

First Friends Church  
2211 North Wabash Road  
Marion, In 46952  
765.347.7320  
[www.marionfirstfriends.org](http://www.marionfirstfriends.org)

I am Paul David Bravard, a follower of Jesus called to support and minister to all people as a Senior Pastor with First Friends Church of Marion, including the home-bound, hospitalized, and those in senior care. My leadership style is primary visionary leadership with coaching undertones, letting people wonder and discover while guiding, creating, and holding space with them.

I am ordained or, as Friends would say, a recorded Minister of the Gospel, and hold a Master's degree in Religion from Cincinnati Bible Seminary and a Master of Divinity (leveled) from Portland Seminary, and currently finishing a Doctor of Divinity.

Growing up, I lived and worked on my maternal grandparents' farm through the fall, winter, and spring (a school year). During summers, I lived with my paternal grandparents working on their farm and in their greenhouses. The families were Quaker and Methodist, leading to an exciting convergence of religious views... While farming and attending school, I went to Sheridan Friends Church and, in the summers, to Mount Lebanon Methodist. Wonderful folks at Sheridan; I am especially fond of the pitch-ins and the Easter Sunrise services. Wonderful folks at Mouth Lebanon, I am grateful for their support, guidance, and Vacation Bible School (VBS).

I started to attend summer camp at Quaker Haven age of 10; going there for three years changed my life. It is a most excellent camp; in my third year, I accepted Jesus. I knew then that He wanted me to work in His ministry, yet I did not know when or how - I just knew the call.

In high school, things changed. Well, I changed - car, freedom, and girls. I did not drift away from Church; because I still attended every Sunday – what I lacked the most was spiritual direction. Then after high school and until I joined the military (twenty years old), I was not a good person. Although I generally meant well, I certainly did not do well. The problems I faced were specific to self-centeredness. Not to the point where I thought, “I live and breathe, and everyone else “owes” me something.” Nevertheless, I was close.

In reflection, I honestly believe I would be dead or in jail if Jesus were not looking out for me. My needs were few: I needed food, shelter, to belong, and the feeling that someone cared. I looked for it in organizations, clubs, drugs, and shady relationships. I did not find it, and nothing could shake a basic feeling of loneliness... This loneliness was not crushing or life-threatening; it was more like background noise – like emptiness with a sense of insecurity.

Even though I was on a path to self-destruction, I knew or felt that I should do something; something was required of me, and I should do it, but what?

My military service involved much traveling: from Texas to Sacramento, to Guam, to Spain, to a tour of Desert Shield and the Gulf War, to Louisiana and Mississippi, and then back to the Gulf again. The loneliness and the need to “do something.”

After I was ready to leave Active duty, I transferred to the Air National Guard. My wife, Debbie, and I met while serving in our nation's military; I was in the Air Force while she served in the Army. We have three adult children: Angie, Alex, and Austin. Our son was born when I was 30 years old. I think that is when I became an adult, holding this new infant, my son, in my hands and being scared to death. This little life was totally dependent on me... What do I do? How do I start?

Throughout my life, I always thought there was more to this life than just this life. I have had my doubts – who has not? People question: What lies beyond; another life, a do-over, or an existence on another plane? We have all battled with it. Something in me has always looked for confirmation that it must be proved to exist. Faith was hard for me to grasp.

My wife and I learned that we were not meant to do life alone. We need each other, and we need God. We started to attend Church every Sunday with the kids. For many people, the main difference they find in coming to know Christ is the love, joy, or peace it brings. All those things were awe-inspiring for me, but the main difference Jesus has made in my life - is Meaning. I had known the blackness and despair of living apart from God. However, knowing Jesus brought everlasting significance to my life. Now life matters, and every day we wake up to another day of knowing Him. I began to feel the pull of being in the ministry - God has plans I know nothing about... The pull became a call; He was wooing me, and His calling became more noticeable; it is hard to explain – a need, a want, a desire, and a must-do - all rolled on into one feeling that must be acted upon. Nevertheless, it did grow in me. It grew in me through the Holy Spirit, with experiences among the Body of Christ, and continues to grow as I learn and grow in Christ.

I now serve as a Senior Pastor at First Friends of Marion. The eldest, our daughter (Angie) lives in Paducah, Kentucky, graduated from ISU in Terre Haute, loves working with animals; she is of the elect and attends Church regularly. The boy, our son (Austin or Harley) graduated from Purdue and works as a plant engineer in Winamac, Indiana; he and his new wife (Jamaica) are believers and attend Church regularly. The baby, our youngest daughter (Alex) graduated from Ball State with a History major and a Greek minor; she graduated from Emmanuel Seminary with an MDiv in counseling and is a chaplain resident at Ballard Hospital in Johnson City, Tennessee.

My wife and I love to serve “wholeheartedly” and share with people that “with God, all things are possible.” As a Pastor, my ministry has created an inviting, challenging, and engaging environment. I enjoy engaging our faith community in missionary work, advancing kingdom goals, and creating a challenging and engaging environment where folks become lifelong disciples and learners. I believe the Church should be outward-facing because it is the catalyst of change for any one person and the surrounding community. I also enjoy engaging our faith community in devising strategies to sustain long-term operational goals for the health of the Church and the local community.

My expertise includes leadership, management, education, and mentorship, which fits in perfectly with those things I love to do: preaching, teaching, shepherding, reading, traveling, and hanging out with my lovely wife.