

SACRAMENTO

Iconic Sacramento pastor retires after 50 years, shares words of wisdom

Dr. Ephraim Williams says it's his love for people that has kept the peace all these years. He maintained that love, even when people didn't love back.

Author: **Keristen Holmes**

Published: **8:19 AM PDT August 14, 2020**

Updated: **8:36 AM PDT August 14, 2020**

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Imagine nearly 50 years in the pulpit. It doesn't happen often, but Dr. Ephraim Williams of St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church in [Sacramento](#) did just that. St. Paul had Williams' socially-distant retirement celebration on July 26, 2020. Williams' life and legacy have shaped and changed the lives of so many in Sacramento.

"I wanted to be a Christian, that was fine. But I did not want to be in the ministry of preaching," Williams said.

He said the call to preach wasn't something that immediately took for him. If you've been around church long enough, you may understand why being a pastor isn't the easiest life to live, Williams said.

"I have a hard time with people who are mean (and argumentive.) I have a hard time with that. So, I thought if I preached and then pastored a church, I could run into that. I haven't had that for 50 years. I had a few differences of opinions but fighting? No."

Williams says it's his love for people that has kept the peace all these years. He maintained that love, even when people didn't love back. Williams was born in Mississippi more than 80 years ago. He moved to Chicago as a teenager and then finally to Sacramento in the 1960s. Despite growing up in the South, Williams says he experienced his first blatant act of prejudice and racism in Sacramento.

"I saw a sign that said 'house for rent at slice sale.' When I went to the door and rang the bell, they saw it was me (a black man) they slammed the door. I remember that well. A couple places I went in the suburbs and they wouldn't even talk to you," Williams recalled.

But still, for Williams, love prevails.

"My mama said, 'You can't make people love you but you can love them.' So I practiced that," he said.

Williams shared this advice to anyone looking to leave the world better than you found it: "Ask yourself what can I do as a person to make things better. We're going to have to pull together."

And it wouldn't be Pastor Ephraim Williams without a final observation for living a successful life.

"Don't forget God, don't forget Him," he concluded.

St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church hasn't had in-person services since March because of the pandemic. Organizers held a socially distant drive-thru parade to honor Williams.

Williams tells ABC10 he plans to continue teaching and loving people through his retirement.