

Ron Channell (featuring Vickie Channell)

Founder and Senior Pastor

Family Church of Lawrence; Lawrence, KS

Interviewed by Emily Stratton in the Family Church Sanctuary; Lawrence, KS

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Transcribed by Emily Stratton

Abstract: Family Church of Lawrence is one of Lawrence's newer churches. It began in 2005 as a satellite church of a large church based in Overland Park, and was pastored by Ron Channell. Shortly thereafter in 2006 while the Lawrence satellite was still quite small, however, some changes took place in which Family Church became independent of the home church in Overland Park. This unexpected change thrust Ron quickly into the world of church-planting, as, from then on out, he would be in charge of all operations in Family Church and responsible for obtaining the necessary resources for the church to function.

This interview with Ron discusses his experiences with getting Family Church established—the many challenges and relocations he and the congregants have undergone, as well as the rewarding moments and visions he has for the church in the future. Near the end of the interview, Ron's wife, Vickie, joins in to tell a few of her own stories about Family Church.

Note: interview questions and comments by Emily are written in **bold** type, Ron's responses are written in regular type, and Vickie's responses are written in *italics*.

So it's Saturday November 11th—no! It's the 13th!!—if I can get my dates straight. We're meeting here at Family Church of Lawrence with Pastor Ron Channell. And Pastor Ron, we just want to get your permission one more time that you're ok with having this interview set into a publicly accessible archive.

Absolutely.

Alright. Well then let's go ahead and get started and Ron why don't you start out by telling us a little bit about your background, what your upbringing was like, and just kind of more of a glimpse as to who you are.

Sure. I was born and raised in Florida, in a Christian home. At an early age, in my teens, I received the Lord as my Lord and savior, and got involved very quickly into the music ministry. I was a singer, and that's my background, really, and got into the rock gospel scene. That was back in the seventies when Larry Norman and all of the Jesus people were starting to hit the rock scene. It was the new thing for Christianity to have the rockers show up. And so, I was really entrenched in that, and we started a band, and started locally, then started going up and down the coast of Florida. And then in 1979 I moved to California: Los Angeles. I was really involved in martial arts and, since I was nineteen I've been involved in martial arts in one way or another. And so I moved out there to kind of expand my wings, for lack of a better word. And my brother lived out there also, so I went out there to be with him and live in Los Angeles for probably about ten years. Then, I was a personal trainer, with martial arts, self-defense... that area. And then I met my wife, and long story short, when we got married—got together, got married—we, we ended up in San Diego. Living in San Diego. So really I'm from California,

because I've been in Southern California since 1979. Her whole family is from here—she's from Kansas City, from Raytown, Missouri. So her dad was having compromised health, and it brought us back here.

Once we got back here, we got into the ministry here in a church in Overland Park. I started teaching there—just a Bible study. And one thing led to another. The church, there, was going to launch a satellite church in Lawrence. And we were asked, because we were in ministry school there, if we would pray about becoming the local pastor in Lawrence. And they were going to be with us for a year and kind of get everything situated, settled. And we prayed about it. We fasted about it. And really felt like the Lord was calling us to Lawrence for ministry and we accepted that position. I believe that was in November of 2005. And January 1, 2006, we were going to go full-time in the ministry, and we were still part of that church. Well three weeks into the new year—somewhere around there, it wasn't long into the new year... a very short time into the new year—we were told that they were going to go a different direction. They felt like they were going to, just, go in a different direction and they literally reincorporated the church here, and just handed it to us. And then kind of went their way, and we went our way. So, really we were kind of on our own, other than some intellectual property. And what I mean by that is we could ask questions about ministry and what have you, but from a financial standpoint, we were released. And so, we were kinda on our own!

But in retrospect, at that time, it was kind of nerve racking at that time it happened, to say the least. But when I look back on it, it was the greatest thing that ever happened to us. Because really, when we accepted the position, we said right then and there 'this is going to be God's ministry. It's not about us.' And that forced me, immediately, to depend totally upon him. I knew that we had no other help. We felt that we were kind of on an island, and if it was going to succeed, it was going to be because of the Lord. And so, he has sustained us for five years. We're still here! And it's a growing, thriving church that's been in so many different locations in our five years. We've probably... well, we've been in nine different addresses, but within those nine locations, we've gone back and forth between those locations probably thirty to forty times. So it's been quite a journey with people trying to track down where we were.

I bet!

So we were blessed to find this place a couple years ago. And we've been in here, and it's great to have an address, and to really be able to say 'hey! Join us this Sunday. Here's where we'll be!' So that's really how we got to where we are today.

Great. Um, so then going back a little bit, when you were first at that church in Missouri, do you know what made Lawrence become kind of the place that they wanted to start this, this church plant? Or what the motivations were?

I, I just know—and by the way it was Overland Park, Kansas.

Overland Park, sorry about that!

Um, it was... at the time, he just felt like he was going to have several satellites going. I believe the initial plan was to have seven, which Lawrence was going to be the first of the seven. So he was going to have them all in the metro area of Kansas City, spread out through the area. And this was just going to be the initial one that they were going to launch. After it was launched, none of the others—I don't think—came to fruition at all. Only this one.

Okay, okay. So then after that started getting planted, and you started getting it going, then you said that they kind of severed the ties so that it wasn't so much a satellite plant any more, that it is your own thing. And it was just a matter of going different directions?

Yeah. Yeah. And no hard feelings, no nothing. I actually—you know, after the blow of it—I really treat it as a true blessing. So it wasn't like 'oh, I can't believe this is happening!' It wasn't any of that. It was 'I can't believe this is happening, but how is God going to use this as a vehicle to answer this call that he's called us to.'

Can I ask, what were some of the things that cause the split, even if it was still on amiable terms?

You know what? I don't know! To tell you the truth, I honestly do not know, other than the fact—the reason I was given was that they just felt like they were being led into a different direction.

No worries. Okay, so then once you were here and getting things going, how did you initially start getting people to be a part of this congregation? How did you pull people from Lawrence into this?

Well, it, it was really just a lot of just getting out in the streets and talking with people. We had a few people that, when it was first launched, I guess it was advertised... so when we first came, they kind of knew that this new church was in town, but really? In comparison, we are really different. I mean our whole way of ministry is completely different. I look at it from a different standpoint. And I think it has to do with my background... just a different approach. I think, instead of spending a lot of money to go advertise—we didn't have it. So we just had to use just getting out in the streets and talking to people and having other people that would come to the church invite other people so that it's just kind of been a duplication factor of people either getting excited about what God is doing here, or not. And if they do get excited, then they go share it with other people and it's really become... I look at the church name, Family Church of Lawrence, and that is really the essence of who we are. I mean, it is truly a family here.

And our prayer, Vickie, my wife and I, when we were first praying about the ministry, our prayer was praying for diversity. And that is not only through just the color of someone's skin diversity, but from all walks of life diversity. And he has answered that. I mean, completely. We have a true mix of people that are just excited about learning and growing in the Lord. We've got professional people. We have non-professional people. We have students. A lot of kids. But also a lot of backgrounds, religiously. I never wanted a denomination to get in the way of somebody receiving the message of Jesus.

Great. So then, kind of going off of this idea of having a different style of ministry, how else would you describe Family Church here? So you have a lot of diversity, a lot of the different backgrounds, but what else differentiates Family Church?

Well, here's, really, our mission statement. And that is 'Real People, with Real Issues, Finding Truth, and Sharing Truth.' Because we realize that when we walk out of these church doors, people are hurting. People are hurting when they're in the church doors! There's just... people

are searching for something to fulfill life with. And our discovery, with talking to people and people coming in within our doors, is that they've tried a lot of different things to find that resolve. To find that peace, to find that inner-strength. Across the board, trying all kinds of things. And the real truth, through the truth of Jesus Christ, is where that unity comes into this body of believers. And really, that's the message. I mean, we're just trying to share Jesus with people. We don't jump in anybody's faith... or face! For that matter. We jump into the word and lovingly say, 'here's what Christ says about life!' You know, he came that you can have life, and abundantly. So does that mean we're never going to have a problem again or something ever again? No! But there's an intercessor there that can help us through those challenges and get us through the challenges, or over the mountain. And it's great and comforting for people to know that they don't have to go through it alone. Or through earthly strength, they can be empowered by a supernatural strength. Through Jesus.

Cool. So continuing off of that, say I show up on Sunday, and I'm ready, ready to join the service. What am I going to expect when I walk in?

Well, you're going to see a lot of smiling faces. You're going to be very warmly welcomed. It's very casual here. We don't really dress up. There's a few people that will come in with ties. I wear ties and suits occasionally, but sometimes I won't wear jeans, but I'll wear shirts like this, you know? We're here for one purpose. And that's to worship and to grow in the Lord. So, when somebody walks in off the street, which many have! They'll just walk by, see the sign, and pull in out of curiosity. And they will be warmly welcomed. And they'll come in, and they'll see an enthusiastic group of people that just want to love God, you know, and just show our, our love to him.

So the praise is—the music portion of the service—is very contemporary. It's got a flavor for—we do have older folks and once in a while we'll do hymns, you know? But it's, for the most part, it's going to be a contemporary service.

And what are the teaching portions like? Or the sermons?

Well at 9:45 we have Bible studies and my wife teaches the adult Bible study, which is—if I can plug her—she's great! And loves to teach. She's very passionate about teaching. And we have great, committed teachers for the kids that just feed into the kids. They're awesome. And from my standpoint, I just tell people 'I'm not going to get up and tell you a bunch of theory.' I'm not, you know, I'll tell you stories and funny stories and funny things that have happened to me or others, and it just... you know, I'm just going to be real with people. But the essence of it is they're not going to hear theory. They're just going to here what's in the word. We believe in the entire Bible. We teach the entire Bible. And we don't try to compromise the word. We just try to stay true to the word.

Well so then what else, what else beyond the Sunday worship and the Sunday Bible studies goes on in the church? What's outside of that?

Well we try to get outside the walls and we have a lot of home groups that are now starting to emerge. We didn't have that in the beginning but our goal this year, really, is to expand on those and just have home groups that people can take different types of subject matters that they're going through and know that they're not alone, or that they're not growing alone in a

certain area. One example of that would be a new believer. Someone who walks in, and they receive Christ, and well, what next? What do they do next? You know, we don't want to throw them to the wolves. What we want to do is to get them in an environment, this loving environment that will start to get them off the milk and into the meat of the word, so that they can grow and be nourished and accomplished what God has designed for them to accomplish in life. We believe that everybody has a predetermined, preordained destiny that God has stamped on all of us. That we will heed to him. And um, so that's just what we try to do is create an environment—whether it's in here, in the building, or outside—to where we can help them grow to be all that they were called to be.

Good deal. And let's see... in terms of getting people growing, what roles does fellowship play into this?--

Oh, a lot, a lot.

--and how does fellowship take place?

It's not a... I wouldn't say that this is a, what you call a social club, by any means. But we're very social, if that makes sense.

Yeah, yeah.

Again, I think it goes back to that family environment. We have a lot of parties where the whole church family is invited and that range is extravagant. It's everything from, oh, a hay-ride theme, or a country theme, where we all dress up like cowboys and cowgirls and go, you know, do the marshmallows on the fire and the singing around the campfire and hayrides for the kids, and just a fun environment of fun and games on a farm. Or to, another extreme would be Valentines dinner, that we turn this place into a beautiful restaurant environment with low lights, and just very romantic for the couples to come and be together and just unite together in an environment that just supports one another. So the spectrum is wide on the kind of events that we have from an entertainment standpoint. But really the essence of it is—I've heard so many times that Christianity is boring. Or people will go say that, that you meet on the street, and say 'ah yeah, Christians, you know, they're this that and the other.' Well, the most joyful people on earth should be Christians because of what they have within them. And so we just try to exude that joy and share that joy with others. So, that's kind of what we do.

And then kind of bouncing back a little bit, as you were going through these phases of kind of bouncing around between different locations and then got here... what were some of the big challenges of that? I know you were saying that it was kind of hard being able to communicate where you were going to be at times, but what were some of the frustrations that came?

Yeah... I can tell you that—very frustrating. But also looking back on greatest of memories. I'll give you an example. One of the places that we went was the Holidome—the Holiday Inn. And we'd go back and forth, but back then, I don't know how it is now, but back then, you had a lot of conventions coming that were prescheduled, so annually, you had all these places. Well, one Sunday we showed up, and we had to bring all of our sound equipment and everything that was basically [on the current church stage], well not everything was there then, but we had, you know, sound equipment and keyboards and all the stuff that we had to load and bring in and set up every Sunday. And so we showed up one morning and... we would rent two of the

conference rooms, and then we would rent another conference room for the kids and some class rooms and so we were just kind of spread out. But when we showed up this one particular Sunday morning, we walked in the rooms and they were already set up for another meeting, so they had double booked it. And so we're thinking 'what do we do? Everybody's going to be here in forty five minutes. People are going to show up!' And back then, we didn't have a huge amount of people because, again, nobody knew who we were from... and you'll see why, when I tell you this story!

So I went to the front desk and said here's the situation, and they're going 'oh my goodness! Well, we don't know what to do.' And I said 'well, what can we do? I mean, what are the options?' And they said, 'well, we have a suite that we could open up and let you have your service there.' And so we literally went into this room that had a table like this, and chairs, and so it was a little larger than a room, but we were like sardines! I mean, it was amazing. One of those folding things like that—stands—I put my Bible on there, and that was the podium! That was what we used as the podium. It was right by the bar that was in the room, you know the little bar that they have? I just stuck it right beside there and we had people—the back door was open, so, well I guess it was the back door, but it went out by the pool, and people were standing out on the railings by the pool, overlooking the pool. We were just jammed in there! But, it was a great day. It was just, it was a great day! I mean, it was just packed, but we look back on that and see how faithful God was in getting us through these different situations that were just crazy at the time. Frustrating, definitely frustrating, but looking back, it was a bond that can't be repeated. It was just a bond that took those people. And all of us that were there at the time just look back at those times and it was great! It was great. So, there's a few stories like that.

Yeah, no. That was a good one.

Crazy stuff!

[brief interruption, not transcribed]

Um, so now that you do have a more stable location, what has that freed you up to do?

Well, get our address out there for one thing. That has helped a lot. It's still a little challenging because the building is for sale, where we are, and we're attempting to buy that. So, we're in the process of really trying to make a location our own so that we can just have our place. So that, that'll be in God's timing, and we'll just do what we do until he opens those doors. But it's allowed us to be able to do events during the week, so that we don't have to scatter ourselves so much. And that people just know where to be on Sunday. It was just a major challenge trying to keep up, especially with guests, with new people. I think with new people coming in, and they see kind of a renegade, moving van kind of church, it's like 'well, do I really want to be a part of that? I'm kind of looking for a home. Are they really going to be around in six months or are they just a passing through, kind of thing?' So now people know we're here. We're established. We've been here five years and I think it gives them a lot more comfort in knowing if they come, we're here. That they can build their lives into the fabric of who we are as a church, instead of saying 'I'm going to pour myself into this place, and then it's not here in four weeks.' So I think it's a calming effect for people!

Yeah, definitely.

Yeah.

For some of those events that you do have during the weeks, home groups, and Bible studies, how is leadership assigned in this area? Is it just volunteers or is it a specific role, are their elders? How does, how does leadership break down?

You know, it is volunteers. And that's been one of the things—quite frankly, we've had people with mixed feelings about that. Saying, 'well you should have...' in the beginning, we didn't have a lot of mature Christians. I mean, we were brand new. So we didn't have a lot of leadership. So I didn't want to put people in positions just to have people in positions. I wanted to do it biblically. So we just took our time, until we started to get mature Christians that were able to be in positions biblically. And God has blessed us in that. So the people that we have in positions now, we feel are mature Christians. And they're not just filling a slot to have the slot filled. It's not to say that people can't come into our church environment and be part of it from a volunteer standpoint. We have phenomenal participation in our volunteers. I'll give you an example.

We were blessed to be able to have our first VBS—Vacation Bible School—for kids this year, this past year. And we had sixty five kids coming through the church and that program. And it was phenomenal. It was phenomenal. We reached out to the community. Kids that didn't come to the church were involved too, it was great. It was great. But to pull that off, you need quite a bit of people to do it, adults. And we had—you know, I don't know the exact number, but I, I would say it's probably thirty or forty adults that were part of that? That just poured themselves into it. And some of them were very new Christians. But we wanted them to be part of it so that they felt like they were part of the church and part of the ministry.

From the beginning, I never wanted this to be a one man show or a two person show with my wife. I wanted to be a family. And even though I'm a singer, and I love to sing—in the beginning I had to sing a lot because we didn't, you know, we didn't have the people! But now, I still love to sing, but I tell our worship leader I'll sing once, you know, every six or seven or eight weeks, but I don't want to do it a lot. I want other people to use their giftings. Because it's about all of us. It's not just about one person being here. I believe that we were all called to be part of this ministry. I just happen to be the under-shepherd to the shepherd, the Lord. So I just try to stay humbly before him as an under-shepherd, but to make sure that he is the shepherd and that we are all in this together.

Sweet. So I was just going back and looking at this mission statement that you were telling me about: the real people, real issues, finding truth, and sharing truth. In looking at that, when you do have these other groups led up, that you have led... are there any themes that are consistent through them? Or do they take kind of a thematic issue, where there will be a small group specifically addressed to overcoming a certain issue or... how does that work out?

Yeah, we definitely... well the running theme is that mission statement. Everything, really, underlying... that, that's the running theme of every ministry that we have throughout the church. But yes, if, in fact, in the new year we'll probably see different kinds of ministries that are going into specifics. Let's say someone has struggled with drugs. Or whatever that case may be. To have a support group for them with someone that has gone through it successfully and been clean for many, many years to be able to be a leader for that group. It is a very

strengthening thing if they can do that biblically and show people how to get out of that situation and that bondage through Christ. So it doesn't necessarily mean that every class is... going to be like a Stepford child. But every class here is real people with real issues! And the truth, everything is going to run back to the theme of 'where do we find the solution for this?' And every ministry within our ministry is going to go back to the source, the main source, which is the word to say, 'here's the solution.' So we're not trying to be a psychologist in that room, we're just trying to help guide people into the word to say, 'what's the Bible say about this?' Let's see if we can find the solution here... which we always can. So, they're all different kind of functioning events, but they all really do have that running theme.

Let's see... tell me a little bit more about where you see this church going. I know that you said you're looking into being able to purchase this building. So say that happens, what kind of ideas do you have percolation or visions do you have ahead?

Well, I have huge visions for the ministry. But again, I'm just trying to be humble before the Lord with it. And because somebody could look at where we are today and say 'how can you have that large of a vision for down the road with where you are today?' But, if we look back where we were five years ago, we've come a long way. So um... my vision, is really to have a campus. A campus that gives kids and people a place to go that is a safe environment to be fed biblically in every way. And what I mean by that... there's a lot of kids in this town, that they go home to an empty house. Mom and Dad's working. Unfortunately, they have to. Um, there's a lot of kids like that. That, they don't have a place to go. But they go home, and they get in trouble because they're on their own. They don't have a whole lot of support. It's not their fault. It's not their parents' fault. It's just the way life is. So if we can create an environment for them to come that is safe, and to be able to come and have a great time, in the afternoon and play games and have an environment that's fun... but yet, have it be in line with God's word. And they're getting that... we're not going to try and force the Bible onto a kid that comes in off the street. We want to love them. And let them be in a safe environment. And let them find Christ as he draws that kid to him in that perfect, godly timing. But if we can just create an environment, for him to be safe and enjoy his life and have an opportunity to just have fun as a kid, that's, that's what I see.

And that is really, not only in a game environment, for them to come in and play games, but that is throughout every age, to be able to have older people to be able to come together and... elderly people. I mean, how wise are the elderly! And so many times they're just kind of left out there on their own. But to have an environment that they could come together? And be infused with younger people? Have really young kids coming in and interacting with them in an environment that can cause the younger kids to get and glean the wisdom of the older, but to have vibrancy of the youth infused in the life of the elder? Those kinds of things.

And I don't know when and how that'll happen, but that's the vision. To have that kind of environment.

Awesome. And then, always shifting gears again, in terms of where you're at right now, how are simple things like maintenance of the building taken care of? Do you have volunteers come in and do that or?

Great question. Great question. And it goes back just to the love of the people. We have volunteers that come in and have—in fact, you may see her any minute. She'll show up here.

Jillian comes in every Saturday afternoon and cleans and does set-up and... just faithful people that do it. We have a guy that, again, is a volunteer. He's kind of the head over the maintenance of the building and he kind of goes through and checks to make sure and see if all the light bulbs are working and the door knobs are... you know, everything is functioning as a building entity. And so all the building maintenance kind of runs through him. And then he has some volunteers under him that do different aspects of that. We have been blessed with people with a lot of different skills sets that use those skills sets for the kingdom. Which is awesome.

Well, I was just glancing at the clock and we're wrapping up at around an hour, and I don't want to take your whole afternoon from you, but I would love to hear some more stories from you that you remember. You were telling me that one about being shoved into that suite—that's an awesome memory. Do you have any other remarkable stories of either tough times or great victories or...

Hey Vickie! Come here a sec! ...she was asking about funny stories or tough times or things like that with the church. I told her about the time that we were double booked at the Holidome and were crammed in that room.

Yeah, we remember that day!

That was a fun time! Um, does anything pop off the top of your head for anything that you just go 'wow!' looking back at that nucleus of people, those were memories that we'll just never forget, but at the time, we were going 'oh my goodness! I can't believe this is happening!' Along with that I want you to tell us how our opening night for our opening morning was with the rainbow. But first, if you can think of anything just off the top of your head...

Wow.

Or you too Wil, either one.

That involved the whole church?

Oh anything. Just tell me some stories to be on the record. If it involves the whole church, great. If it involves just you, that's fine too!

Wow... I'm trying to think. It seems like we talk about things all the time, saying 'did you write that down? Did you write that down? Oh... and remember when!' I do remember that one Sunday you were talking about. Umm....

I'll give you another one.

Okay.

We were at the Virgil school. Do you know where the Virgil school is? It's behind the high school, Lawrence High.... I think? I think that's the street it's on, but it's... anyway, they have a great big open area where you can go and I had booked it and when we got there, the air-conditioner had gone out and it was right in the middle of the summer. Remember that? And it was just miserable! And that particular day, I started with a suit on. And ended with like a T-shirt on!

No kidding.

It was just amazing. We were just... it was burning up in there. But again, it was one of those days where you look back on it, and it was just exciting. It was just because everybody was there not to be comfortable, they were there because they loved the Lord. And it just was one of those great days, where we're all sweating like crazy, but laughing through it all. You know, just saying 'wow. It's just one of those times.'

Tell her about the rainbow!

Well, we were...

Don't let me make you nervous right here, I'm just afraid it won't pick up. (Emily moves voice recorder closer to Vickie)

Well actually this, the whole event was incredible and there was an element of it that was pretty funny on that following Sunday. But we were getting ready. We had been in here for several months, but we were waiting to do—until the students came back—we were waiting to do our grand opening. And it was publicized in Lawrence Journal World and so on and so forth. So everybody was coming in and had been working really hard all week and the sanctuary had been painted. That's when we did the painting and had done the altar and all kinds of things. And it's Saturday night at 7:30, and one of the girls took her two kids and said, 'I'm going to go home, and I'll see all y'all tomorrow.' Okay. So she heads out. And the next thing, she comes flying back in saying 'y'all gotta come out here! You gotta come out here!' So, 'well what's that?' And she said 'just come out here!' So everybody leaves what they're doing and they go running out. And we look up...and go down to the First Service parking lot to get a view of it... and there is a double rainbow that literally looks like it is over our church. And because it was double, there was like a reddish glow that came from inside of it down. And I'm telling you, it was just like the Lord was saying 'this is mine... this is mine. And I am protecting it.' And the kids are dancing, and they're running around, and they're doing all of this stuff, and there's tears running down all of their eyes and there's tears running down our eyes and everybody's got their cell phones and they're taking—they're trying to capture this scene.

Seriously. Yeah.

And so, so we had it on camera, but at that point in time, some of the cell phones would only do what, like ten seconds at a time? So it was hard to get the whole thing.

Anyway, the next day here comes a woman. And they had read in the Lawrence Journal World that—did you share this part?

No.

So Ron gets a phone call, and now we're normally here—my class starts at 9:45—we're here normally by 9:00 or shortly thereafter. I think it's probably about 8:15. And somebody says, 'we've got a woman with us from Topeka and she wants to film parts of service. Is that okay?' Well, somehow in my mind through all of this, I thought it was somebody like—I don't want to say K-LOVE—but, I thought it was a Christian station or a Christian radio program or something. So when I see this NBC local thing on the side of it, I'm just not really thinking much. It just didn't really register. So we come in early and she says, 'listen, I just want to interview a few

people. We're going to interview the two of you all. Do you mind if I follow you around? And I want to film various parts of your services and I want to put together a piece.'

'Yeah sure!' Well as it turns out, they had heard before about when the original planting had come, and the guy that had originally planted, that senior pastor who had planted the church here, had made some statements about what he was going to do with this church in a very short period of time in this community. And the Lawrence Journal World, I think, had a couple of issues with a couple of things that he had said in his approach. And so they were following up. They were wanting to follow up. And so when that whole article got printed, they made references back to the very beginnings. So here comes the TV stations. We're going... we're not understanding any of this. It's just, it's just naïve right?

She goes to interview us, and she asked us a couple things. She says, 'well... so tell me about the church,' and I start to say it. I started interviewing her because I wanted to, I think she's just... and I say 'now what do you notice that's different?' again, thinking she's with a Christian station, 'what you notice that stands out to you different with our church, because I'm sure you've done this before?' So I'm going through this whole interview process with her, right? And she's got me rolling on camera!

'Well,' she said, 'you mentioned diversity. You prayed for diversity and that's one of the first things I noticed.' And she said, 'and that rainbow!' And she literally filmed from our service, the rainbow as it appeared on our screen. So here, after the whole thing is over, it dawns on me, and I said 'you're not with a Christian channel?' She says 'no, I'm with local Topeka NBC!' It's like... okay. And immediately my mind started to go, you know, 'what did I say? How is this working? I wasn't nervous... should I be nervous right now?' You know that whole thing because I'm thinking, I don't know what an investigative reporter now is doing, you know. And because that's rare. I mean, there are very large churches out here, and they have new buildings and they've had new things happen and no one shows up from Topeka.

Anyways, so she says 'go check the thing.' And at 10:00 that night--5:00 Sunday night, 10:00 Sunday night, 6:00 the next morning, and it ran clear around noon the next day. There were... it was about a three or four minute piece, something like that. And they showed the rainbow. On the news.

Yeah, it was so cool.

They showed, I mean, they showed everything. And the piece was very, very productive. She did a great job with it.

Oh good.

And it, yeah. The whole thing was just really strange, wasn't it?

Yeah, yeah. So we just feel that God has sealed the ministry. You know, like I told you from the beginning. It's his. We're just trying to be obedient.

But, because I know we're running out of time, but I do have one story to really share with you why we're here. This will give you one example of the many... they might not match this one, but particularly why we are here.

We have a woman who is here that came—they actually moved from Texas. She came into the church because she moved to be with her son and daughter in law and their two kids and help. And she... she was leaving her husband. And so she came along. And this was on a Sunday. And I was in the back, getting ready for service to start, and there's a man that comes in, and I meet him there and welcome him and the service has already started. I just was back there. I saw him come in and so it's like I'm out there trying to answer his questions and he just breaks down. I mean he literally just breaks down crying. And he's telling me, 'I don't know. I don't know why I'm here. I don't know why I'm here.' And I didn't know that he had anybody that's in the service connected to him. I was just totally out of the blue and said, 'Well, just come in. And just be with us today.' And long story short, after the service was over, he surrendered his life to the Lord. Received the Lord.

And come to find out, when we heard his testimony later, he was in Texas the night before sitting at his table with a gun loaded. And when she left he was just going to end his life and he thought, 'the last thing that I told her was that I was going to go to church. That's the thing that she said. Go to church. I want you to go to church. And so instead of going to church there' he thought, 'I'm going to go to church where she is. And it'll be my last time to see her. I'll go to church. I'll meet my commitment there, and then I'll go back and end my life.' Because he said he just, 'for some reason, I just couldn't do it.' And he goes 'I don't know what happened to me, I just kind of... before I knew it, I cleaned my truck out. I put things in my truck. I was down the road. And the next thing I knew I was in Lawrence.'

And um, I look at them together. Their marriage has healed. God is doing amazing things in their life and in their marriage. And I look and I say, you know, 'if it's just for that, thank you Lord, that you are able to have a place here that drew him in.'

But that's just one of many stories and maybe not as dramatic as somebody getting ready to end their life, but let's face it. The end of life is going to come sooner or later. And um, there's a fork in the road that we have to choose. Sooner or later. And is it going to be... there's a real hell and there's a real heaven. So we're just trying to be here to share with people the love of Christ and that they can take those problems that they're having now and yeah, resolve them here, but not worry about this blink that we live as a lifetime, but to take care of eternal security, once we leave this earth. So that's really the essence of why we're here. And that's one example of, I believe, many that will be drawn to the Lord through this ministry... at least we pray that.

Alright.

Anything you want to add to that? Anything?

Real people, real issues.

We talked about it.

Alright. Well I will end it there then.

[device put on pause]

Oh I thought I turned it off, but just realized I had it on pause, so if you're telling a story, shoot! Let's get it recorded.

That's funny because there was another church that was next door to us, and the walls were so thin that you could hear. And there was time... we were supposed to be there at a different time, so that we wouldn't conflict with one another. But it didn't work out that way. Somehow we ended there at the same time and doing the same thing at the same time. But, their singing was going on while I was trying to preach. So it was like this loud music coming in while I was trying to talk and so the louder the music got, the more I was trying to out-voice it! So it was like I was almost screaming... 'can you hear me?!' I felt like one of those old-time preachers you know? Where they... it was just hilarious! And you know, what can you do? It was just, everybody's just kinda with me. Hanging in there going, 'it's okay! We'll get through this!'

So anyway, just another... another event of the crazy journey that we're on. But it's fun. It's fun.