

THE

ENVOY

INDIANA DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES OF GOD | ISSUE 2 | VOL. 77 | APRIL 2025



**REMEMBERING
CHARLES CRANK**
MAY 1934- JANUARY 2025

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Our **INDIANA DISTRICT LEADERSHIP** provides ministry leadership, resourcing and fellowship opportunities throughout their group/region. They are committed to equipping, empowering and fostering healthy pastors and thriving churches.



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ARMED WITH KINDNESS

I am sure you have noticed, but you might say we live in a “hostile environment.” I love to watch old cowboy movies, of which many are depicted in adversarial environments. You may see Indians chasing down a wagon train to protect their land, masked villains robbing a stagecoach, or a shootout between the good and bad guys on Main Street. Most of the movies end the same; they may not be as predictable as a Hallmark movie, but the storyline is consistent. The desperadoes show up, things get hostile, the good guys win, and our hero rides off into the sunset.

One of the issues we face today, in the hostile political environment in which we live, is that everyone thinks they are the good guy and the other person is the enemy. Because of that, there is division, hatred, blame, and plenty of insults to go around. Because of social media, the fight is not a shoot-out at high noon on Main Street but all hours of the day and night on platforms that continue to stir the pot, deepening the tensions.

Where is the church in the midst of this? Opinions run deep on both sides of the proverbial aisle. Some would say we are too meek to do anything about it. Others might say we are too weak to affect any real change. Others see the church's value as an advocate for change and encourage people of faith to “Do what Jesus would do.” However, both sides of the aisle have differing opinions about what that might look like.

As followers of Jesus in controversial settings, what should we do? How should we go about Kingdom business to make a lasting impact on our communities and culture? I want to throw out a thought: **Let's show kindness.** How should we engage one another in a hostile environment? I am no longer speaking about the political realm but our daily lives. We arm ourselves with kindness.

Sometimes, in life and ministry, we place too much emphasis on being in authority, strutting around like a rooster, waiting on someone to disagree with



KINDNESS HAS A WAY OF OPENING DOORS FOR THE GOSPEL TO BE CARRIED INTO THE LIVES OF OTHERS.

us so we can show them the kind of authority we have or think we have. We want to be like James and John, asking Jesus, “Can we call fire down from heaven now and cook them?” Hostile environments don’t always draw out the best in people, but rather than call down fire on those who are contentious towards us, what if we were to heap burning coals of kindness upon them in response to their fiery responses, sarcasm, or hatred? For example, instead of calling them “a brood of vipers,” what if we chose to multiply the fish and loaves so our city council would be willing to work with us? Instead of fighting with our church members, we invited them into our homes to fellowship around a pitcher of sweet tea. Instead of dreading being with our family because of discord, we spent time fasting and praying for them.

As a spiritual leader, how do we want to be remembered in the hostile days we live? As a great preacher or teacher? Of course, we do. We are Bible people, but the truth is that people will remember

us more for the deeds of kindness we show them than for any sermon we preach. The kind words you said to the cashier at Dollar General, how you loved the kids that rode the bus on Sunday morning, and how you walked and showed kindness towards community leaders during a tough season are the messages that are best remembered. Kindness has a way of opening doors for the gospel to be carried into the lives of others.

Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit. How has it developed in your life? Is there work to do? For me, I know that there is room to grow. I pray regularly that kindness becomes foundational in my attitude, life, personality, and family.

What level of kindness will help calm the hostility in our nation? I don’t know, but I want to do everything in my power to use the kindness of the King to fill up the Kingdom.

Chad McAtee, IDAG Superintendent



CENTRAL EXECUTIVE PRESBYTER NOMINEES



Adam Detamore

ADAM DETAMORE

Current Ministry Position - Lead Pastor at Greenfield Realife Church

Length of time in ministry there - 18 years

Prior ministry experience - Youth Pastor at Delphi First Assembly and Indianapolis Southwood Assembly, Planted Realife Church in 2007, Launched second campus January 2025

Education - Global University - Berean School of the Bible



Bob Fairchild

BOB FAIRCHILD

Current Ministry Position - Lead Pastor at Covington First Assembly of God

Length of time in ministry there - 21 years (2004-2010 Associate/Youth Pastor, 2010-Present Lead Pastor)

Other district leadership positions held - Current Ministry Group Presbyter, ISOM Instructor

Prior ministry experience - Associate/Youth Pastor at Covington First Assembly of God

Education - Global University - Berean School of the Bible



Perry Meade

PERRY MEADE

Current Ministry Position - Lead Pastor at New Palestine Church

Length of time in ministry there - 18 years

Other district leadership positions held - Current Ministry Group Presbyter

Prior ministry experience - 36 years of occupational ministry with the Assemblies of God.

Serving includes student ministries - Minister of Music/Fine Arts - Associate Pastor - Lead Pastor

Education - Central Bible College - Global University - multiple leadership certifications



Wayne Murray

WAYNE MURRAY

Current Ministry Position - Lead Pastor at Greenwood Grace Assembly of God

Length of time in ministry there - 28 years

Other district leadership positions held - Ministry Group Presbyter (past and current), AGWM Board Member, General Superintendent's cabinet, Student Ministries cabinet (Steve Furr), Church Development cabinet (Randy Blankenship), Chi Alpha board member (current), ISOM Instructor (current)

Prior ministry experience - Youth Pastor at Terre Haute First Assembly of God and Youth Pastor at Logansport First Assembly of God

Education - BA in Missions at Central Bible College, MA in Church Leadership at AGTS

JOSHUA SOUSA

Current Ministry Position - Director of Indy Chi Alpha

Location of church/ministry - Campuses of IU Indianapolis and Purdue Indianapolis

Length of time in ministry there - 3 years

Prior ministry experience - Chi Alpha -8 years, 15 years in local church ministry serving as Youth Pastor, Worship Pastor, Associate Pastor and Campus Pastor

Education - BA in Bible from Central Bible College, Master of Theology from Global Grace Seminary, currently working on DMin at Global Grace Seminary



Joshua Sousa

DR. JON SUSA

Current Ministry Position - Senior Pastor at Indianapolis Caring Place

Length of time in ministry there - 16 years

Other district leadership positions held - District World Missions Secretary (2017-present), Ministry Group Presbyter (2012-present), ISOM Instructor (2011-present), Church Planting Team (2011-2021)

Prior ministry experience - Lead Pastor - Indianapolis Conexión - 2 years, Executive Pastor - Restoration Family Church (Lakeland, FL) - 4 years

Education - Doctor of Ministry in Expository Preaching & Teaching - Liberty University (VA) - 2023, MA in Ministerial Leadership - Southeastern University (FL) - 2009, BA in Interdisciplinary Studies (Church Ministries & Business Management) - Southeastern College (FL) - 2003



Dr. Jon SUSA

TERESA TROUT

Current Ministry Position - DePauw University Chi Alpha (2023-Present)

Location of church/ministry - Greencastle, IN

Length of time in ministry there - 19 years with Chi Alpha and Greencastle The Storehouse

Other district leadership positions held - Executive Presbyter (current), Ministry Group Presbyter, Women's Ministry Sectional Rep

Prior ministry experience - AGWM Missionary Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Cape Verde Islands, West Africa (1993-2003), Co-Pastor at Greencastle The Storehouse (2006-2022)

Education - Indiana School of Ministry



Teresa Trout

**THE ELECTION FOR CENTRAL EXECUTIVE PRESBYTER
WILL BE HELD DURING THE BUSINESS SESSION OF
DISTRICT COUNCIL ON MONDAY, MAY 19TH.**

MAY 18-20

DISTRICT COUNCIL

2025



Chad McAtee
Superintendent

Sunday, May 18

4:30 PM | Council Registration Opens
6:30 PM | World Missions Service | Jeff Hartensveld

Monday, May 19

8:30 AM | Council Registration Opens
9:30 AM | Morning Session | Travis Jones
10:30 AM | Breakout Session #1
11:15 AM | Breakout Session #2
NOON | Lunch
1:30 PM | Business Session
6:30 PM | Evening Service | Travis Jones

Tuesday, May 20

9:30 AM | Morning Session | Worship, Scripture and Communion
6:30 PM | Ordination Service | Superintendent Chad McAtee

Wednesday, May 21

8:30 AM | Charles Crank Golf Classic
9:00 AM | Missions Bike Ride



Travis Jones
Motivation Church,
Richmond, VA



Jeff Hartensveld

Director Asia Pacific,
AGWM

For more information:
www.indianaag.org/home/district-council

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Paying It FORWARD

Sometimes, the most influential moments in our ministries are not birthed from the experiences we face, but from the people who grace our lives. In October 2008, Pastor Aaron Rowe began his first pastorate as a certified minister in Portland, Indiana. He began serving with the expectation that he would be licensed within two years. Thinking back on that season of his ministry, Rowe reminisced,

"I signed up for my first Indiana School of Ministry class that following August, not fully knowing how I could ever afford it."

In 2008, the Indiana School of Ministry (ISOM) met on Friday night and Saturday morning. Ministers who did not live locally had to reserve a hotel room or stay with friends or family nearby. Rowe recalls,

"When Faith heard my story, she graciously opened her spare bedroom to me for the Friday night stay, which I gladly accepted."

Over that year, the Bradshaws were not just excellent hosts, but quickly became cherished friends and mentors. Rowe recalls,

"DURING THAT YEAR, LARRY, FAITH, AND I BECAME VERY CLOSE, AND I LEARNED SO MUCH FROM OUR CONVERSATIONS AND WAS STRENGTHENED BY THEIR ENCOURAGEMENT. I COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT THEM. I HAVE OFTEN WONDERED, HOW I COULD EVER REPAY THEM?"



Fast-forward to November 2024. Pastor Aaron and his wife, Nikki, have been pastoring Fire Life Church in Waterloo, Indiana, for nearly five years. Pastor Aaron is now ordained, and his opportunity to pay it forward is coming to fruition.

Each November, for the past several years, Pastor Aaron has led his congregation through a series of messages focused on living thankfully and generously. Rowe explains,

"Every November at Fire Life Church, we celebrate 'ThanksLiving.' I preach about living thankfully and generously. On the last Sunday, we will collect a special offering for a cause outside ourselves."



This past year, with the money they collected, the church established the Faith and Larry Bradshaw Scholarship fund. With these funds, the church plans to sponsor one whole level of ISOM courses for a student pursuing credentials for pastoral ministry. The scholarship recipient will be chosen based on proven call, work ethic, potential, and financial need.

The Indiana School of Ministry, Pastor Rowe, and the Fire Life congregation hope this will become an annual scholarship to which other churches, ministers, and former students can contribute to continue the kindness this amazing couple has shown countless ministers here in Indiana.

On Sunday, November 24th, Pastor Aaron invited the Bradshaws to Waterloo, where they honored the couple and announced the establishment of the scholarship fund.

Faith's fervor for education helped play an integral role in the school's inception in 2009. Today, her passion as an educator and love for the Indiana School of Ministry continues. She can still be seen behind a desk at an ISOM event grading study guides or working in the district office board room reviewing reflection papers.

For 16 years, the Indiana School of Ministry has been preparing students from around the state to pursue

God's call on their lives. Here are some fantastic statistics as of February 2025:

Students taking at least one class: 1,960

Lead Pastors taking ISOM: 69

Lead Pastors teaching ISOM: 51

Staff pastors taking classes: 143

Missionaries taking classes: 91

Participating churches: 205

Number of ISOM Español students: 51

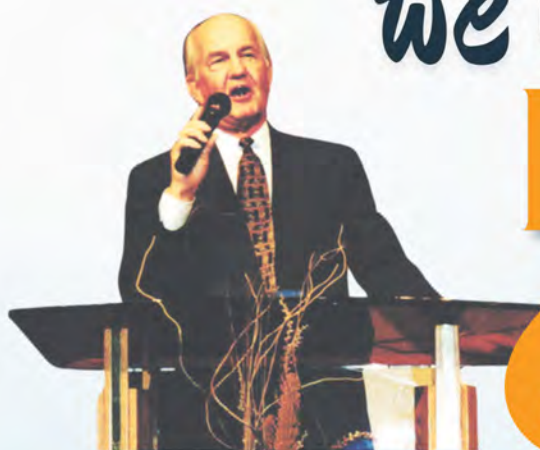
Those graduating from all three levels since 2009: 95

These are not just numbers, but evidence that the seed we sow, and nurture, will one day bear fruit. The Bradshaws' willingness to sow into the lives of our next generation of ministers is producing a harvest that is more than admirable; it is inspirational. It is our hope and prayer that with the establishment of the Larry & Faith Bradshaw Scholarship fund, generations of ministers to come will experience the love, care, and generosity that Pastor Aaron felt when the Bradshaws opened their home and their hearts to him.

If you or your church would like to contribute to the Larry & Faith Bradshaw Scholarship fund, you can help pay it forward by contacting ISOM Coordinator Toni Mosburg for details on how to give.

Scott Burr, IDAG Executive Secretary,
Ministerial Development Director, and
Indiana School of Ministry Director





we'll carry the torch FROM HERE



**REMEMBERING
CHARLES CRANK**
MAY 1934- JANUARY 2025

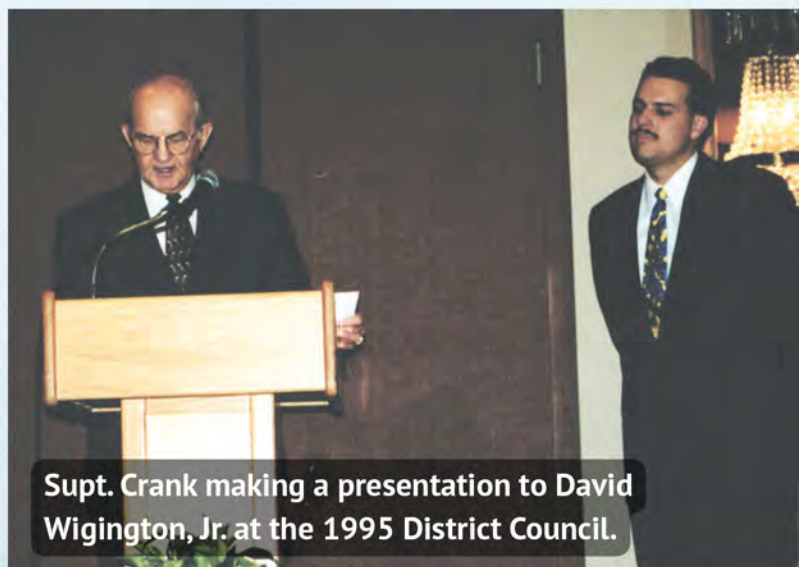
THE FIRST MEETING

I met Charles E. Crank forty-seven years ago when I was five years old.

My dad had just become the State Youth Director – then called the D-CAP (District Christ Ambassadors President) – and I remember walking into the old Indiana District office on Michigan Road in Indianapolis. The building was not impressive – just an old residence converted into an office. You entered through the back door of the “house,” accessed by some weathered concrete steps, and came in through the “workroom,” past the smell of the mimeograph machine, and into the office proper. Although the building wasn’t impressive, the moment certainly was for me.

As a kid, the place felt big and official, but the moment I saw Charles Crank, I knew I was in the presence of someone important. As Wayne Murray described him at his funeral, he was a statesman. To a five-year-old, Brother Crank seemed larger than life. He was my dad’s boss, and I knew immediately – this man carried weight. He was serious and austere.

What I didn’t know then, and couldn’t possibly have understood, was that this man would go on to shape my life and ministry in ways that continue to echo today. Over time, Brother Crank became far more than a District Superintendent or a statesman – he became a mentor, a friend, and a second spiritual father.



Supt. Crank making a presentation to David Wigington, Jr. at the 1995 District Council.

I can confidently say that I would not be where I am today – literally and figuratively – without him.

Brother Crank had the insight—the vision—to see something in me and the city of Bloomington. Where others saw uncertainty, he saw an opportunity. He believed in planting a life-giving church here. And because he believed, I believed. Because he said, “Go,” I went. Looking back, I can see how that moment of encouragement, that nudge, was one of the many ways Brother Crank stewarded not just a district but destinies.

A BUILDER OF MORE THAN BUILDINGS

Brother Crank served as District Superintendent of the Indiana District of the Assemblies of God for 29 years – nearly three decades of steady, visionary leadership. That kind of longevity in leadership is rare, and the fruit of his faithfulness is evident all over the state.



Superintendent Charles Crank

During his tenure, he shepherded our district through seasons of incredible growth and expansion – spiritually and structurally. He led with a vision that saw beyond what was and into what could be.

Brother Crank oversaw the relocation of the district office from the Michigan Road location of my childhood to a new, purpose-built facility on Purdue Road in Indianapolis. It wasn't just a move—it was a statement about the future and excellence, about building something that would serve future generations.

At Lake Placid Campgrounds – a place dear to the hearts of countless Indiana pastors and young people – Brother Crank championed the construction of new dormitories, a new cafeteria, and a beautiful new worship center. These weren't just buildings; they were environments where future ministers would be called, hearts would be healed, and lives would be forever changed. They still are.

Perhaps most significantly, Brother Crank was a champion of church planting and missions. Many of Indiana's strongest churches today trace their roots back to the season of ministry that Brother Crank led. Long before the days of CMN and ARC, Brother Crank launched Indiana Advance with a vision to see more churches planted in the Indiana District. He believed in growth – not for numbers' sake, but for the Kingdom's sake. He believed in sending, sowing, and stretching. He believed God was not finished with



Executive Presbytery at 2003 District Council



Cranks, Giffords and Painos in 2018

Indiana – and because of that, neither were we. Brother Crank's leadership was visionary and strategic. He seemed to always have eternity in view.

THE WALKING BIBLE

Ask anyone who sat under his preaching, and they will tell you – Brother Crank didn't just know Scripture, he embodied Scripture. It was IN him. He was called "the walking Bible," which wasn't an exaggeration. In his messages, he quoted passage after passage – sometimes entire chapters – all from memory, all from the heart. He didn't just reference the Word and preach other sources or his own thoughts. He preached the Word. For Brother Crank, anything besides the Word was supplemental or superfluous.

One of my favorite sermons Brother Crank ever preached was his message on healing at the General Council. It stirred something in me that day that still reverberates in my spirit today. I recently found that sermon memorialized on the internet. He quoted dozens of Scriptures on healing. It was powerful and even better than I remembered. Even more memorable than his messages were the lines that stayed with you. There's one I will never forget. He often said with humble conviction:

"There are many men who can *preach the Gospel better* than I can, but no man can *preach a better Gospel* than I can."



Brother Crank leading in songs at 1996 Camp Meeting.



1996 District Office directors and spouses

That was Charles Crank – a man rooted in the unshakable truth, authenticity, and authority of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He didn't care about polish or platform. He cared about power – the power of the Spirit and the truth of God's Word. He didn't chase applause. He chased anointing.

Martin Luther once said, "The highest form of worship is the preaching of God's Word." That's how Brother Crank lived – believing that preaching wasn't a performance but a sacred trust.

GOLF, GRACE, AND THE GOSPEL

Over the years, I played hundreds of rounds of golf with Brother Crank. You get to know a lot about someone on a golf course. If you ever played golf with Brother Crank, you know he was a stickler for the rules.

It didn't matter if you were winning by 20 or losing by 30 – you were going to play by the rules. No gimmies – you had to putt everything out. Mulligans? Not a chance. While it might have driven a few of us crazy, there was something deeply consistent about it. That's how he lived. Integrity mattered. Consistency mattered. Every shot counted. Every person mattered.

As a young man, I was deeply passionate about politics. One day, I was pontificating on the golf course about something happening in Washington, and he quipped, "The older I get, the more I realize that it doesn't really matter who is in charge in Washington." At the time, it made me so mad... but the older I got, the more I realized what he meant—and that he was right.

For Brother Crank, Jesus was on the throne, and that was all that mattered. He taught me that. He modeled it in district meetings, on platforms, over coffee, and

on the 18th green. Brother Crank's conviction was the same in every setting: Be the same man in every room. Play by the rules. Lead with honor. Finish strong.

HIS TRUE LEGACY

I believe Brother Crank's most enduring legacy in Indiana is not a building, a campground, or even his stellar preaching—as wonderful as those things are. His real legacy is the ministers he empowered.

He had a gift for seeing potential in people, especially young, often overlooked leaders just starting out. He gave us platforms, opportunities, and confidence. Robby Bradford, Wayne Murray, Brent Oliver, and Gene Feasel are just a few of the many who were lifted by his hand and encouraged by his heart.

Most of us aren't "young ministers" anymore, but we still stand on the ground Brother Crank cleared for us. It's our turn to do the same for those coming behind us.

If you want to build a legacy stock portfolio, experts say, "Think long and invest deep." Brother Crank did exactly that in building his Kingdom legacy. He always thought long-term and invested deeply in people.

FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

At the graveside service, Randy Blankenship – Brother Crank's nephew – opened his remarks by saying, "It's ours now."

He's right. The mantle of leadership, the weight of carrying the Gospel to the world, and to the Indiana District...It's ours now!



The Walking Bible

Brother Crank showed us what is possible when a leader leads with humility, consistency, and spiritual fire. He reminded us that preaching, pastoring, and leading aren't just tasks – they're an honor of the highest order.

Charles Crank never took his calling lightly. We shouldn't either.

Preach the Word. Study and quote it until it's written on your heart and engraved on your bones. Lead with integrity when no one's watching. Champion the next generation. And above all, play every hole honestly – right down to the final putt.

FINAL WORDS

Brother Crank is now with the One he served so faithfully, but his voice, values, and vision still echo across this district—in our churches, in our lives, and in our pulpits. For me, he was more than a superintendent. He was more than a boss. He was more than a mentor. He was more than a golf buddy.

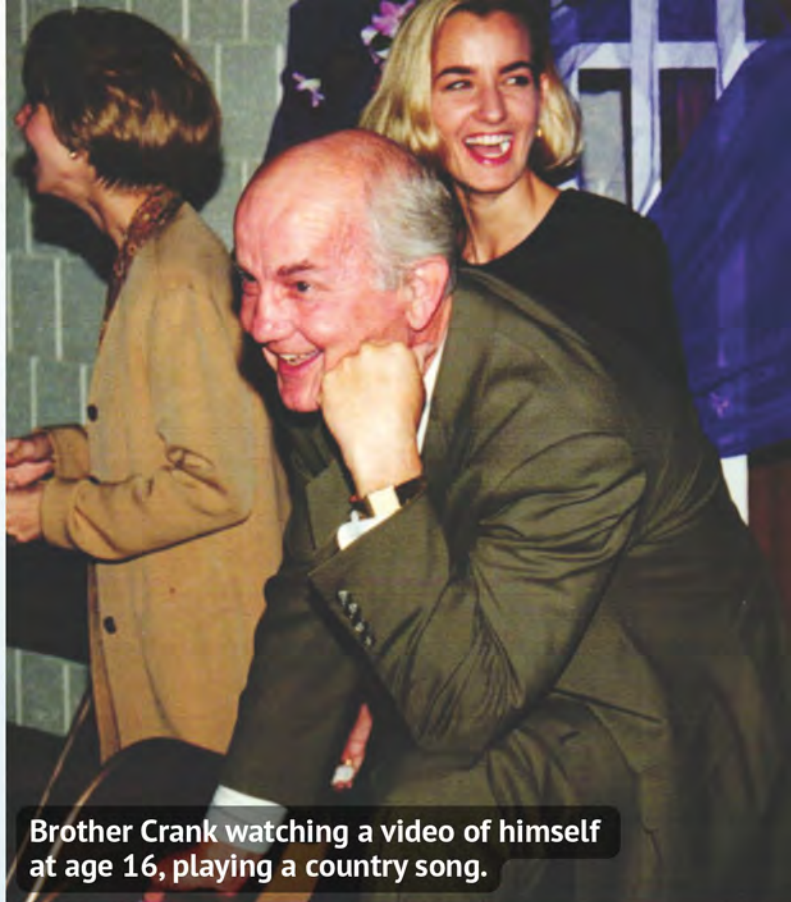
He was a friend. He was a spiritual father.

I thank God I had the privilege of walking into that office on Michigan Road all those years ago and meeting a man who would change my life – and whose legacy is still changing lives today.

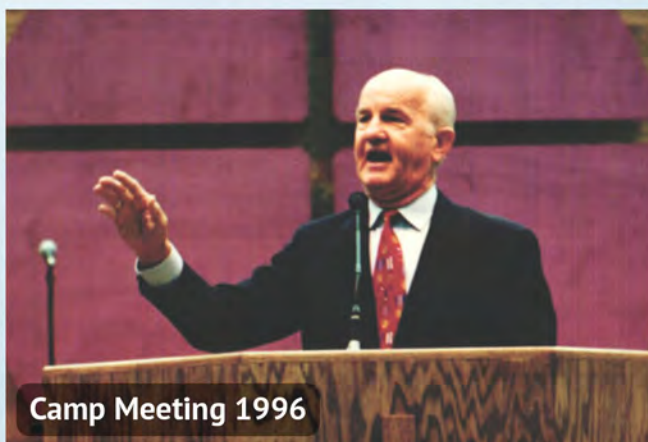
Thank you, Brother Crank.
Rest easy, dear friend.

It's ours now. We'll carry the torch from here.

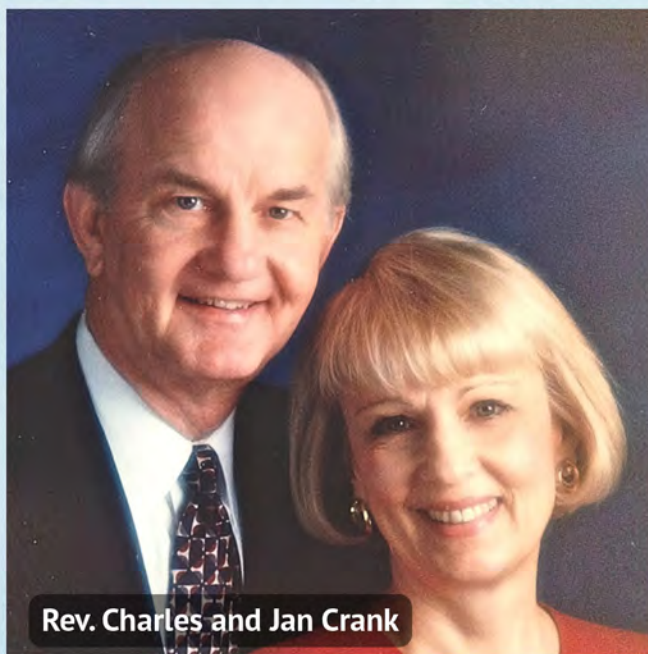
David M. Wigington, *Lead Pastor at
Bloomington Cornerstone Christian Fellowship*



Brother Crank watching a video of himself at age 16, playing a country song.



Camp Meeting 1996



Rev. Charles and Jan Crank



Sacred Gatherings

HOW TO TRANSFORM LIVES

In 2015, our dining room table was old and rickety, and the time had come to search for a replacement. Wandering through the showroom at Kittles, we found ourselves drawn to the back of the store, where we laid eyes on *The Table*. It was sturdy enough to withstand a herd of elephants and heavy enough to throw Troy's back out, leaving him seeing stars as he and my son-in-law unloaded it into our home!

Growing up, I never experienced the joys of gathering around a table for meals. In our house, the table was more of a catch-all—piled high with newspapers, loose change, keys, and whatever else we dropped there on our way in the door.

My mother, gifted in many things but not in cooking, worked third shift as a welder, leaving my dad as our self-proclaimed chef. His culinary expertise peaked at boiling hot dogs and mastering fish sticks—earning him the honorary title of *Chef Tater Tot*! My brother and I would plop onto the couch, TV trays balancing on our laps, mindlessly munching while staring at the screen for hours.

Everything changed when Troy and I moved to West Africa as AGWM missionaries. *Adieu* to my love of Pop-Tarts, processed foods, drive-thru windows, and Culver's! Our Brazilian colleagues, Rachel and Pedro, introduced us to the profound significance of community around the table.

The slow pace of life, the necessity of cooking from scratch, and daily trips to outdoor markets reshaped my perspective. Rachel taught me to prepare foods I had never seen before, and the table became a hub of conversation, hospitality, and spiritual growth. Here, neighbors and members of the national church gathered not just to eat but to grow in Christ together.

The Christian faith is not meant to be lived in isolation. Likewise, meals are not meant to be eaten alone. In Africa, meals are often shared from a common bowl rather than plated individually at a table. This stands in stark contrast to a culture where meals are handed to us from a window in a paper bag or delivered by a stranger we never even greet.

Many of the most powerful moments in Scripture center around a meal: the Passover; the widow gathering sticks during Elijah's time, whose food supply was supernaturally extended; Esau selling his birthright; Jacob receiving the blessing; the table in the Tabernacle loaded with bread; manna falling in the wilderness; Jesus turning water into wine at Cana; His meal with Zacchaeus; the feeding of the multitudes; the Last Supper; the breakfast of fish on the beach at Peter's restoration; Peter's rooftop vision of the sheet being lowered, commanding him to "kill and eat"; and ultimately, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The list goes on.

Jesus understood the significance of the table. He saw it as a place to encounter the lost. Something changes when a meal isn't handed to you in a paper bag but is prepared by a host. Someone has invested in you—they shopped for you. Peeled, diced, and chopped, boiled, baked, and fried for you. They prepared a table amid life's busyness and trials.

In doing so, *The Table* becomes more than a place to eat—it becomes a door to relationships, understanding, and spiritual growth. When you prepare a table for someone, you extend an invitation to their heart. They arrive hungry, not just physically but often spiritually. It is at *The Table* that we must also serve spiritual nourishment.

Over the past several years, we have practiced what we learned from other cultures. Our tiny home in Greencastle, Indiana—population 10,000—has welcomed over 300 students and professors from 35 countries. We have shared meals with Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and atheists from around the world. Our table has seated guests from Nepal, Pakistan, Iran, China, Vietnam, India, Bangladesh, Morocco, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Russia, Slovenia, and beyond.

Students have lingered late into the night, tears in their eyes, telling us they have never felt such peace as in our home. Conversations naturally flow to spiritual matters when we gather around *The Table*, and opportunities to serve up spiritual morsels quickly present themselves.

At *The Table*, we led a professor from China to Christ. Holding the Mandarin Bible we had given her weeks before, she told us, "I'm just now realizing that this Bible is a book of wisdom, and it is the wisdom of love. I want this love!"

At *The Table*, we invested in a professor from Taiwan and led her to the Lord.

At *The Table*, we spoke into the life of a Pakistani student, resulting in the opportunity to present him with a Bible as I saw him off at the airport after graduation.

At *The Table*, just last week, a girl from Morocco opened a New Testament in Arabic for the first time and took it back to her dorm room after a meal with us.

When I reflect on the role of community in spiritual growth, I always return to *The Table*. It is a place that requires preparation and effort. It is a place of invitation. It is a place where life slows down, allowing us to truly see others—to hear their stories, share in their joys and struggles, and speak life into their journeys.

For us, *The Table* is more than furniture. It is a mission field. It is where hearts are nourished, both physically and spiritually. And it is where lives are changed, one meal at a time.

Teresa Trout, Executive Presbyter and Director of Chi Alpha, DePauw University





Recapturing BIBLICAL ECCLESIOLOGY

I recently had the opportunity to travel to Rustenburg, South Africa, to spend two weeks teaching a Bible Doctrines class to students at the South African School of Theology. And as anyone who has traversed to a foreign shore can testify, one of the things that is so readily apparent is the cultural gap that exists between two different locals. The minute the opening remarks are given for a lecture, the divide between teacher and student is quite evident. To adequately impart the material, one must re-contextualize the text by crossing the cultural bridge both linguistically, socially, and culturally.

Even though the differences could not have been more obvious, what bound us together was far more potent than what separated us. Despite the disparities in language and culture, what seemed to connect heart to heart and mind to mind was our shared inheritance in Jesus Christ through our adoption into the family of God as His children. What we experienced during those two weeks was a manifestation of one of the most beautiful pictures of an authentic Christian community in Scripture: the image of brothers and sisters existing communally as the family of God.

Although the biblical text provides many metaphors that adequately describe the church in operation and function, revisiting the picture of the church as a family can help us recapture God's design for the local Christian community. By examining what family means in the text and what it meant in the first century, we can reclaim biblical ecclesiology for our churches today, even amid our rapidly changing and evolving Western cultural context.

THE CHURCH AS A FAMILY IN THE TEXT

One of the most frequently repeated phrases throughout the Biblical text that exemplifies the significance of family as a New Testament image of

ecclesiology is the Greek word *adelphos* (ἀδελφος). A form of this word appears 346 times in the New Testament, across twenty-five of the twenty-seven books, and is often translated as brethren, brothers, or brothers and sisters. The term means a sibling born of the same parents, and figuratively, it refers to fellow believers in Christ who are united by the blood of Jesus. This usage is recognized by several different New Testament authors:

- **Colossians 1:2** (NET) - to the saints, the faithful *brothers and sisters* (ἀδελφος) in Christ, at Colossae. Grace and peace to you from God our Father!
- **Galatians 1:2** (NET) - and all the *brothers* (ἀδελφος) with me, to the churches of Galatia.
- **Philippians 1:12** (NET) - I want you to know, *brothers and sisters* (ἀδελφος), that my situation has actually turned out to advance the gospel
- **James 1:2** (NIV) - Consider it pure joy, my *brothers and sisters* (ἀδελφος), whenever you face trials of many kinds,
- **2 Peter 1:10** (NIV) - Therefore, my *brothers and sisters* (ἀδελφος), make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble,
- **1 John 2:7** (NIV) - Dear *friends* (ἀδελφος), I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard.

Altogether, Paul uses the word ninety-eight times; James uses it fifteen times, John eleven, and the author of Hebrews eight. Each instance describes the people of God in community with one another. Based on this usage of the Greek word, it is clear that it is one of the most favored descriptors for a group of Christian believers gathered within a local community, as recognized by those who shepherded and invested in these communities relationally and theologically.



THE CHURCH AS A FAMILY IN THE FIRST CENTURY

The reason Paul and others use this word to describe the church in community is better understood when studied within its proper first-century cultural context. In our modern Western culture, a hierarchy of relationships typically begins with the bond shared between husband and wife. Next would be the connections between parents and children, followed by those with grandparents, cousins, friends, and so on. If a classroom of first-century students were tasked with prioritizing relationships, they might not arrange them in the same order.

Regarding Mediterranean family dynamics, the most significant relationships for many who constituted the early church were those based on blood ties. Dr. Joseph Hellerman notes, “In the New Testament world, an individual viewed as family those persons with whom he or she shared a common patriline—a bloodline traced from generation to generation solely through male offspring.” Due to the belief that blood is passed down exclusively through the male line, the closest family connection was not the covenantal and often contractual relationship between husband and wife, but the blood relationship between siblings. For those in the early church, blood ran much deeper than any form of romantic love. The most intimate, connected, life-giving, supportive, and satisfying relationships in the first century were those forged by blood between siblings.

The importance of this blood-oriented relationship is not only recognized in the New Testament but also highlighted throughout the Old Testament. The first sin recorded in the Bible after the fall of mankind was not unfaithfulness, divorce, or even the murder of a spouse, but rather the murder of Abel by his brother. From there, sibling conflicts of varying degrees take center stage throughout the

narrative, from Jacob's issues with Esau to Joseph's struggles with his brothers, to Moses and his siblings, all the way to the tensions and rivalries that existed between King David's children. These stories would have been shocking for a first-century reader of the Biblical narrative. Due to the expectations placed on blood-born relationships, sibling betrayal would have been seen as the greatest of relational catastrophes.

When the apostles chose to describe the early church community as brothers and sisters, they relied on their culture's shared family values to illustrate the kind of relationships that should exist within those communities. Since the early Christian church was meant to be a family, and the closest relationships in the family were meant to exist between brothers and sisters, “the church represented the primary focus of group loyalty and solidarity.” The original intention of the church was for it to be more than just a building, a social club, or a network of people with the shared responsibility of meeting the monetary demands of a mortgage payment. It was meant to be a committed and trusted family group transcending the typical dividing lines that continue to separate people today.

THE CHURCH AS A FAMILY TODAY

The challenge before the church today is discovering how this relational dynamic should be expressed in our rural and urban congregations. If the original intention of the Biblical authors is to portray this kind of community, how should this truth manifest in our modern context? If one of the most scandalous actions an individual could take is to betray their brother or sister, what does that imply for the people of faith with whom we share space every week in a pew or row of chairs? To help us answer these questions, we need to recognize a couple of important points ourselves.



The first point is that Jesus paid for this kind of community. The finished work of the cross shattered the walls that often separate all of those whom God has created in His image. This was made clear to Paul when he wrote to the church in Colossae, “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross (Col 1:19-20, NIV).” One result of this reconciliation of all things to himself was the unification of the people of God into the family of God. Paul summarizes this later in the letter when he states, “Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all (Col 3:11).” We are all brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. Jesus paid for our right to call ourselves sons and daughters of God.

The second point is that if we are all brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, this should affect how we live together in community. The realization that we are all children of God should impact how we live in relationship to one another. Bruce Malina describes what this could look like in his book *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology*:

What this means is, first of all, that the person perceives himself or herself as a member of a church and is responsible to the church for his or her actions, destiny, career, development, and life in general. The individual is embedded in the church and is free to do what they feel is right and necessary only if in accordance with church norms and if the action is in the church’s best interest. The church has priority over the individual member.^[1]

gossip? If our most trusted and fulfilling relationships are with those with whom we share a blood kinship, wouldn’t we find it difficult to praise God with our tongues while cursing others who are created in His image (James 1:9)? If the words that came from our mouth aligned with the church’s best interests, wouldn’t we be more careful to avoid letting any unwholesome talk escape from them (Eph. 4:29). This principle extends far beyond mere words. If the most scandalous act we could commit is betraying our brothers and sisters, it would also impact other aspects of church life today.

This image of first-century familial relationships, along with other images throughout the Bible, is powerful because it cuts through our preconceived notions of family and reveals God’s vision for the social life of His church. God’s original intention for an authentic Christian community is reflected in the trusted, loyal, and deeply intimate relationships between brothers and sisters in Jesus’s world. Although we may seem far from this vision and much work remains, embracing and cultivating a genuinely biblical ecclesiology is worth fighting for and will help the church become healthier both relationally and spiritually.

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Malina, Bruce. 2010. *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology: Practical Models for Biblical Interpretation*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers.

What would a Christian community look like if we truly had the church’s best interests at heart? Would we spend time around the water cooler indulging in

Steve Terry, Lead Pastor at Corydon Trinity Assembly of God



Congratulations 2025 Graduates

STUDENTS COMPLETING THE WORSHIP CERTIFICATE

Kristine Gott
Hannah Grace
Jodi Green
Jean Hager
Amber Howard
Shawna Jones
Jennifer Koch
Kristin Lawrence
Aubrey Lema
Rebecca Marlow
Amanda Neace
Matthew Olson
Jeanie Reimann
Nicole Rowe
Sarah Shaw
Micah Wyman

STUDENT COMPLETING NIVEL UNO – SPANISH

Nahum Vasquez

STUDENTS COMPLETING NIVEL DOS – SPANISH

Jinette Cepeda
Carlos Garcia
Dilia Guzmán
Julio Rebolledo
Noel Sifuentes
Nahum Vasquez

STUDENTS COMPLETING ALL THREE NIVELS - SPANISH

Zavier Agosto
Eloína Ortega

STUDENTS COMPLETING LEVEL ONE

Jordon Allbright
Gabriel Allen
Jordan Asbury
Jodi Austin
Michael Austin
Gregory Ayris, Jr.
David Daniel
Kerry Darrah
Tiffany Darrah
Alvin DeAnda
Rebekah Deere
Rachel Dunaway
Justin Gibson
Michael Ham
Angela Hamm
Aubrey Harder
Samuel Haslett
Judy Hibbard
Sondra Hopper
Paul Joest
Molly King
Matthew Ladd
Nohemí Lugo
Keith Martin
Julie McKinney
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David Parry
Dorothy Parry
Isaac Peercy
Rachel Polley
Daniel Rader
Vanessa Rand
James Reimann
Robert Rickaby
Teri Rickaby
Candice Rogers
Miranda Rosenberg

Boakye Sarpong
Dolores Tucker
Yolanda Ursery
William Whitman
Anne Wilkins
Kelley Woods
Dakota York

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Cory Atkins
Kristen Atkins
Jamie Coleman
Aaron Graham
Colton Kellam
John Johnson
Michelle McCauley
Jared Overman
Kevin Prange
Josué Quirindongo
Brice Webster
Christopher Woods

STUDENTS COMPLETING LEVEL THREE

Jason Forthman
Devin Garcia
Steve Miller
Taiwo Oloyede

STUDENTS COMPLETING ALL THREE LEVELS

Jason Forthman
Devin Garcia
Michelle McCauley
Steve Miller
Taiwo Oloyede
Robert Rickaby
Teri Rickaby

TETHERING OURSELVES TO THE NEXT GENERATION

Once, a friend shared a story about watching her father tend to their front yard one afternoon. Among the trees was a young, thin sapling struggling to stand straight. A recent storm had battered it, leaving it bent and weak. On top of that, neighborhood kids—herself included—had used its low branch as a makeshift seesaw. Seeing its need for support, her father retrieved some rope and tethered the young tree to an older, stronger one nearby. When she asked why, he explained that the mature tree would provide stability, preventing the sapling from growing in the wrong direction. Over time, as the winds continued to blow, the younger tree would gain strength, standing tall on its own. That image has stuck with me. It's a picture of true mentorship—walking alongside someone, offering strength and stability in their faith journey. A mentor doesn't cause growth; only God can do that. But just as that older tree stood firm beside the sapling, a mentor comes alongside another to provide support, wisdom, and encouragement as they grow.

JESUS: THE ULTIMATE MENTOR

The best example of mentorship is found in Jesus Christ. His relationship with His disciples was intentional, personal, and life-changing. It wasn't just a teacher-student relationship; it was a model of what biblical mentoring should look like.

INTENTIONAL AND PURPOSEFUL

Jesus didn't randomly gather people around Him.

He chose twelve men to follow Him closely, calling them away from their old lives. Peter and Andrew left their fishing nets behind. Matthew walked away from his tax collector's booth. They followed Him because He called them.

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide." (John 15:16)

True mentorship is intentional. It's not waiting for someone to come asking for guidance. It's stepping in, investing in someone, and saying, "Walk with me." Think about the young people around us today. Many are searching for direction, wrestling with questions about faith, purpose, and identity. What if we stopped waiting for them to reach out and instead extended an invitation?

RELATIONAL AND PERSONAL

Jesus didn't just teach His disciples from a distance; He lived with them. They ate together, traveled together, and shared everyday moments. They saw Him tired, hungry and burdened. They heard Him pray. They watched how He treated people.

"No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends." (John 15:15)

Mentoring isn't just about giving advice over coffee—it's about sharing life. It means being open and vulnerable, letting others see the victories and the struggles. It's about walking through life together and being authentic while pointing to Christ.



SACRIFICIAL & UNCOMFORTABLE

Mentoring isn't always easy. Jesus' relationship with His disciples was marked by patience, sacrifice, and even heartbreak. He loved them deeply, even when they failed Him. He invested in Peter, knowing he would deny Him. He washed Judas' feet, knowing he would betray Him.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (John 10:11)

We sometimes hesitate to mentor because it requires time, energy, and vulnerability. However, true mentorship is sacrificial. It's being willing to answer late-night calls, listen when someone is struggling, and speak hard truths in love. It's a commitment, but it's worth it.

PREPARING OTHERS TO LEAD

Jesus didn't just keep His disciples close—He sent them out. He gave them opportunities to teach, to serve, and to heal. He let them fail and guided them when they did.

"After this, the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go." (Luke 10:1)

Mentorship isn't about creating followers—it's about raising leaders. In today's world, we don't just need more people sitting in church pews; we need disciple-makers. Whether it's in our families, workplaces, or communities, we should be equipping others to lead and serve.

ROOTED IN PRAYER

One of the most influential things Jesus did for His disciples was pray for them. On the night before His crucifixion, He lifted them to the Father:

"I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours." (John 17:9)

Mentorship without prayer is incomplete. When we mentor someone, we should consistently bring them before God, asking for His wisdom, protection, and guidance in their lives.

MENTORSHIP IN TODAY'S WORLD

We live in a time when people are more connected than ever through technology, yet loneliness and uncertainty about the future are at an all-time high. Younger generations are hungry for truth, genuine connection, and examples of authentic faith. Who is investing in them?

Mentorship doesn't have to be a formal program or a perfectly planned process. It can start with simple, everyday actions:

- Inviting a younger person into your home for dinner
- Taking time to listen and encourage a struggling college student
- Praying with a coworker who is searching for faith
- Walking alongside a new believer as they learn what it means to follow Jesus

Jesus modeled what it means to disciple others.

Now, it's our turn. Who in your life needs someone to stand beside them? Who can you tether yourself to, not because you have all the answers, but because you've walked through storms and can offer strength? Discipleship isn't just a suggestion—it's a calling. Jesus' final command before ascending into heaven was clear:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

The question isn't whether we are called to mentor. The question is—will we answer?

Mark Whitehead, IDAG NextGen
Ministries Director



MEET OUR NOMINEES



Holdeman



Jorris

Every four years the Indiana District is asked to present two nominees for consideration to serve as additional representatives on the General Council's Executive Presbytery board.

We are pleased to announce that the Indiana Executive Presbytery has chosen Josh Holdeman to represent our district as our Under 40 EP nominee and Barry Jorris as our African American EP nominee.

Pastor Josh Holdeman is the lead pastor of Richmond Lighthouse Assembly of God. He has served as lead pastor since Jan. 7, 2024. Prior to that, he served as Children's Pastor at Richmond Lighthouse for 16 years. Josh faithfully served the Indiana NextGen team for over 15 years before transitioning into his new ministry role. He

attended Rockford Master's Commission, Global University, and the Indiana School of Ministry. Josh and his wife, Kristin, have been married 15 years and have two children.

Pastor Barry Jorris is the Connect Pastor at Fort Wayne First Assembly of God where he has faithfully served the past 29 years. During his tenure there he has served as Kid's Pastor, led Student Ministries, and currently serves as the Connect Pastor. Prior to that, Barry traveled as a traveling Kid's Evangelist for 10 years. In addition, he currently serves as the coordinator for the Junior Bible Quiz National Festival. Barry graduated North Central Bible College with a degree in Christian Education. He and his wife, Tami, have been married for 39 years and have three children.

CALENDAR

MAY 2025

- 2-3 JBQ - Regionals
- 3 STAND Men's Conference
- 9-10 LPCC Work Days
- 18-20 District Council
- 21 Crank Golf Classic/Bike Ride for Missions
- 24-26 Foster and Adoptive Family Retreat

JUNE 2025

- 2-6 Youth Camp 1
- 5 Credential Orientation
- 7 Girls Ministries Field Day
- 9-13 Youth Camp 2
- 13-16 Youth Weekend Camp
- 16-20 Youth Camp 3
- 23-27 Youth Camp 4
- 30-7/4 Youth Camp 5

JULY 2025

- 7/30-4 Youth Camp 5
- 6-9 Kids Camp 1
- 9-12 Kids Camp 2
- 10 Credential Exams (C & L)
- 13-16 Kids Camp 3
- 16-20 Ranger Camp (JLDA/Rangerfest)

AUGUST 2025

- 4-8 General Council (Orlando)
- 4-8 National Fine Arts (Orlando)
- 15-17 PK Retreat

SEPTEMBER 2025

- 6 Boys & Girls Adventure Day
- 22-25 Men's Pastors Prayer Retreat
- 22-24 Ordained Women's Prayer Retreat
- 26-27 Women's VITAL Conference

OCTOBER 2025

- 3-5 LIFT DAC Retreat
- 4 JBQ
- 5-11 National Royal Rangers Week
- 10-11 Girls Ministries Camp-O-Rama
- 10-12 Royal Rangers FCF
- 18 NextGen One Day Conference
- 26-28 Minister's Retreat (French Lick Springs)

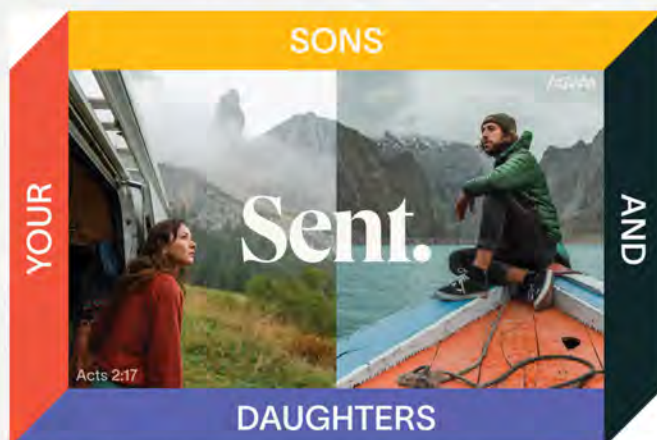
NOVEMBER 2025

- 8-9 Youth Convention
- 15 JBQ and TBQ

DECEMBER 2025

- 4 Credential Orientation

AROUND THE DISTRICT!



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NOW WITH CHRIST



Rev. Gregory Ranney, age 59, passed away on January 31, 2025. He was born on August 16, 1965, in Fort Wayne and graduated from Fort Wayne Christian School, Class of '84. He used his gifting as a worship leader vocalist, directing

audio-video teams, and performing in numerous musical and theater productions at Fort Wayne First Assembly of God. Gregory graduated from Southwestern Assemblies of God University, was a Licensed Minister, and served in various capacities over his 37 years at First Assembly. He is survived by his wife, Maylynne; children, Marissa (Colton) Charland, Evvin (Megan) Ranney, Jesse Ranney, and Garrett Ranney; grandchildren, Jude Charland, Sonny Charland, and Millie Ranney; siblings, Kimberly (Barry) VanCamp, Stephanie (Doug) Roth; and mother, Cindy (Clifford) Beck.



Rev. Donald Thomas, age 64, passed away on March 21, 2025. He was born in Fort Smith, Arkansas on June 27, 1960. He married Tamera Newell on July 16, 1983. Donald started preaching at the age of 13. He was the Lead

Pastor at Connersville Living Waters. Don held two master's degrees: an MBA from Indiana University Kelley School of Business and an MA in Ministry from Indiana Wesleyan University. He was also a financial advisor for Edward Jones.

He is survived by his mother, Shirley; wife Tamera; children, Stephanie (Justin) Pile and Brandon (Morgan) Thomas; grandchildren, Brynnley, Lily and Bryce; brothers, Darryl (Lupe) Thomas, Mike (Teresa) Thomas and Shannon Thomas, as well as nieces and nephews.



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VISION SUNDAY AT FISHERS HIGHMARK CHURCH

Executive Secretary Scott Burr, and wife Tandy, were honored to join Pastor Don and Jamie Champion for Vision Sunday 2025 at Fishers Highmark Church on January 26, 2025, as they celebrated their six-year anniversary and became a General Council assembly.



Church Extension Plan

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