

Oral History Cover Sheet

Interview Information	
Project Name:	Gateway City Church, St Louis and St Charles, Oral History Project
Narrator:	Laura Roberts
Interviewer:	Katie Sweet
Interview Date:	March 30, 2026
Interview Location:	St Charles, MO

Descriptive Information	
Narrator's Biographical Information:	
Interview Summary:	Laura Roberts recounts her spiritual journey from a religious upbringing in a traditional Church of Christ to her baptism in 1979 as a college freshman, influenced by vibrant campus ministries and a desire for wholehearted commitment to God. She describes the challenges and blessings of her early faith, including family resistance, her involvement in church planting efforts, and the supportive community she found among fellow believers. Laura reflects on the evolution of the St. Louis church, highlighting its culture of generosity, resilience through leadership changes and doctrinal challenges, and its ongoing efforts to serve the community through outreach and service projects. She emphasizes the importance of humility, love, and a Christ-centered faith over rigid doctrine, noting how the church has matured by focusing on relationships, personal growth, and passing faith to new generations. Throughout, Laura shares personal stories of transformation, community impact, and the scriptures that have sustained her, illustrating a life shaped by faith, perseverance, and a commitment to helping others know God. (Adobe AI Summary)
Interview Key Terms:	International Churches of Christ; Gateway City Church; St Louis; Henry Kriete Letter; Chemical Recovery; Community Service;

Technical Information	
Recording Format:	Audio
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Administrative Information

Workflow Process	Name	Date
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Narrator's Name: Laura Roberts
Interviewer's Name: Katie Sweet
Date of Interview: March 30, 2026
Location of Interview: St Charles, MO
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[illegible]

Interview with Laura Roberts Transcript

Narrator's Name: Laura Roberts

Interviewer's Name: Katie Sweet

Date of Interview: March 30, 2026

Location of Interview: St Charles, MO

Transcript Completed By: Katie Sweet

Transcript Edited By:

Additional Notes:

KS: So, Laura Roberts. We're here in St. Charles. I believe our date is March 30th. So, do you give your consent to be interviewed for my digital history project and the ICOC history project?

LR: Yes, I do.

KS: Excellent. So, we went through all of the things. But, just a reminder, if at any point you need a break, let me know. If at any point you're like, I don't feel like answering, just let me know.

LR: Okay.

KS: My approach is much more of the relaxed conversation. So I'm gonna start with the important question. How did you become a disciple?

LR: It was 1979 and I was a freshman at Southwest Missouri State in Springfield, Missouri and I had met with a group that I had been a part of in high school and one of the young ladies she was talking to me and I said, well what do you know about the Church of Christ? Because I had like gone into there on a Sunday with my friend because we were late getting to his church and she goes, oh I'd be really careful. They believe you have to be baptized to be saved and I remember in my mind thinking, I wonder why they believe that? And so I saw one of the young men who was an RA in my dorm that was also at the church building the day we went and I said, Mark can you talk to me about baptism? And he's like, oh sure. He came down and you know was telling me a bunch of things and then recommended that I study the Bible with the women's counselor and the campus minister and so I did that and it was before a lot of the studies that we had. Obviously they had gone to a retreat in Charleston, Illinois and were just blown away by you know just the commitment, total commitment to God, Jesus and so anyway I was like, yo that's what I want and so I was baptized September 19, 1979 and it was a blessing because I had the Bible background and view of studying the Bible from the traditional Church of Christ but then they had a very vibrant Berlin campus ministry and so I got kind of the best of both worlds and then at the end of that year Tom Jones, who was my campus minister, was basically let go because we were causing problems on campus and so I moved to Perksville to help start a campus ministry. They asked me if I'd go and I found out later it wasn't because you know like I was so mature and spiritual but because I was young and I would be there four more years, no, and anyway and I had a heart to want to serve and to do that and so that was great, great experience with a smaller congregation up there, learned a lot from the older people and their love for the campus and they had us over and I felt like I had a bunch of moms and dads and aunts and uncles and it was great being away from home and so that was really good and at the end of that I had thought about going on a mission team to France because I had some French language background so I went to Boston to talk to the people who were going and I think God knew that was not going to work for me and you know I didn't go which is probably good so I came back home and worked for a year and then they started the St. Louis mission team or training in Columbia, South Carolina. Stephen Terrell Brand and Nick and Debbie Young and that was great so I was like an intern for a year. I had a bunch of learning and oh just classes and it was great fun and I just learned so much and then we moved back here in 1986 to help plant the congregation here.

KS: Well fantastic. So, you came from a mainline Church of Christ?

LR: Yeah a traditional Church of Christ with a with the campus ministry that was vibrant and you know part of like from Crossroads. Okay. Moving up with Kip to Champaign and and then Tom and the campus minister who'd gone to a retreat there brought it back to Springfield. Yes yeah it's been interesting to hear like talk with Linda about her experience and see more of that connection with kind of some of the other Church of Christ that ingrained out of that. Yes.

KS: So for you it was the baptism that really kind of was the convincing?

LR: Oh yeah well it was like um you know I was in a religious I was very religious growing up. Very Pharisee you know I wasn't like the wild crazy moment of oh my gosh my life's a mess I need to repent you know it was more like oh my gosh I'm a Pharisee and you know doing what God wants me to do with all my heart you know. You know that was good too that was a change and a mindset change and and really seeing that as sin just like I would you know anything outward.

KS: How did your family take it?

LR: Not well at first. My mom my dad was a Methodist minister you know my mom was very religious growing up but my dad was also very abusive so there was a lot there no one knew about nobody you know did anything about it because they weren't open about it you know that kind of stuff and so you know I was pretty disillusioned by yeah by all of that and wanted something more honest and more real and you know just asking lots of questions and I prayed Jesus into my heart every night and couldn't figure out what was going on and and even in the one discussion with the young lady about you know we'll be careful of them you know she had she talked about we'll find a church of your choice and then we had this meeting this night and this meeting this night and and I remember just thinking that's a lot of time you know but then when the message was give all your heart God wants everything yeah that was different that was like that's what I want and I want to add something to my life I want to be different you know and so so that was kind of what I think really but with my parents it was like and then when they asked me to move okay this is a year after the Jim Jones Kool-Aid incident when all the people died and Tom Jones you know my mom was kind of freaking out oh they my mom and dad drove down to Springfield to meet with Tom and my mom will tell the story she's like within 10 minutes of the conversation I felt totally fine with you moving to Kirksville yeah because he was not weird and he was not a fanatic and he was not you know and so it was just neat to see God work and change their hearts and change their mindset so that I was able to do that sounds like you were doing a lot of prayer when you found out your parents were oh yeah well at first I didn't know that I just thought they'd be happy for me yeah do you know what I mean I was kind of naive you know and instead it was like no I'm not happy you know that you reject everything that I've done for you and but that wasn't my mindset yeah do you know what I mean it wasn't like oh I don't like what they're doing I want to do something different it was but it's neat because my mom after 15 years she'd studied the Bible like three different times and every time was like and then the last time she'd studied and I don't know what happened I wasn't there but they said she just kind of closed her Bible and stood up and left and I'll never be good enough for this church you know and came to my house and I could this isn't gonna work and so and then she went out to eat with some friends of hers and one of the sisters who'd studied the Bible with her went to the same restaurant totally God yeah saw her like Sarah how are you gave her a big hug in it like the light bulb went on like I don't have to be good enough people love me for who I am and she was baptized just like three days later but you know it's when you grow up a certain way or you grow up with abuse or you grow up you know those things you have to work through yeah to to see God differently yeah so anyway that was 15 years after yeah like like reflecting on that time how did you see God moving in your life hmm well just with my mom and dad meeting with Tom yeah you know and then being able to go to Kurtzville not going on the mission team to France and ending up going on the mission team to st. Louis because that's where I've met my husband yeah do you know and that whole situation even with my husband I remember I talking to a sister one time about I I had this reputation live with Laura you'll either start dating get engaged or get married okay I was in everyone's wedding that was my reputation live with Laura you know yeah I'm like okay you know and so I was struggled a little bit with that and one of the sisters said Laura write down everything you want in a husband pray about it every morning and let it go yeah okay so I started a list about a year after that John and I he'd gone out with my roommate and he brought her home and I was like we need to go out

sometime you know I mean I just was like to the point where I'm like I'll just go out I just want to relax about this I'm not gonna worry about this and so as we got to know each other I was like the things on my list like even one of them my mom had told me when I was in college don't marry anyone under 5'9 because you'll slouch so we were in Toronto at a singles event and I I John came in and I said how tall are you you know we had it I think we'd gone on two dates or whatever I said how tall are you and he was 5'9 why do you want to know and I said oh no big deal but I filed that away I wanted someone with dark hair and blue eyes he he wore kind of those glasses that were shaded like when you walk in and one time he was his glasses off he was clean his glasses and he has these bright blue eyes you know and number one thing was he had to love God more than me yeah and then later when he struggled with addiction drugs and alcohol that brought him back you know I mean his love for God yeah eventually brought him back yeah so I mean definitely God working you know you see that in in him closing doors and opening doors and and just even where we moved to the house we live in yeah was like a block away from a brother and sister and like a mile and a half from a couple that had disciplesd us and this is when he wasn't coming to anything you're right there yeah for my support at the time and then for both of us you know but seeing God work in my mom's life like she was very much a hostess I loved having people over so every Christmas she'd let me have a Christmas party and invite all the brothers and sisters so she got to know people Carlton and Benita and and who drove like three hours in the snow one time to come to my party and just different people from campus and and one young man eventually ended up singing in my wedding because he was an opera he'd been in yeah an opera in Russia you know and I mean just I mean just so cool and you look back and think all of these people had an impact on my parents yeah because my parents were like sure let's have a party I mean we have 40 50 people on our little little but it wasn't huge yeah you know split level people up and down and yeah so anyway you know there's so many it's so I mean I could have even more you know God stories yeah my kids and you know get that next time okay so be ready for that okay like

KS: The other question that I'm like how much time we have but yes definitely in the future we'll be asking about what are those like

LR: When you look of like how in the Old Testament talks about this I always think pillars of pillows yes I think it goes both ways yeah my house is mine yeah like so thinking about that when you look back and like what are those like the great victories and those like defeats that God turned into victory oh yeah so yeah definitely next time we get together we'll talk about those so we'll get back to st. Louis okay that's the one of the important goals right right a lot of the everything you know with my husband was in st. Louis yes so I was gonna start us back okay good forward so you moved here with the mission team in 1986 yes so how many who was on the mission team how many of you were there there were about well I think with the people that met us here there was like 17 can't remember exactly how many came from Columbia we've got see me Debbie Steven Terrell Alicia two brothers so there were about nine or ten yeah between eight and ten came from South Carolina I would have to go back and look at pictures and pictures of what happened in South Carolina I actually pictures in South Carolina because those would be the people and then we met people here that were already living in st. Louis waiting for the church to be planted

KS: yeah if you can send me one remember there was the poster from the reach conference yes send me a picture of that yes that would be well yeah I can't like I don't know if I gave you my email I think I sent it text okay but text I did that receive okay well I will do that right now oh

LR: yeah there was another couple that had a baby oh that's another story I will have to share with you about all of the people on staff that moved in here that were pregnant okay when they came I mean a lot a lot a lot a lot Oh John and Jerry Worth that's another couple so I guess there may have been they came with us from South Carolina dies minutes here Oh Kathy sample so there may have been over ten okay they came from South Carolina

KS: I will eventually be speaking with Kathy Lohman

LR: oh yeah oh yeah she seems she has a great memory for names oh gosh yeah

KS: yeah I can get that from and once Linda is feeling better I'm gonna go and talk with her too

LR: oh yeah I figure I probably should talk with brothers but I'm well Jeff hubby would be when I met him he was I think 19 in South Carolina yeah it was so funny but he was on the team so yeah there were there were and then it's

what's cool is in this picture there's a lot of people that became disciples that first year yeah like here's Kathy and Alicia I have tried to find her she had moved to LA to help with the mission team there and I have not been able to avoid oh yeah I love that woman oh my gosh she is like oh yeah this woman right yeah well if I'm speaking like I don't have her picture because my phone is stupid but if I'm hopefully we're talking about the right person I hope so she from Columbia South Carolina that is a good question my voice voice boy the OI ~~OID~~ oh oh my gosh I have been so happy I will I loved Alicia she she was one of those people it was the OI ~~OID~~ she's one of those people that spoke the truth and love to me okay you know what I mean just with tell me what I needed to hear very kindly I will see if I can track her down since there's a lot of disciple I'm still close with the same person in LA and that last name is familiar okay oh if it was a looser voice like you know she is yes we can use this to like if you think of stories it's like okay yeah what are some of those stories from the first oh I have to tell you Julie hubby who's married to Jeff now that we had a bunch of people from South Carolina come and doorknock that we had a campaign before the like first service you know getting the church going then reaching out and so it was like 97 98 degrees outside and we are going to these apartment buildings and the brother that was with me who's from South Carolina we were like there's one more building and we're like what time is it it's it we're hot we're tired like okay we'll just go to this last one yeah and so we walked and we knocked on the first door and a woman answered and you know she was religious she was very nice and everything and invited her oh yeah and Julie's sitting in the background so they're like yeah we might be interested and so then I called them and Julie was interested not her roommate yeah but Julie and so Julie came to to one of the first Bible studies that we had at a brother's apartment which was there's like a road called Bennington and there's like tons of apartment complexes here and tons of apartment brothers were over here she was over here so we were door-knocking those apartments during the outreach and so she came and later Jeff came up to us and he's like are you guys studying with her yet she's really cute are you studying with you know I like I don't know exactly how it went down but he was eager to know whether or not she was studying and then and so we did she wanted to study the Bible and I remember she went on a Christian cruise and we're like are we gonna lose her you know whatever and she came back and it was she was more open because she saw things that she's like that's not what God wants us to do because we've been studying different things and so kind of revealed her heart that she did want to be different and so she was baptized and then it was a while but then she and Jeff started dating you know it's just cute eventually they got married but you know that's a neat story and then another story we were reaching out on campus at Wash U and I were inviting people's for going and met this one young lady and she was like an engineering major and and she wasn't really interested she's like but my sister might be and I said well can I get your number you know because they're looking for an apartment and we had just been looking for apartments and kind of knew how to do that and so anyway I called her back and Kathleen is like when is that Bible study can I come pick you up you know and later she was like I didn't want you to forget me you know so I can't I wanted to kind of get you I remember even studying the Bible we're studying Acts 2 and and we were done and reading and she goes you have to be baptized to be saved like she just had this teachable you know what I mean and it was just so refreshing you know to meet people who were eager to know God who could distinguish as they were reading what what God really wanted and versus maybe a worldly religion or yeah what they were used to or I don't know you know so that was those were two stories of that first summer Wow I remember studying with one of them on a hill at an outdoor service that we had yeah and so it you know it's just this is cool you look back and go wow God knew who was open yeah and and put people in our path even though they weren't the direct person mm-hmm do you know what I mean and the brothers have stories like that too I'm sure but yeah one guy was delivering pizza to the brothers apartment and they invited him to come and he studied the Bible yes I mean you're like okay God just send him to our house so it sounds like the like the st. Louis church as it was being planted the disciples there was that excitement the first oh gosh oh yeah because when you're part of a mission team that's your whole mindset kind of like st. Charles being planted they've got that initial mindset and you know the church that's more established we're trying to get some of that back yeah I mean I well I won't talk about st. Louis now that let's say that right we're talking about it then we could definitely talk about since you were here with the planting and seeing like kind of what is that change what is its story oh yeah over time yes yes because you were watching it grow up so yeah basically yes and and that's a really good comparison because you

know how you go through your teenage years you know and and everything is like black and white and you know do or die and you know you don't have a lot of wisdom and discernment yet and even the church was like that because you think about the initial people just out of college yeah we don't have life experience we didn't have children we didn't have to to you know we people were going into like these young couples or singles going into like an established congregation and expecting these people who've been going for a long time had children had jobs to have the same outward level of commitment that they did there there wasn't discernment it was this or that yeah black or white you either be here or you're not and you're not committed if you're not yeah well okay this woman just had surgery or this you know what I mean and so that you know you see that in the movement of the church as how people matured themselves and grew themselves and still trying to keep that mindset of my purpose is to reach the lost yeah how do I do that yeah and I need to share about Tim and Jackie Summerlin I don't know if you've ever heard Tim's classes he did some recovery ministry like dealing with grief and grief recovery and he's awesome but anyway they came and were on staff for a while when John and I were single dating and they were in the ministry and then they stepped out of full-time ministry she is a physical therapist and Tim was in education do you remember what years well 90s and we got married so he was still on staff in 90 they were still on staff in 90 so it's probably a few years after that okay but what's cool is they were that couple that reached more people do their jobs than full-time ministry I mean seriously Jackie was baptizing her clients and and she had this one older man that was just kind of mean and surly and his family wouldn't even come visit him and Jackie just kept being kind to him and loving to him and reaching out to him and he he ended up getting baptized and passed away like a week or two later I mean it was just like but he changed you know what I mean it was just that she and in Tim when I think about couples who aren't in the full-time minutes who were in the full-time ministry and then got out of the full-time ministry but still had that heart yeah I think of them yeah I think of all the people they reached couples they disciplined as married as a married couple raising their kids I guess that bring for me the question of like what were they doing like what what was it just where they're like their heart focus was at yeah their heart was for people hmm when they were in a full-time ministry their heart was for people when they're at their jobs their heart was for people but if their jobs the people that they're around there are lost yeah don't know God yeah you know when you're in the full-time ministry you spend a lot of time training and raising people up and doing things like that and and they still did that in our small group you know they let our group and disciple John and I when we were first married and gave us input because John and I got married and three months later got custody of his two boys who were seven and nine or yeah seven and nine okay so we were kind of clueless as they came with tons of baggage and we had our own and it was just like oh and Tim was because it was an educator and because he actually so they he was already back teaching and as a counselor okay he was a counselor so that would have been John and I would have been married in 90 and the kids would come to be with us so they probably maybe even that year that year or the year after okay but Tim and Jackie I mean they still we'd see them at conferences and we'd see them my brother live in Colorado and we'd always visit with them when we went to visit my brother and just our hearts you know what I mean they just had that impact yeah and we're a great example of that and I think that helped you know when you have people and then I the one strength of our church right now and I really saw this with how Vince would have when Vince came he would have so many different brothers do communion and do contribution I mean different all the time yeah and you started seeing there like many sermons like you're like I'm taking notes I started taking notes on communion and contribution because they were so impacting yeah and I'm like that's the wisdom that has accrued over the years in in the people that are here yeah you know the elders that but then there's that you know you have the people on staff and you have the elders and then you just have the members who are wise and who are sharing things and getting up and a brand new baby Christian well he's been a Christian a few months his name's Bob and he did contribution yesterday you could tell he was nervous as I'll get out but he did such a great job because he's sharing from the heart and he's sharing like you know my convictions changed by listening to people share on Sundays yeah and he pointed out particular message it brothers that had shared particular and you're like wow yeah when the whole service is impacting mm-hmm yeah it's not a show you know music isn't a show to pull people in and I used to kind of like oh we have a lot of diversity and we have a lot of you know we have great music and we have you know the focus sometimes would be outward yeah and now it's like if

you want to be like Jesus this is where you need to come yeah you know I mean I get right to whether this person doesn't open hard or not you know what I mean and not like oh we have great music come listen to music you know and then they're like oh that sermon but I don't know like I don't want this anyway

KS: What makes St. Louis the st. Louis Church?

LR: St. Louis mm-hmm I get both congregations but I think yeah us and st. Charles just the st. Louis area even apart from church yeah is known to be very generous like when things happen worldwide or when things happen in the United States st. Louis is one of the first to send people to help to send rescue workers to send money to send so that basis is very strong in the people that it become disciples yeah and they're very generous yeah I mean like we've met our specials we've and in not like forced or I mean I'm sure there's some people that way but I never I was always just like I remember we used to have walk-a-thons and we have one in Forest Park and we'd have little drink stations and you know I talked to people that I work with and they'd sponsor me and and I remember one year we didn't have that but we didn't have a lot of money and I'm like I really want to do something so I had my own walk-a-thon and I had stuff made up and I walked to my house because my co-workers knew about that and they knew I was for we had a garage sale one time we're like six or seven families brought stuff and we made like five six hundred dollars for special we you know just that let's do this being generous I think and in even when I don't know if you were there on the Sunday they talked about special and Liberia in Russia and the heartland and the campus ministries and all of that and just how it's like let's do this let's you know we want to support the rest of the world we're very well off you know I mean our church I mean you you have a wide variety from people that are living on Social Security and you know month to month and then you have people who are very prominent business people or doctors or yeah yet it's all kind of that mindset of it makes me think of the no hunger holiday the pictures of oh my gosh that's become bigger and bigger every year because people are just more and more generous yeah and the kids you know have their turkey drive and they're all excited and they bring their money and I don't you know on a Sunday we were talking about it Alex Bryant was preaching and he talked about his son was out and he saw his neighbor across the street and he goes can we mow your lawn to raise money for to buy turkeys and the guys like I don't really need it mowed right now but he donated some money you know and then another person was they knocked on this lady's door and she's like no I don't like and then later she came back and said yeah no raking leaves they're raking leaves and so they raked up her leaves and she came like \$100 oh wow and so they went and bought a bunch of turkeys I mean but his son is the one that said dad we need to do this so it sounds like it's definitely the disciples have the heart to do oh yeah is that also part of the culture of like st. Louis area of like people here in the heart are very giving yes okay at least in st. Louis our city kind of has that reputation yeah but I think people then becoming I mean not everybody obviously that's a generalization but people that have become disciples have brought that just mindset of you need to help yeah giving you know we want to give mm-hmm how can we give to help the God's Church grow that

KS: what are some of the ways that the church has interacted with the community difference

LR: well I think a hunger holiday hope when we had the flood in 93 we had tons of people volunteering to fill sandbags and and food and I know there's been different sisters even that at one time like had a had a sandwich fruit chip thing at their house and just and then took it to the homeless yeah you know and just I know I hope did a lot with the tornado last year they came in and this is interesting because I went to a funeral one of the brothers mom passed away and I put put it in my phone right so I'm going the way it's telling me to go and it takes me to this place and I'm like this is not the building it was like a church building with broken-out windows and boarded up and I'm like it says I'm here but I am NOT there's no street name by that name here and I'm like so I put it back in my phone and started taking me it took me through the tornado area yeah and on the news it made it seem like there was one or two areas that were affected like Forest Park big show video of all the trees and then this one Street got a lot of exposure it was block after block after block it was smiles yeah and I'm like that is convicted yeah what hasn't been done these homes that are still rubble or still have things on their roof yeah or whatever and I know that Yolanda and Hadrian who had up our hope worldwide chapter here okay worked with hope actually some of the people with hope worldwide came in after the tornado and gave us a lot of direction and help in moving ahead like what do we do in the future yeah like how do we meet needs in the future so I want to ask you know what the

follow-up is because I haven't yeah until I drove around that neighborhood did not realize yeah how much there is left to be done yeah I'll have to get their contact so I can yes I'm like oh yeah pictures of the volunteers of the image but right and be really great to hear oh gosh and then no hunger holiday started out where we just made the things and then we partnered with another group yeah that does a bigger even bigger and so we were able to meet even more families like I think we gave 600 families oh wow a Thanksgiving meal last year yeah and I know different people different groups volunteer yeah at food pantries you know we've done like for the month like that last Wednesday of the month is like a serving a service week and our group had gone to where my father-in-law lives because it's a retirement center but it's not your fancy one it's the one where there's a lot of Medicaid patients and there's they don't get a lot of visitors and there's not a lot of people that are caring about them and paying attention to them and yeah we realized like we were having a game night and we realized okay this group of people is not like where my mom lives which is the retirement community and everybody's still pretty yeah we said and active you know their game nights are great and they get a bunch of people showing up and at ours it was like we go around well I'm really tired so I'm gonna lay down you know or one guy down my leg is hurting today they just have a lot of health issues and so it was like okay this isn't quite working we'll have to come up with it but I know other groups go to food pantries other groups help and with the holding babies oh yeah and at least in Phoenix it's Hushabye I don't know if it's yeah it's no it's what's it called here I don't know but I would love to sit and hold babies I think that would be amazing but yeah there's just a lot that each individual group has has done my daughter and I went to Circle of Concern it's a food pantry in Valley Park one of the better run okay it's a lot of needs it's amazing yeah organization and we would go and package up groceries on Saturday morning and then give it out to the people as they came in yeah you know and so it's not like we have to recreate the wheel yeah we just need to jump in and be the hands and feet in places that are already established which I think is a better use of resources yes in some ways but we do have the things like no hunger holiday and we've done Women's Day has done some things with gathering up Tiger Lily oh yeah that that organization is amazing but then getting like women's products oh yeah in diapers and things that you know to I think one month we just all brought in diapers every Sunday yeah and the collected wipes and diapers and stuff like that and then took it to one of the local facilities that gives that out to single moms and yeah

KS: One of the questions that would probably be an all interview with disciples when the letter came out yeah what was it like kind of in the time around that and kind of how did the church here

LR: Well it was I don't know about everybody else but I was dealing with a husband who was drug addict alcoholic yeah trying to get restored you know trying to so it was like I'll read it later you know or it I know a lot of people struggle you know with it saw those things but I also know people changed do you know what I mean a lot of people like yeah that's the way it is I'm leaving and other people said well yeah that's the way it is but we don't want it to be that way yeah let's change mm-hmm you're teachable do you know what I mean and we're not the same we don't do things the same now Cove it kind of threw everybody for a loop now we're trying to get back to just you know I think you know that commitment and desire to like get together and and everything because so that looking at you since you've seen the church and as in all of its ages yes that did it basically whether the storm pretty well with the letter like there was some shake-up but it just kind of or was it kind of they were rough moments oh yeah oh yeah I know for a lot of people mm-hmm you know it was it was like what is this and and I know some of it for me because I came in and I've noticed this very clearly those who were converted during that time that the letter talked about yeah have struggled more have left more readily because I don't think we had the Bible foundation like studying the Bible as a whole yeah really getting into the Bible it was more like converting people to our doctrine okay instead of Jesus okay and I think that's one of the things the letter tried to address because if you convert someone to a doctrine because it can become legalistic because it's it's the information yes not Jesus whereas when I you know some of the people and I look at some of the people that are the leaders in the church now yeah they came from the traditional Church of Christ yeah they brought that wisdom Bible knowledge I should say in application with them Gordon Ferguson Tom Jones the Bairds the the Brumleys the you know people the lambs you know people that had been in more traditional churches but had that Wow we we need to apply all this we need to do this and they I think to me in my mind those are the ones that if they were in your congregation yeah helped

you weather the storm yeah because they brought you back to what God was calling you to okay because if you were in the traditional Church of Christ that could be very legalistic him mm-hmm and so you wanted to get away from that yeah that's what attracted you to wholehearted commitment and this is you know Jesus is Lord and really that being yeah you know what I mean and so I think for me I've noticed that the people that struggled the most were more in that period where they were converted yeah that way yeah as opposed to you know people that had a different foundation I don't know I mean that these are all generalizations of course and just observation of people I knew there I'm sure there's other stories yeah where you know it shook me shook me you know because I remember our kind of our because there are so many changes the first year yeah with leadership and Stephen Terrell went back to South Carolina and then Nick and Debbie went back to Chicago to get more training and then you know different couples came in and it was just like you know and I remember us joking on staff it was like flexibilities our middle name just try to say you know we're gonna be faithful yeah God is in control and so those of us who were converted kind of that in the first group first wave we'd already been through a lot of that so it was like okay here's one more challenge that had we have to deepen our faith we have to question our faith what is our faith in yeah people or God or you know and I I remember being at a meeting where things came up and I remember saying something along the lines of you know God is in control of all of this yeah you know I don't worry because I believe this is God's Church you know and if I didn't believe that to begin with I'd be gone yeah so if you don't have that conviction to begin with yeah it's easy to just go find another congregation or go worship somewhere else or go but I remember first Corinthians 12 was something that really spoke to me I can't say to the hand I don't need you yeah you know that in the the ear can't say well because I'm not a hand I'm not important or an eye or whatever you know it's like no we're all this is God has put us all together God and we're all a mess and we're all work on and and I remember talking to his sister one time that's struggling and I'm like well good luck finding a place where there's perfect people or no you know no one is to have an issues because if you go there you'll be the one having issues because you have them now yeah so you go there are they gonna these are people don't even know you yeah and they're gonna help you I said we know you we love you unconditionally just the way you are all this stuff going on I said it's up to you but I mean in my mind it's like why why wouldn't I not stay with people that already know me and love me yeah and go somewhere where no one knows me yeah now know if they'll love me because I don't I don't know where they're at

KS: I'm from other stories I've heard that a lot of the disciples who kind of left the church up in the wake of the letter but a lot of them have returned that's held true here too

LR: Yeah oh yeah especially when the church is planted out in st. Charles hmm okay there's a lot of people that have been restored and there's other people that have been restored because they come back and it's different people change people repented yeah we don't do things the same way what are some of the major differences that I think humility in leadership you know I think applying the word all of the word yeah do you know what I mean because some of the things that were issues before were because people weren't applying the word yeah truth and love love is patient love is kind doesn't have any doesn't boast is not proud doesn't keep a record of rounds okay are you loving this person are you talking to them in a loving way yeah no that means you're not following what God said it's like you think that was something that was there in the beginning or like just kind of out of habit got we got away from cuz I once more yeah I think in the beginning when it was when it was not so defined like what a disciple was and what you know because they didn't study that with me I remember studying that on my own I remember doing a word study on disciple and you're going whoa this is putting flesh to this concept of total commitment you know what I mean but then when you put it on paper and then it steps yeah or defining yeah then it's not it's not discovery in the same way yeah do you know what I mean it can become a checklist yeah oh a real disciple does blah blah blah blah you know whereas Jesus when he called him it's like yeah I'm God yeah in the flesh and you need to follow me me yeah and I'm gonna tell you lots of things you know I'm gonna preach the Sermon on the Mount and it's gonna pierce you to the heart because it's all about the heart yeah cuz you guys have been following laws which I think is what became yeah of the movement yeah any movement honestly any church yeah any it can become that mm-hmm just because that's our nature yeah tell me what to do I remember when my husband was struggling before he left and he would call a Jim Albert and he'd just tell me what to do just tell me

what to do and Jim's like I'm not gonna tell you what to do I'll give you verses to read yeah I'll let God tell you what to do I'm not gonna tell you what to do you know what I mean and John was like he's on the list yeah he's what just tell me what to do and I'll do it you know and and that wasn't what he needed he needed his heart yeah and so leaving and being desperate and crying out to God on our back porch when he was you know God got his heart where it needed to be yeah when he came back yeah and so but I I think that tendency is just part of our nature yeah that's true you know too and and of course we're gonna deal with that yeah we're gonna deal with how do I look versus what's the truth you know a lot of the things that have come out about people that were abused or whatever even my mom didn't talk to people about it because she didn't think they would believe her yeah yeah do you build that when you don't have like an open transparent leadership or whatever you build that in if you're not following the rules if you're not doing what's right you got to hide it because you don't get in trouble yeah you know what I mean it's like a little kid it's like like a teenager yeah oh yeah I did this and I was with my friends and I'm not gonna tell my mom because I'm gonna get grounded

KS: you know to where our teenage years like by the time we entered the 90s that's kind of the letter pre letter yeah

LR: the letter kind of describes a teenager yeah

KS: think about it because thinking about that analogy of like speaking with Roger Lamb like he and getting kind of that rough larger history yeah that it seemed like in the early 90s there was almost a crisis in the movement which was honestly the first I had heard of it right but it was also that point where like Hope Worldwide was being at least about thereabouts of Hope Worldwide we were getting disciples today and all of these larger structures being in place right right but it sounds like was there like that crisis of movement so we're like let us do these things to get us like connected yeah and then we entered our teenage years of the 90s as we're getting more defined like how would you like I need more information yeah I tell me your perspective

LR: well I think our our culture like how you have to communicate kind of directed certain things okay but I think your mindset towards those things is really important explain the communication like the internet oh yes social media the world has it Don Pat yeah so if we don't as a church have an option out there for people you know like being able to watch service for people that are I remember Leroy there was a sister who studied a Bible with and her husband was in the service and they went to Korea hmm Leroy who passed away a few years ago his wife just passed away sent her the tape from the message every single week oh wow every single week it was her lifeline yeah back here we didn't have that yeah so now you have you can upload it or you can live stream it or you can do I mean that can become a crutch for some people but it's also a lifeline for some people yeah there are several sisters or saying like hey I have a box of tapes like can I give it to you a bunch of CDs

KS: I will eventually be collecting those to digitize them.

LR: so go back and see if any of my little cassette tapes work you know how they can degrade over time but um so yeah I will take any and I will turn any of that okay oh yeah I'm sure I have some somewhere yeah I did purge a while ago but I I think I still have some because I would like to like upload one of those as a final project right right it's like maybe one of the history yeah history one of the anniversary yeah services like if that's even a possibility yeah I think now I think what I've seen in the church in the last few years is much more of a focus on meeting the needs of individual groups okay you know like when you go to a conference now you have a grief recovery class you have you don't just have it's not just all about okay let's make everything great okay this is how you meet a great campus mystery this is how you can be a you know it's more like how can we help you as a person be all you can be for God yeah and a thing and then go do those things and that wasn't before so like I think when and this is like culturally to you know what I mean it's more acceptable now yeah to talk about therapy to go to there to have a therapist to yeah go to counseling you know but at the time it was like when the social media first started yeah like disciples today or whatever it's all about put your best foot forward yeah and just like Facebook people post things and that's not real life yeah that's not what's really going on yeah do you know what I mean and I'm like okay yeah this is great but what's the struggle they went through to get there and what you know I liked when they'd have stories of people oh yes and and overcoming different things and not just yeah that church is doing great and blah blah what does that mean what does it mean the church is doing great you know and then five months later your leader steps down because he's been having an affair with somebody I mean I like yeah what's the reality that

and that it's okay yes to think of we talked a little bit about the st. Louis Church of the ICOC and it's larger that it seems like like do you feel I know my opinion on this what's your opinion is it feels a little bit more disconnected now than it was like a few years ago disconnected how that since we're international are like and it's perhaps because I've moved around where like the connection like we have our sister churches around the world and we see ourselves as this international church do you do we still like is there still that vibe or are we like a little too I think in the heartland we've really tried to keep that because like we have a heartland conference every two years or three I don't know how many it is and so you know the states and like church camp okay all the kids coming to all the parents or counselors all that you have a lot of overlap in the Midwest okay and so like I have good friends in the Kansas City Church I know people it in those different places you know just like Jody Hayward came and she and her daughter I know them mm-hmm from 1979 I knew Mark her husband you know what I mean so it's like I think we've tried to do a better job I'm not gonna say better because I don't know what other churches have tried to do I just think that when I think about Columbia or I think about Springfield or I think about Little Rock or I think about Arkansas Fayette or whatever I think of people that I know there okay I don't think oh there's a church in Columbia okay I think of the people that I know and love that live there okay so I don't feel disconnected mm-hmm in the Midwest and I feel connected to the churches we help support because like the Russian evangelist will come over with his wife and and speak and yeah and you know when they went to Liberia and they took video and pictures and came back and spoke about that and you know so we have that connection mm-hmm so I can't speak for other places okay well it was like is the heartland connected to our other regions like the Atlantic Coast or like I don't know the southwest is way too far yeah yeah I was like well I know I feel connected through my friends on Facebook mm-hmm yeah you know that I'm that I'm friends with the brother in Texas you know people in Chicago yeah people you know we have a pretty strong connection to Chicago anyway even though they're not because the Simmons curtain caddy used used to so there's people in Chicago they used to live in st. Louis that are in the church there yeah we feel a connection to Nashville because the people that we know I know people in New Orleans and it's people it's people it's relationships that I've connected with people the question is like as we become as we get older as a church yeah and both as the st. Louis Church but also ICFC like what do you think we've forgot to bring along with us along the ride and what have we done a good job bringing like connecting through the generations of teaching the new generation yeah it's gonna carry the church on I think it has to start with helping people want to be like Jesus yeah it's not about the ICFC yeah I mean honestly oh yeah no no I mean I think if it becomes about yeah that yeah then we miss the point well I like I'm just thinking in church as a movement of making sure like carry it on like but so but my my perspective is if the movement isn't about being like Jesus yeah it will die yeah so well I guess I had a way to bring with you I guess I guess my brain for the ICOC is that relationship with God like that is kind of what I hear that in so I should ask people around the world yeah so I should probably start okay

KS: What does the ICOC mean to you?

LR: Oh because nothing really nothing okay it's a it's a denomination it's a name of a denomination okay so that's why that question was that are misunderstood because yeah because we were in my mind yeah it didn't start off is that that's a label mm-hmm that we've put or other people have put on us and it means absolutely nothing to me okay except that if I know something is the ICOC then I know some basic doctrines gonna be the same okay I know depending on the congregation when they started they may have struggles that I've already worked through you know the label isn't as important to me just like like when I was a brand-new Christian a year old as Christian I went to Perksville yeah we had a Monday night class part of that Monday night class was the history of the Church of Christ mm-hmm so I mean everybody has a history oh yeah yeah but but the history to me has to take a backseat to God's bigger plan like if I don't see the ICOC as part of God's bigger plan then it becomes about the ICOC and other people yeah who've left will use that phrase and I'm like what are you talking about what do you even what do you mean by that do you know what I mean because in my mind I'm like are you associating all these negative things with the ICOC are you associating people that love God and want to be like God with the ICOC

KS: What does that mean you know what I mean so in my mind I'm like yeah so we're in total agreement I'm thinking of the ICOC as this like more of this mission of helping people be like a group of people working with common goal so exactly that's so we're on the same page okay thank you for pointing out

LR: Other people bring that up yeah I'm just like what are you talking about because I didn't join the ICOC mm-hmm I was baptized into Christ I don't even know what the Church of Christ was like my mom is freaking out going well they help they all have long hair and they don't they wear long like she grew up the Church of Christ she grew up with mm-hmm was very kind of rules oriented and like okay so she grew up Methodist and and so her people that she knew they were church so when she was kind of like what

KS: I grew up Southern Baptist so it wasn't until I was reading one of Gordon's like like actually his like he goes to the church of history I was like oh that makes sense why we do all these things

LR: Yes yeah didn't grow up a part of that why you know instrument we didn't have instruments and all of a sudden we do have instruments and why people struggle with that and then people that want to have women speak and then what we haven't ever had women speak and now and I'm like go to our congregations go to our meetings women are speaking all the time they're doing announcements they're just thinking they're you know helping with communion there yeah whatever so teaching your kids you know like yeah it's I mean the thing that I appreciate about where I'm at and the church as a whole is the willingness to keep learning and to keep growing if that stops then we've become a monument and not a movement yeah people have used that phrase before but it's but what are we moving forward see I think that's what we've matured in before it was like oh we're coming a monument we need to get back to the whole movement yeah it's all about just one or two different things not becoming like Jesus and reaching the world that because of that and so you know for me knowing that we've matured to the point of okay getting back to movement means getting people back to Jesus yeah not our doctrine not our I mean yes doctrine is important I'm not I'm not saying that I'm just saying Jesus isn't the center of your doctrine yeah yeah I don't know you get away from yeah you know but we did this and we did that

KS: I'm part of two weekly book club so okay okay centered on like what finding the heart of God and

LR: oh that's cool that even when it comes to sharing your faith you're not oh I'm inviting people to church right I'm sharing my life right is like I'm sharing for my love right sharing my faith is faith not inviting someone at church yeah and it's like I'm building relationships with people to show them God not to necessarily like to invite them to church but if they write another church body amen like if it's long as it's bringing them closer to God that yeah then sometimes that's the journey yeah people go on to come back I remember talking to a brother there was recently he's in the process of being restored and he goes he's talking about he goes you know I went all these other places I went he said but you know what everything I learned about God I learned here yeah everything I learned about God I learned here yeah and he's back yeah because that's that's the thing that brought him back with his heart to want to know God yeah you know and so I just thought that was interesting comment yeah you know they said everything I learned about God I learned here yeah from our sister churches that's like something that runs throughout I'm like yeah that you really learn and there's so much diversity and oh gosh yeah it's I'm very grateful for the churches that allow multiple brothers maybe one day sisters but brothers yeah lessons to get those different perspectives well we've John and I've been asked like we're gonna do a communion in April and but last year he shared his his transit you know what yeah how God had moved in his life and this time they're gonna let me share how God used that situation yeah and and what I learned you know I gotta put it under three minutes but you know it's like yeah like yeah it's like Aquila and Priscilla they were together teaching Apollos yeah they taught him so it will be interesting to see how our church continues to grow and yeah and what's interesting is there's when I hear there's differences of opinion there's always split yeah I remember traditional churches of Christ splitting over whether they put a kitchen in the building oh wow okay little like things you're like God is like going what happened to unity yeah what what happened to you know yeah and so when you get so nitpicky yeah about different things you lose the heart yeah but that's another thing I appreciate that we can have disagreements of the core doctrine we're like you know we agree on but other things non-salvation issues we can't have that we can disagree about the kitchen yeah yeah and be okay or coded or masks or whatever you know what I mean it's like yeah it's really I mean that's and I think that's maturity and growth when you when you you know Paul talks about that a lot with eating meat you know or eating you know like consciences and things like that that's different than sin yeah do you know what I mean and so it's like like I said it requires discernment yeah talk about it you know legalism requires no discernment yeah it just requires rules yeah and Jesus was discerning to the dividing heart and soul joints tomorrow

I mean I'm like okay that's very discerning not you know how do you buy joints tomorrow I don't know but the Word of God does it so you it's letting God's Word yeah do those things in people's hearts yeah it seems to be like so from what you've told me about the st. Louis church in both its parts the strength of like we're seeking God we're seeking discernment and that yes there are storms that have come our way but we've weathered them together because we love each other we love God right and we might disagree on yeah some peripheral issues but at the heart of it right right

KS: and that kind of and as we make that transition from movement to generational church that's gonna be out of what helps us and

LR: we kind of have in a way I mean I'm 64 yeah I'm the third generation yeah from you know what's be kids being born now you know I mean like my son yeah is you know you've got you know when I think about the different leaders I think about Sherwin McIntosh's son you know chase who is down in Atlanta yeah you know I think about the Albert's son Kendall who was here and was leading our youth and family ministry and his sister who just lost her husband he was 34 his work but anyway but that generation like yeah those are there those are the challenges that that generation is coming those are gonna be their pillars and their stones and they're like okay this is when God yeah showed me who he is and yeah revealed his strength to me in his comfort yeah you know what I mean and so and then you've got this next you know the kids that are in my class that I love you know no even even yet you have these teenagers yeah and this is one thing that our church is um I think excelled in a lot with our youth with our classes mm-hmm they had I don't know if you've heard about this it are it are building anyways we have the warrior boys and the glory girls and it's that age from about second grade to maybe third grade to fifth grade and they really try to adapt it to how boys and girls learn differently generally and the things they do with the boys they don't have any furniture in their classroom like they play games Bible memorization game Wow throw the ball go to first big you got the answer you go to you know what I mean they play games and what's cool is to see that first group become your middle school and your high school and how some of those boys are so grounded in the Bible and you're like wow you know and other people are saying what do you do with your because they're seeing the st. Louis teens at camp and they're seeing they're seeing a difference in what they know about the Bible and what they understand about God and there and so it's like that's maturity in my mind is when you pass on to that next generation yeah that love for God and understanding of God and his nature yeah do you know what I mean and so that definitely is a plus oh we probably went over but that's totally okay like okay that's what we'll do

KS: I'll ask one more question and then we'll pause take a break and then we'll do another round of just like you looking at the collages and oh okay okay so like for the final question for this round okay what are some of those scriptures that have like pulled you through from like early days to now

LR: like you're my gosh um Psalm 51 you know Alex preached about yesterday but like created me a pure heart renew his steadfast spirit you know times that I've struggled just knowing that you know you you are gonna be in a place someday when you don't have a willing spirit when you don't have a clean heart when you've lost you the joy of your salvation yeah and that God can handle it yeah not that he's okay with it I don't necessarily like that praise but he can handle it yeah and he can help me and he can change me he can restore me he's prepared for that day yeah yeah it's like I'm the one that's like God and God's like I got this just come to me I you know I've helped other people before you you know so um I think that's been a really you know one that grounded me Isaiah the description of the suffering servant mmm you know and how you know since we considered him despised with it and I remember going back and putting I yeah in there because I definitely was the Pharisee yeah so Matthew 23 was convicting to me yeah you know maybe not to a drug addict or a prostitute or someone's a party or whatever but to me Matthew 23 was like yeah pierce my heart you know and and one thing when I was a freshman someone gave me a topical Bible and it really helped me I went in and I just looked up all the verses on love because I had gone to a class some kind of retreat either campus retreat or may have been for everyone at the church there and I remember Tom Jones talking about intimacy with God and I remember being embarrassed like you know like you know what I mean it was just like that's just weird you know but that set some groundwork for me to understand a relationship with God is close and vulnerable and open yeah do you know what I mean and so I went and I was looking up I think like having that mindset of I'm having that topical Bible and then later getting a concordance

help me see like okay I want to know something about a topic I'm not gonna look up one verse in the back of my Bible or two I'm gonna I'm gonna read from Genesis to Revelation and I want to know what God says about this topic yeah that really helped me you know because I could refer back to that when my husband was struggling first Peter two and three when it says you know Jesus was silent yeah he entrusted himself to him who judges justly yeah and then right after it says went wives in the same way if your husband is unbelieving like a lot of times we'll just read the thing about wives oh your life blah blah blah yeah you don't read the before you know the therefore why you know what oh I need to imitate Jesus yeah I need to entrust myself to him because he sees the big picture yeah he knows what's really going on yeah you know and that helped me with anxiety it helped me with worrying about my husband you know those kinds of things like I said first Corinthians 12 about the body yeah you know help me not be prideful and arrogant no I don't need what you know why are these people here what what's their purpose you know and God's like I'm the head who you paying attention to you you know you're not the head so anyway though those those are some that were that I still yeah bring back to my mind because they get me grounded yeah

KS: Excellent. Okay so you're still good with me using these.

LR: Okay