminary, a Southern Baptist school in Ft. Worth, Texas.
- Doctor of Ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary, a non-denominational school headquartered in Pasadena, Ca.

In January 1980, he began a Bible study group with his wife Kay and seven other people at the Warrens' Saddleback Valley condominium in Orange County, Ca. In April 1980, Warren held Saddleback Church's first public worship service on Easter Sunday in the auditorium of Laguna Hills High School in Laguna Hills, Ca.

Warren has been married to Kay since June 21, 1975. They have three adult children and four grandchildren.