

“541 Signing Off”

There were all kinds of emotions at the recent retirement ceremony of the Kernersville Fire Rescue Chief, Chris Langham. We were sorry to see the chief retire but happy for him in his future ventures. The strongest emotions, however, were those of Chief Chris Langham, on his final day on the job he loved. Chief’s lifelong passion was to be a fireman, leading to a 30-year career. In that role he frequently put his life on the line to protect life and property of people he didn’t know but cared about deeply. Chief Langham was so well liked that the planned 90-minute retirement ceremony lasted a full 3 hours, because so many people wanted to thank him.

The tradition of retiring Kernersville Fire Chiefs is for them to sign off on the radio communication system as their final act of service. There wasn’t a dry eye in the room when Chris Langham got on the radio and said, “541 signing off.” 541 identifies the caller to be from Forsyth County, from Kernersville and that he is the fire chief. He fulfilled his childhood dream being a firefighter with excellence. As he signed off everyone in the audience was thinking, “... *Well done, good and faithful servant!... (Matthew 25:21 paraphrased).*”

But then Chris continued on the radio. He said, “Chief Scott Alderman is now 541.” The baton had officially been passed to his successor. There was an immediate radio response from all fire stations in the district. One by one they came on the airwaves to thank the retiring chief for his exceptional service and wish him well. With each accolade the tears flowed, not only from former Chief Langham but the hundreds of people in the room. We were all watching a man passionate for the fire service say goodbye to the position he loved. The sunglasses worn by Chris Langham hid some of the emotions, but we all felt the depth of his passion.



Chris Langham signing off on his final day

As Christians whenever we serve the Lord, our efforts are appreciated. We never know the full impact of that service as it helps many more people than we could ever imagine. The voices of radio dispatchers from all around the region were evidence to a room overflowing with firefighters from all across the state. People you help feel the same appreciation for your service.

God was in the room, too. We know that because He is always present in Chris Langham’s life. God recognizes the deep faith of a man who exhibited being a Child of God in a secular, municipal setting. Chris had a history of helping people come to faith. One of the speakers at the retirement ceremony told us that when Chief Langham was attending an out-of-town training conference he pulled an all-nighter counseling a homeless person in the faith.

There is a more to the “well done” verse from Matthew 25:21. It is not a retirement from service but a call to action. The complete passage says, *“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’* When Chief Langham was signing off at the fire station he was signing on to a role in ministry. He had accepted God’s call for a bigger assignment. In the next chapter of his life Chris will be in the pastoral ministry. Whether it is to the homeless or people in the pews of his church, Chris will be serving the Lord. In addition, he will also be teaching part-time at Glenn High School, encouraging high school students to consider a career as a firefighter. Chris was an inspiration to his professional firefighter peers and now will be an inspiration to those looking for purpose in the fire service. A man of God will be leading our youth. It doesn’t get any better than this.

God has a succession plan for us. Just as Chris Langham prepared an Assistant Fire Chief to become chief, God wants us to prepare others to receive and then share their faith. Hopefully, we will do it with the passion that Chris Langham displayed.

It was a joy to be present at Chief Langham's retirement ceremony. He was surrounded by several generations of his loving family at the ceremony. Chris is a man with a genuine passion for **Faith, Family and Firefighting**. We can certainly say "well done" as we look forward to his next role in ministry. Although he has signed off as fire chief, God has a new assignment for him.

The lesson for us is, as one chapter of your life come to completion, God has planned a new chapter for your service to Him. No matter how passionate you and I are with our current service, God is preparing us for another way of serving. With God's help us we will be ready for an even more impactful assignment.

The Bible Says: *Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms (1 Peter 4:10). For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45).*

Questions: In your service to the Lord, what future opportunities will you pursue to continue serving God when your current chapter reaches completion? What do you think God is preparing for you next?

Prayer: Lord. We thank you for the many opportunities you place in our path to make a difference for others. Help us to be open to how we can expand our service to You? Amen.