

Oral History Cover Sheet

Interview Information	
Project Name:	Gateway City Church, St Louis and St Charles, Oral History Project
Narrator:	Matt Kitrel
Interviewer:	Katie Sweet
Interview Date:	April 29, 2026
Interview Location:	Zoom (St Charles, MO)

Descriptive Information	
Narrator's Biographical Information:	
Interview Summary:	To summarize the interview: Matt Kitrel shares his personal and spiritual journey, beginning with a religious upbringing influenced by his grandparents, but feeling disconnected from faith during his early adulthood. Facing financial hardship and personal struggles, Matt and his wife Kathy were introduced to a supportive church community, leading to their baptisms and deep involvement in church life. After a period away from the church, marked by the challenges of raising a special needs child and the grief of losing their son Timothy, Matt describes a gradual return to faith, catalyzed by a vivid dream and the encouragement of friends. He reflects on the importance of community service, the unique aspects of the St. Louis/St. Charles church, and the value of resilience, humility, and supportive relationships in spiritual growth. The interview also touches on church history, leadership changes, and advice for new disciples, emphasizing perseverance and openness in one's faith journey. (Adobe AI Summary)
Interview Key Terms:	International Churches of Christ; Gateway City Church; St Louis, MO; St Charles, MO; 2016 Reach Conference; Grief Recovery;

Technical Information	
Recording Format:	Video
Digital File Type:	M4a
Interview Length:	01:06:47
File Name:	GMT20260430-000526_Recording.m4a; GMT20260430-000526_Recording.transcript.vtt; GMT20260430-000526_Recording_640x360.mp4
Interview Quality and Recording Conditions:	Zoom; no background noise
Consent Form File Name:	Kitrel, Matt, 04-29-2026, St Chalres (Consent Letter).pdf
Restrictions:	None
Additional Materials:	None
File Name(s) for Additional Material(s):	

Administrative Information

Workflow Process	Name	Date
Cover Sheet Completed By:	Katie Sweet	April 29, 2026
Index Completed By:	Katie Sweet	April 29, 2026
Transcript Completed By:		

Narrator's Name: Matt Kitrel
Interviewer's Name: Katie Sweet
Date of Interview: April 29, 2026
Location of Interview: Zoom (St Charles, MO)
Index Completed By: Katie Sweet

[illegible]

Interview with Matt Kitrel Transcript

Narrator's Name: Matt Kitrel

Interviewer's Name: Katie Sweet

Date of Interview: April 29, 2026

Location of Interview: Zoom (St Charles)

Transcript Completed By: Katie Sweet

Transcript Edited By:

Additional Notes:

KS: Okay, so today is April 29th, 2026. I am here with Matt Cottrell. Do I have your consent to use this for my digital history project and then for the ICOC Church Oral History Project?

MK: (00:22) Yes.

KS: Okay. Now we can officially begin. So the first, we're going to start tough. The first question is, what is your testimony?

MK: (00:32) My testimony. So it's funny because we just shared this on Sunday, but for this purpose, we'll share it again.

So I want to start, I guess, with my grandparents. They were very religious in a good way. You know, basically God was part of their lives, daily lives, from prayer before dinner to nightly prayers to anytime I'd stay with them, they'd usually tell me a story as to why this is good or why that's bad or why we should do it this way. And it's usually, it was biblically related and they'd always share those stories in there. They were married for 72 years before my grandfather passed away.

So they were very, out of all the religion that was in my life, they were the most true to the scripture, to the Bible, that really showed their heart where it was really at. So I grew up with a lot of religion in my life. I didn't go to church with my parents, but it felt like a chore, it felt like a job. And my mother kind of bounced around from different religions. And so we, so for me, it was always just kind of, I almost viewed God as a wish granter of sorts.

And so I, occasionally I would go, I might throw in, you know, a little extra money in the pot, hoping I'd get 20 return on it, you know, things like that. It just wasn't, I didn't really understand what I'd know now, but that's what it was back then. So I was in sales, street commission. We just had two kids, both of them, two of them under two years old. And I had a sale that was out past Troy, Missouri.

And that's where my grandparents lived, was in Troy, Missouri. So this was an important sale because I had to make the sale, otherwise I wouldn't have the funds on that paycheck to pay a house payment, a car payment. I was behind on everything. We're on the verge of foreclosure, verge of a car being repossessed. So much was just going on financially.

My wife was a stay at home wife, a mother. And so I went out to make the sale and it should have been a easy sale. I was saving the guy money and drove past Troy, Missouri on the way out there. And I always think of my grandparents when I drive past that exit. And went out and I tried to make the sale and the guy said no.

So he said he didn't want to make, he wanted to think about it more. And so on the way back, this was pre-cell phone times. So on the way back, all I had was myself to, you know, to talk to. And I was just thinking about things and how I felt like a failure. I felt like I wasn't able to take care of my family, my kids, that we were going to be kicked out.

What are we going to do? Are we going to move in with my parents? What, you know, those, all those questions, right? And so on the way back, I passed the Troy, Missouri exit again on the way back. And I just started thinking of my grandparents again and thinking about how happy they always were.

And even though they weren't rich, they were, you know, middle income family, married, you know, like I said, 72 years and just always happy. And I always felt like, what am I missing? You know, there's something I'm missing here. I've always felt like I was a good guy. I didn't steal.

I didn't cheat on my wife. I didn't do anything that I wasn't supposed to be doing like that. But I was your average guy, you know. But I thought, you know, what, what, what am I missing, God? What do you want from me?

What, you know, and I just remember sobbing and crying on the way home quite a bit. And so when I got home, I told Kathy that, you know, she needs to call anybody and everybody in our phone book that we had because she sold Pampered Chef, you know, and to call anybody else to set up a Pampered Chef party to potentially make some money to hopefully hold off the bill collectors. And so she called her former manager, who I have known, Stephanie Rivera. And I was friends with her and with her husband, John Rivera. And Stephanie was Kathy's former boss.

And she was very intimidating is the words I've been instructed to use. But she's a very athletic, aggressive type of person out, you know, like very let's get this done type of attitude and sort of a very intimidating person. And Kathy and her didn't really get along great, you know, as a co-worker situation. But she's like, I guess I got to call her. So she called.

And Stephanie was 100% different person was like, Oh, yeah, no problem. Set up something. What do you want to do? We're going to do this weekend. And it all everything was coming together.

She set up the Pampered Chef party. She went met Stephanie and her Stephanie's friends and turned out they were all, you know, Christians, disciples with the church. And so she made some good sales, came home and, you know, it's like how saved right in the but on top of that, what was better was that they invited her to study the Bible. So and I thought, well, this is a nice coincidence, you know, this is I guess maybe God's trying to say something. I don't know. But so she got together with Stephanie and her friends, started studying a few times.

Trying to hold it off. So anyway, she was supposed to meet with a few others with the church and they studied a couple of times. I they invited me out. I had every intention to go into church or but something would come up, you know, because like I was still financially behind. So maybe a potential sale would come up or something and I wouldn't be able to go.

Stephanie's husband, Stephanie and John, had a hockey game party that they invited a lot of their friends and Christians over to their house. And so we're all kind of sitting around watching the game and talking. And I didn't know anybody but John and Stephanie and my wife, obviously, and with John talking with everybody and Kathy talking with all the new friends that she's making, I was basically just kind of watching TV and then Ken Calinato sat down next to me and just started started up a conversation. And as we were watching the game and I got to know him a little bit, got to say hi to a few others. And then as I was leaving, Pat Tucker was at the door coming in and he kind of stopped me and he started asking some questions.

I got to meet Pat Tucker at that point and we loaded up and went about our way a little bit after that. And I started studying the Bible or well, I'm sorry, I was finally able to make it to church on a Sunday. Warren Pottinger was preaching and it was at a music school. I want to say maybe three or fifty four people at the time. And they showed the K&N video, Kingdom News Network video, which kind of showed, you know, things that other sister churches were doing across the world and and how they were helping spread God's word.

And it really kind of opened my eyes a little bit, think that this is a lot bigger than just a small Roman church that doesn't have a home. And, you know, it kind of was nice to see that. And the production was very professional, even for being, you know, a video of kids in like some country in Africa or something, you know, it actually looked professionally done and very well edited. And, you know, so I thought, wow, they really got their act together. And everybody was friendly, everybody was talking, fellowship was great, and then Ken Catalinato and John Rivera were talking off to the side and then they'd lean over to me and they said, so what are you doing Tuesday?

And I said, well, I guess nothing. OK, and then they start talking again. I have no idea what they're talking about. And then about five minutes later, as we're finally kind of my wife finally wrapping up her fellowship and her talking with friends and we're getting ready to walk out, I kind of leaned over to John and said, what are we what's going on Tuesday? And he said, well, we're going to study the Bible with you.

I'm like, OK, so it's not like they even asked me. They just told me. So so we got together and we just started studying. And just a couple of months later, both Kathy and I were baptized. She was baptized a week before I was

roughly 30 years ago. On the 19th was her baptism and 26th was mine. So 30 years ago. So it's that's kind of what happened.

KS: So 96.

MK: Yes.

KS: Yes, and I know from your testimony on Sunday that you and also because I'm friends with your wife, she's my partner in crime, that you all did eventually kind of leave the church for a time. What year did you stop coming?

MK: (10:52) I am terrible with dates. I'm going to probably say. Probably maybe eight years ago. Oh, yeah, I'd have to really check with Kathy maybe a little bit more. But yeah, I want to say probably I want to say Tim was maybe no, probably let's just say 10 years ago, maybe so somewhere in that range.

KS: And then you all returned. It was twenty, twenty five.

MK: But yes, it was roughly about probably two months before we opened the church, maybe three months. St. Charles.

KS: OK, could you share about like coming back and being restored?

MK: (11:43) Yeah. So another another story of where, you know, God intervened. So with that, we stopped going, as we just mentioned. But I still always kind of believed in God, I still kind of believed in what I read. I just didn't feel like like I was he necessarily cared for us, you know, like like was maybe I just wasn't included in that. And there are some of that. And part of it was because of my youngest son, Timothy. He had special needs. And every time I'd see he'd had seizures or events or happen where it was just me, Tim and God in a room and he's seizing and it's not stopping. Prayer wasn't stopping it. Nothing was stopping it outside of meds, emergency medication. And it just made me feel like, you know, OK, is he punishing me because of, you know, through Tim and things like that? It just a lot of anger was building up.

And well, Tim, on May 1st of twenty twenty four, passed away and when he passed, I was my anger just elevated even more, you know, towards God. I just I thought, why did he take him, take my boy from me is what I kept thinking. And probably about a week after I remembered that I had a dream when my father had passed, about a week after my father passed, I had a dream of with him in it. And it was very vivid in how it ended up. Basically, it was I saw him in a dream and I got to give him a hug goodbye. It's almost like I knew he was dead, but I got to give him a hug. And I was able to say goodbye. So, like I said, when Tim passed about a week later, I started praying. For a dream, I knew I wouldn't have any new memory with him, I knew that. The only way a new memory in the sense that could be formed would be in a dream, and I wanted to be able to say goodbye again.

And so I my nightly prayers, I usually start off with saying that I hate you. I hate you, God, for taking my son. I hate you for for doing this to me, for giving him such a hard life, you know, things like that. But I just want to want one prayer. That's all I ask. And then I'll leave you alone. That's what I kept. I would pray that.

And I prayed that every night, daily for four months. I have I have it written down, but I prayed that nightly for probably about a I think it was one hundred sixty three days every night. That I prayed asking for the same thing over those months. I stayed in contact with Ken Calinato and he I went to a couple of his family group events that he had. Kathy and I went to Dennis Bowles birthday party, which had some disciples that and I went to an occasional I think I went to two men's midweeks that was held at the the airport in the Sandsbury Church.

And so I kept I was still angry. My prayer always started with that, but I held out hope that I'd have a dream. Then that's what I was really wanting. It wasn't like I was really wanting a relationship with God. I was wanting a dream of my son.

But over that time, I also knew that that attitude that was not where my heart needed to be, I knew that I had to change that that desire. But it wasn't going to happen for me not praying. It wasn't going to happen for me sitting on a couch at home. So I thought, you know, I started making those little efforts. And then. And then I had the dream, I had a dream where it was very vivid that I got the in the dream, I got to say goodbye to Tim.

A lot of very interesting detail, but I remember and I don't usually remember my dreams. If I remember one dream a month, that's a lot. But that one, I do remember very vividly. And the next day, you know, instead of saying, I hate you, I said, thank you. And. And it made it really softened my heart even more, you know, I I still shared my anger.

I still said I wasn't happy that, you know, that that was his will, his son would be taken. But but I at least I at least I I was thinking that, you know, he gave me he gave me what I asked for. And I said, what do you know?

I also knew that my temper was getting shorter. My I was getting road rage was increasing. My views with my wife was getting shorter and I'd get angry quicker and around that time. And I just so half of the dream happened. I said, what do you almost the same prayer? What do you want from me, God?

What do you what do you want me to do to help me out here? Help me heal my heart from this anger. Well, less than a week later, I want to say one of the guys I work with, a co-worker of mine that I manage, he reached out to me on Facebook. He friended me on Facebook. And I always avoided trying to friend people that I manage because I didn't want them to feel like they had to hide something in their personal life, you know, work related or something like that. But since he reached out to me, I thought, well, you know, we're close friends, close enough friends at work, you know, OK, I'll do it.

So I friended him. Well, probably a week later, I was just scrolling through Facebook like normal and I saw his post came up on a Sunday's like he took a picture. He was in a car outside of a church and it was raining, apparently. And he said, I went today, but I couldn't go in. But some church, I don't know what church it was, but some of his friends responded saying, why would you want to do that?

And others were saying, well, you know, let him have his own journey, you know, and some are supporting, some are kind of making fun and teasing. But I saw that as, you know, maybe that's God's way of saying, hey, you know, let's get him to church. So. So I, who hadn't been to church in years and then my wife, Kathy, who has previously expressed not only no interest in going, but it was then said she wouldn't go back after we said that. So I told her the situation and I said, I'm going to talk to my friend Chris and find him out to church. I said, you know, but I want to let you know that I'll probably be going this Sunday.

And she actually said, well, if you want to go, I'll go with you. So we decided to go either way. And my friend wound up not coming, but we still wound up going. We saw a lot of friends, people we recognize, a lot of people we didn't recognize. And, and she, what was very impactful for me was not only was I welcome back, but I always felt like I can talk to people and hang around people.

I never had that problem, but I knew Kathy, her personality is she likes to, she opens up when she's around me, but she's always had a rough time kind of being around somebody that, you know, new people. So, but she really felt welcome and she is, I think her words, she felt at home again. And so with that, and then there's a couple of the brothers that came up to me and expressed their joy of seeing me that day, which was great. And then Tim Spencer with Dan Schrader and I were talking and Tim said, well, you know, is there anything you need, you know, what can we do to help you or something like that? It wasn't necessarily like, Hey, reach out.

It was like, what can I do to help you? He was volunteering something. So, so I told him, I think I need to get with somebody and just talk over my feelings. And so, so that's, that's where it started. We started coming back to church every Sunday and eventually the midweeks and the small groups and I got with Ron and a few other brothers and Kathy got with Cheryl and some of the sisters and we just, you know, opened back up and really kind of got our hearts and minds straightened out.

KS: Well, thank you for sharing all of that. I know we're May 4th is Tim's anniversary of his passing.

MK: May 1st. Yep.

KS: So thank you for sharing all that. So, to, so as I mentioned with the digital history project, part of it is about St. Louis history. And so looking at our St. Louis church, so you became a disciple during the dude, where's my church era of meeting in various locations. When did we purchase the Sandsbury location? Do you remember?

MK: (22:27) I, I, I'm not good with dates. I do remember a lot of the shuffle, a lot of the hotels we'd go to. I remember the committee that was put together and they made to go find a location, something central because we had people come from Illinois and people come from Passport, Missouri. So there was a wide range of distances with the airport being a good central location. So I know that they were looking for a place for a while. There were, we're meeting in Chesterfield, Missouri for the administrative offices were in Chesterfield. And we had some, some spare rooms in this, this large suite and where we'd have children's ministry and, you know, on, on the Wednesdays

and stuff like that. But it really, I, I, I think that was mostly just for administrative work and for, for midweeks, it wasn't big enough to hold church there. So, so we did a lot of hotel churches and a lot of home churches.

KS: (23:37) Do you remember when the Sandsbury building was bought?

MK: I don't, I don't, I do remember going, but I don't remember when, when it happened.

KS: Okay. Well, it's more of like, what is the story of like, I know the building there in Sandsbury used to be a Catholic school and it's been, and I know especially children's ministry was very happy to finally have a building where they didn't have to pack everything up. Okay. That, so have you visited a lot of our sister churches or?

MK: (24:14) A few. I've been, I want to say down in Miami. I went to one down there. I would, we went to the Kansas city church. I know, I know. I went to, there was a church out in Los Angeles. I went one time, I want to say it was a midweek though. So there was, there's been a few that I've been to that maybe Kathy hasn't, but for the most part, it's been all in St. Louis. I did a little more traveling with my, my job and, but a lot of them, it wasn't, if, if I was out, out of the state on a Sunday, it's because there was some work related things. So I might've missed it or something. So occasionally I get to go.

KS: So from your experience, you know, visiting sister churches or talking with disciples from other churches, what do you think makes the St. Louis slash St. Charles church unique? What makes us us?

MK: (25:12) Well, I don't know if I can necessarily say it was unique compared to the other churches just simply because I noticed with the other churches too, is just the diversity that was not only in St. Louis, but the Miami and no other churches, not only the diversity and race, but the sex and age and everything from the you know, the elderly down to the infants, you know, it's, it's all over. So I always thought that was impressive. I know when I started going, I guess that the, the K and N video was very impressive, was, was great to see how we work with you know, around the nation.

I also thought it was impressive that Aaron Pottinger and Warren Pottinger were a mixed race couple, you know, that they were leading the St. Louis church and the fact that he was 20, I think he was 24 or 25 at the time when we started going and he was leading the church here in St. Louis. So so specifically about our church compared to other sister churches, I, I, I can't really say that there was anything that really stands out as being unique to me, I guess.

KS: That's fair. That's kind of one of the questions I asked just to see kind of what it, what comes to people's minds. So that the St. Louis church, just like our other sister churches have been, have been very involved with the community. That what are some of those kind of our like community service through Hope Worldwide or others that you remember or participated in?

MK: (27:03) Yeah, there's been a couple they've, you know, in leading up to the event, there's always the work this weekend, you know, you kind of get this feeling of, you know, you know, I'd rather sit at home and watch the football game or something. Right. You know, and then that's just the, you know, it's sometimes the, the, you know, attitude creeping up, you know, but that, but then there's when, when you're doing it, though, it's just so much fun. We've had many times we've helped serve the homeless for Thanksgiving when we've had Thanksgiving meals. I remember one time we did a cleanup St. Louis where we, the whole church and with the police presence, we went down to some of the inner city areas and just walked block to block to block.

And we would just pick up trash along the sidewalk and along the streets to help clean up. And I remember there was a, an older gentleman that came out and sat on his porch and he kind of yelled at us and, but we weren't sure what, what for at first. And then we found out that he was thanking us that that was the first time he's been able to sit on his porch in months he was saying. So I guess it just, it didn't feel safe on his porch. But when you had, you know, 400 people and police driving up and down the streets, you know, the presence was there and, and, and, you know, it was, it was great to see everybody helping, helping others out like that.

Then we've done obviously some of the Turkey, you know, donations that, or everybody brings a Turkey. I mean, there's, there's been a lot of, a lot of times when we're just even as simple as going door knocking for house church, you know, even though it's not really a charity type situation, it was still just something that an outreach, you know, to, to get to know people and people, people. And, you know, I think what had helped me in some cases was, and what was good for the kids, cause my kids were a little younger, all under 10 at the time. It is just, it opens your eyes

to all the blessings that we have. I mean, even though, like I said, I was paycheck to paycheck for a lot of our, a lot of our marriage, so probably the last 10, 15 years.

And so for a majority of our marriage, paycheck to paycheck, we're still, we got, still got food on the table. We still have a house, even though we almost lost it, we're, we were actually helping people that did, you know? And so it kind of helped put things in perspective as to, yeah, I might be struggling day in and day out on things, you know, but I'm still blessed. And, and I got the, it helps help. I think my kids feel be more appreciative of, of the toys they had, of the, of the food they had on the table, the shoes that they, you know, we were able to get them and, and, you know, yeah, we might be going to Goodwill for a shirt, but at least they got a shirt, you know, that's clean and washed, they have married parents, you know, things like that. Just, it was, it was great to, you know, it sounds kind of odd saying that, you know, cause somebody else was worse off than I was, I, you know, that's how I saw it, but, but, you know, I think it helps, helps humble us, you know, in some ways to, to not only be appreciative of what we have, but also make us want to help others in those situations to help lift them up. And, and, you know, if I can't necessarily get them out of the situation or in at least be able to encourage them I just remembered another outreach that we kind of did, there was our, our family group helped at a woman's center where they had the abusive, you know, or the, the husband or the baby, the baby's dad, you know, might've been abusive or something. And it was a center for ladies to be able to go and take their kids and live while they find some permanent housing. And some, you know, it might be their days, some might be weeks and some even months, but it was nice to be able to go there and, you know, we, we'd help cook and we'd help clean and just spend time talking and being able to encourage the kids and play with them and stuff like that. Cause some of them, you know especially being a women's center, they didn't have a male role model, somebody to talk to.

I don't want to say a dad to look up to, but, you know, I was there to at least, you know, for the, the, the young, you know, seven-year-old boy to be able to, you know, talk sports or something, you know, things that, you know, they don't, might, might not get with a mom or with a lady. So, you know, it was a, that was another nice, fun opportunity we had there to help others in need, so.

KS: Do you have any other favorite memories of being a part of the church here?

MK: (32:33) Yeah, we, you know, excuse me, we've done a lot with the church when it comes to different ways of serving, whether it be in children's ministry, I've helped usher. There was a time when the ushers used to wear suits and ties. So when we had little name badges, you know, to, to wear that said usher that we, you know, things like that. So we, we would do that and we, you know, and helping with the kids again, it was, it was fun learning all these kids songs from people older than me that it's like, how do they have so much energy to keep up with these little ones, you know, and then obviously as, as a couple of weeks into the serving, it's like, you realize you have to have a serving, it's like, you realize you have that energy to, you know, it's just, it's easy to pour out, you know, when, when you, when you know the songs and when you know the lyrics, when you know the kids and you just love on them, like, you know, like they're your own sometimes. So, so there's, there's that, you know, and we, we've had times with Timothy that there might not have been some, there were some, definitely some times that we're saddened by certain things. You know, we might touch upon those later, but the, there was an event in the year 2000, actually that the church sent Kathy and I out to in California called the Net Ministry. And it was the T was technology.

I can't remember what the N and the E was for, but I think one was in, I can't, new media, exceptional children and technology or something like that, I think was the, was what the net NET stood for. And that, that was really exciting. It was, like I said, it was 2000. So internet was kind of new at the time and you know, it wasn't, it was a little raw at the time. So it talked about like for the new media, how, you know, different things from TV and video and internet streaming of sorts and uploading videos and websites, you know, and that obviously crossed over into the technology portion portion as well, but how places such as China and Russia, where there was ban on Bibles and how they were getting things in electronically and digitally, you know, versus, you know, the old way of sneaking in books, you know, printed media.

So it was exciting to hear about that. But for our part, we went out because of the exceptional children, because Tim having special needs and the hopes were to hear, not only be encouraged, but also to, to hear some practicals and some things that maybe we could bring back to St. Louis. And so it was a great learning experience, some great

lessons and such, but we came back with very high hopes to be able to implement some of the ideas in the St. Louis church. And, you know, we got to share with the church and everybody was excited. And I know some people that we shared with were inspired.

But unfortunately they're just, I guess the need wasn't, wasn't as big as what we saw. The leadership saw other areas where maybe need was greater. So, so we never were able to implement some of the ideas, but yeah, it was, that was one other, one other event, I guess, that we got to partake in.

KS: Were you still here for the 2016 REACH conference? Or is that about the time?

MK: (36:37) Well, I can't remember. We've done, we've done other, I probably, no. Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Down, down at the America Center. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. We were, we were part of that. We did go to that. That was, that was neat. Had a lot of people obviously there. I thought it was, it was almost too overwhelming. Too many, so many people. But, you know, I mean, that's, that's what it was for, right. You know, just to have a great central meeting place for everybody in the Midwest here. And yeah, so it was, it was definitely a fun event and a lot of neat things. You know, I know, like I said, Ken Calinato was a good friend of mine who baptized me and he was playing in the band. And so I remember talking to him about a lot of things and how much, how busy it kept him. And here, I thought I was busy. And he's, he was bouncing all over the place with so much, because he not only had to perform, but all the practices and the warmups and the stuff leading up to it. So, but yeah, yeah, that was down, down in the city. That was nice.

KS: And you said that y'all started coming back around the time that St. Charles, we got our building.

MK: (37:59) Yeah, yep. It was, so we were meeting, the St. Charles group was meeting at the 8020 location out in O'Fallon. I, there was a few times I almost came when I, when they were someplace in Cottleville, never went though. And then I heard they, I guess they went out to O'Fallon. And then, so we, I want to say maybe two, three months out there, I think we met before, before, it probably was a little bit longer, I guess, before we started prepping the current location on Mexico road. You know, obviously a lot of painting, a lot of, a lot of work put into that.

KS: So what was your part? Like, what did you and Kathy do? Like for, for, for the, for the St. Charles group or like when we got the building and getting the building up and running?

MK: (38:57) Yeah, so at that time, I hadn't quite 100% committed to come back yet. So, excuse me. So at the time, the church in St. Peter's, St. Charles was needing, you know, like Wi-Fi and just internet services and just basic IT stuff set up. And I know the Stansbury location suggested that they reach out to a friend of ours, Dave Stubblefield. Dave Stubblefield was a member out of the St. Louis church, but, and I work with him directly. So we're, we sit 10 feet apart from one another. So, so when I heard they were reaching out to him and I mentioned I could potentially help because I knew Dave was kind of not in, he didn't really want to help too much with some suggestions and physically installing and things like that. So I kind of offered my services because I figured the network engineer pool of resources with the church might be kind of minimal, you know, so there might be only a few that understand it. So I offered my services and that kind of locked me in because I was, you know, it's like I would have felt bad if I would have just said, go by X, Y, and Z and turned my back, you know?

So, so Ron Hammer, the evangelist was reaching out to me quite a bit saying, well, what should we get? And I talked to Dave and Dave gives some suggestions and then I'd start to look and then I'd make some suggestions. And finally, when I realized I wasn't getting a lot of guidance from Dave that I'd pretty much just have to make the decision. So I kind of went, dove into the deep end and said, Ron, you need to buy X, Y, and Z. And so he did and he's like, it's all here now.

And I think he was trying to ask for my help to install it. So I'm like, okay, we picked out a time and I went up and I just started working on this a lot. Everybody else is painting. I'm kind of working on setting up the Wi-Fi, setting up the router and the switch and getting everything connected, the battery backup. And part of that was the data cables that were ran.

A lot of them were pre-existing. A few were new, new runs. And I had to tell Ron, okay, since we don't have this, you need to go buy this and this and this. And so now we got this whole setup, this whole, all these tools and parts

and stuff. But the good news is we wound up saving the church roughly probably, I think it was five or six thousand dollars by doing it ourselves instead of me helping out versus being a third party to come in.

And there was a whole system that had to be torn out. There's like, for example, the old, what's called PBX system, which is the old phone system. It's wires everywhere. You know, think of a telco closet. You don't know what wire goes where and what it's for.

Well, with the setup we were going with, we didn't need any of that. But what I didn't know, and I told Ron, I said, I don't know if any of this controls your alarm system, your, you know, for the security system. I don't know if this controls any of your fire alarm system, because sometimes that's part of it. Sometimes you have to have an active phone line for things like that. So I said, it'd be nice if we can get all this out, but we'd have to identify what needs to stay.

And so about a week later, Ron said, oh, I got it all taken out. He sent me a picture. And so he took it out, I guess, without even verifying. Fortunately, nothing broke. So it just made the rest of the install go smooth.

And so we, yeah. So after that, we got it all nice and set up. And now every cable, every data drop works except for one. And that's because they decided to put a big, you know, 500 pound desk in front of the port before I was able to fix it. So and I told him I'm not going to move that on my own.

But all in all, it's all good. But yeah, that's been my role. So every time I come into the church and if there's any kind of hint of any issue, Ron says, Matt, the guest's Wi-Fi is not working. And I'm like, well, I'm connected to it. He's like, well, that's funny. It wasn't working an hour ago, you know. So I'm like, I don't know what you did. It's like it's working for me. You know, things like that. It's not a once a month.

He kind of taps me on the shoulder for something like that. But it's, you know, but I found a lot of reward in that in some ways, you know, that I was able to provide some of my expertise, some of my experience in ways that was able to help the church. You know, some people are handymen, they can paint well and they can hang doors well or whatever, you know, do things like that. You know, I felt blessed to be able to help the church with setting up the network and terminating cables. You know, it's not a it's not a pretty job.

It's not something you share and you can look around and say, oh, look at the, you know, casual beige, you know, like the church has now for paint color. You know, it's like nobody goes and says, oh, look at that neat Wi-Fi access point sitting on the wall. But, you know, it's nice to know that if somebody does want to hop on the Internet, that I kind of help contribute to that.

KS: Fantastic. I can just see all the cords pulled out and be like, well, OK.

MK: I do have before and after pictures. So good.

KS: So you were still part of the church when the Henry Creed letter came out.

MK: Yes.

KS: What are your memories about the letter? Kind of memories and feelings?

MK: (45:21) So it was interesting at the time I the letter came out and I it's like nobody wanted to talk about it. Nobody really wanted to share what was going on, what the letter was about. And so I really kind of went into my church life as in blind faith, you know, that the leadership want to share and talk about it. They would. And it felt like in some ways it felt like they were hiding stuff, you know, in some ways and not not saying they were just, you know, that's the kind of. Shield that you want to put up, you know, that when you go, why aren't they talking about it? Why isn't this being brought up or or it's being talked about in hush hush circles or maybe in like whispers or or maybe in just small little kind of by the way this happened type stuff. So I thought that was I thought that was a little disappointing and how, at least to me, how it felt like it was handled. Yeah, maybe it was handled better in other circles.

Maybe my small group house and maybe didn't share it. I don't know, you know, where the breakdown was in some ways. Maybe if I would have spoke up, I might have said, hey, what's going on with this? Let's let's. So I even to this day, I I don't I don't know a lot of the details about the letter.

It's almost been like, you know, my attitude's always been like it's my relationship with God, you know, and if the church is not doing something right, it's still my relationship with God. And so I've always thought that, you know, I did. I was in some ways on the other side of the coin was I was somewhat impressed that the church was willing

to say, you know what, maybe we're wrong about things and we need to have a different stance on this. You know, my understanding was the church before the letter was we were the church, the one church. This is how you go to heaven, you know, through our church type of attitude.

Not that it was a cult per se, but it was just a we were following the Bible. The Bible says, do this. We do this, you know. And so, you know, but then when the letter came out, you know, the way I understood it, somebody said, hey, how do we know we're doing this right? How do we know?

And so the church finally said, you know what, there's a good point. How do we know? And that actually kind of I kind of impressed me. So it made me go, you know, there's validation for that. If a church is willing to say, we might be making a mistake. Let's correct some things. Then that's the kind of church I'd want to go to. Yeah. Oh, I didn't mean myself. Yeah.

KS: I honestly haven't read the Henrik Crete letter yet. I've just asked people about it, and it seems like a lot of people have read it. But I know one thing that they usually point out about it is the cycling kind of forming kind of more of a toxic relationship and a bit more controlling. So, yeah. So that was just really funny because I've honestly not read the letter.

Maybe eventually I will have to. But for now, I've just been asking people, assuming you all have read it and know. OK, so I think I have two, maybe three questions left. So we're in this in stretch. So in the Old Testament, many a time, God tells the Israelites, like, hey, like pile up stones, build a pillar of stone type thing.

And those kind of pillars or piles of stones represent great victories or great defeats. The purpose is to help remind those who come later, this is what happens. So in your walk with God, like, what are some of those pillars slash piles of stone?

MK: (49:55) Yeah, let's see. Well, I guess kind of like what I mentioned, I always believe that, you know, it's a personal relationship with God. And so there's been a lot of. Persecution, I guess, from within my family about, you know, maybe not spending time with my, you know, parents or, you know, sort of, you know, you're always at church, you know, things like that, or, or work when the guys, you know, would go to lunch at Hooters and I didn't want to go. Just just upholding my conviction, I guess, I stood my ground in most situations. I mean, I'm not going to lie, you know, I'm a guy, you know, I'm human, everybody sins. But there's, there's been quite a few times when opportunities would present itself that I could easily just turn my back on God.

And so I'm trying to like different situations where, like, on my first week at my current job, the guys, the team wanted to go out for happy hours, a celebration. And I was excited to go with them. You know, I wasn't not a heavy drinker. I might have a beer or two type of thing. I just kind of go have a little fun with the guys.

And my team, I'm an IT, so they're all guys, you know, so, so anyway, they, they asked me where I want to go and it was a down in the city and I didn't know when it was going to be open. So I told my manager, I said, well, you know, just pick a spot where you normally go and we'll just do that. So he picked a place called the social, excuse me, called the social house. And I was like, okay, you know, I had no idea what it was, you know, I just, it was a standard bar or whatever. So the Friday evening as I was wrapping up and, you know, I was, I was, I was, I was, I was So the Friday evening as I was wrapping up and probably 80% of the team had already left to go.

Me and another guy were kind of wrapping up stuff. And I decided to look up the address. And when I looked up the address on the internet, one of the comments was the social house is the best place to go see the topless women in the city of St. Louis. I thought, wait a minute, St. Louis is not a, you know, nudity is illegal. So I was thinking, is this supposed to be in East St. Louis, which has bars like that.

And so I found the address. I was like surprised to see that, that basically it was a bar that the women paint themselves from the top, from the waist up. And, you know, I was like under pressure. Should I go? Because they're happy hours for me.

You know, they're trying to throw this because it's Matt's first week and, you know, kind of get to know him. But, you know, I felt it would be disrespectful to my wife and, and, and obviously as a Christian, I didn't want to do that. So to my wife or to God. And so I had to call my boss up and say, look, I just, I can't do this. It's not, you know, something I want to do.

And so they respected that. And I guess in some ways that was kind of a something I, you know, been able to hopefully, I think it really laid a foundation to some of my coworkers as to what to expect out of me, you know, that I wasn't just some, some guy that's going to be, you know, church on Sundays and, you know, mad on Mondays, you know, type of thing. So I'm not sure if that's the kind of answer you're looking for when it comes to like a pillar, you know, but that's.

KS: It's open to interpretation of what kind of comes to mind, figure all everything you're answering is what the Spirit is kind of prompting. So there's not a right or wrong answer. And what are like, what are some of the scriptures, the verses that have helped you in your walk that helped you run the race?

MK: (54:30) Uh, let's see, I'm going to have to cheat because I, um, one thing I am terrible at is actually memorizing the actual scripture, uh, number. So, um, uh, but, um, let me pull it up here. So I don't, uh, uh, cheat a little bit or don't, uh, paraphrase it. So Matthew 25, 21.

So, um, uh, give me 10 seconds. Um, so basically what happened, why, why I really liked this scripture was, um, when I had, um, Kathy and I had three children, uh, when Allison was born, she had a high level jaundice and, uh, we had a nurse that would come in and spend time with, with Allie as she kind of healed. Uh, we actually had come to our house to help, um, and that came to pass. And then when my, um, oldest son was born, uh, he swallowed amniotic fluid and was in children's hospital for, uh, I believe it was three weeks. Um, and, uh, they said he had about a, um, 25% chance of passing, uh, and, uh, you know, scary times.

Um, but he, that came to the past, you know, he, he healed. And, uh, so we, we had two difficult childbirths. Um, and then, uh, I had a page a day calendar that, uh, you know, was a Bible scripture and, um, uh, the, the calendar, uh, scripture for that day, uh, for this one specific day was, uh, Matthew 25, 21, um, where it's, uh, well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a few things. I'll put you in charge of many things.

Come and share in your master's happiness. And why that's important to me is because that's the, that page a day calendar was the same day that Kathy told me, uh, found out she was pregnant with Timothy. And so, uh, I thought about how, looking back, how, you know, we've been put in charge of a few things now, uh, we'd be put in charge of many more things with Timothy being a much more dependent child. Um, and, uh, it was, it, you know, it was really that in, in my conversion story, basically how, you know, driving past Troy, Missouri, as I mentioned earlier, um, uh, just seeing things where God put stepping stones and paved the path for me, uh, has really helped inspire me. Um, there, and, um, I mean, even one more thing that kind of helped with, uh, Timothy and his special needs is before we even had children, Kathy and I both worked in a group home and helped people with special needs.

That's where John and Steph Rivera that helped, uh, lead us to the church, um, where we knew them from. They were worked at a group home, people with special needs. Um, so years before we even had a child that happened. And then, um, and then when Kathy was pregnant with Timothy, um, there was a test, uh, that they did that they used to determine if the child might have Down syndrome. And, uh, the test came back positive that one of two things is going to happen.

Either your child has Down syndrome or they got the conception date wrong. And so what they usually do is they do another test to, uh, to kind of firm up the dates and see if, you know, what it might be, excuse me, but we had, we had, I think it was roughly about two weeks between the test. And, uh, during that time, we had a lot of time to be able to pray, get some guidance and advice and share and open up with some friends. And a lot of those prayers were if God, if, you know, if it's meant for our son to have special needs, uh, you know, you've obviously prepared us for it. Uh, so we, we kind of set our heart hearts, right.

And, um, at that time, uh, well, months, uh, we found out that the test was, um, that the conception date was wrong. So that, uh, so everything was considered was going to be a typical child. And so when Tim was born, uh, 10 fingers, 10 toes, brown hair, brown eyes, Kathy was joyful because she wanted a son that had brown hair, brown eyes, because the other two kids had blonde hair, blue eyes. So, um, but all three of the kids have my, my little widow's peak, I think they call the birthmark on the back of the neck. So, uh, uh, but Timothy, uh, was born, uh, typical child, everything seemed normal.

Uh, but it wasn't until months later that we found out he was born with cerebral palsy and, um, he's on the autism, uh, spectrum and some other, um, um, other things that, you know, uh, affected his life. So, but, but that, it always

made me come back to that scripture of, um, you know, the well done, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful with a few things. Now I'll put you in charge of many things and, uh, the common sharing your master's happiness. And I always thought that last part was like, um, you know, uh, sometimes you give responsibilities as a manager.

I give responsibilities to some, one of my guys to, to go do something. And, and I always try to frame it within their experience or expertise, what they can handle, what they could do. And, um, you know, I know some guys can handle some things and others can handle a lot more. And so it felt like, like he trusted me with, um, being able to handle more than he, uh, not only was prepping me and training me and teaching me and coaching me and bringing me along and paving that path, but he, I was finally at a spot where he trusted me to be able to handle a gift, a child such as Timothy.

KS: So, um, so kind of final question, um, what would be some advice you'd give to like baby disciples?

MK: (61:07) Uh, baby disciples. Well, uh, it would definitely be to, um, stay open, uh, stay humble, uh, be prepared to fall, uh, and, but be prepared to, um, to get up, you know, um, the, uh, I think I heard a saying that, um, you know, you can't fall unless you stand up. And, uh, so that means that one point you were standing up, in other words, uh, you know, Peter couldn't walk on, he walked on water for a little bit, you know, uh, he did it. Um, so for baby disciples, you know, stay faithful, you know, God, um, God expects us to make mistakes, but he also, uh, wants us to, um, repent and, uh, still follow him, you know, and, um, uh, that he's still there with, with open arms, you know, um, with, uh, with Tim's passing and, uh, being in grief share, you know, uh, one, one thing, I guess, uh, when we all become disciples, uh, Christians, we, uh, we think, oh, life's going to be so much easier. You know, we think God's going to, you know, protect us, shield us, guard us, watch over us, do all that.

And I mean, he does, but it doesn't mean that our life's going to be that much easier, you know, life is still life, you know. Um, and, uh, you know, to, to remember that, um, you know, as we try to go through the, the hard times, uh, you know, we will experience sorrow. We will have grief, we'll lose family, we'll lose friends, uh, not only, uh, with death with passing, but also with just with life, people move away, uh, things happen, um, people wrong you, you know, and, and that's, that's, you know, life. Um, and, uh, I know in, in Romans 12, uh, I think it was Romans 12, 25, uh, you know, it talks in Romans 12, it talks about acts of love, um, such as being hospitable, um, welcoming one another, uh, speaking truth and being earnest. Uh, but there's also, uh, I think it's 12, 25 Romans 12, 25 says, um, rejoice when I, when we rejoice and, um, grieve when we grieve in some, uh, versions say, uh, weep when I, when others weep.

And, uh, that's an act of love, you know, is, is not only rejoicing, but it's the weeping. Um, it's the, the grieving with other others. So, uh, that, uh, I think will, would help, um, form a strong bond, you know, make sure you have a good, strong relationship with somebody, uh, not just somebody is some bodies is good, but it all starts with the one, you know, um, and that, that takes effort. You know, for me, I, I put a lot of my bond in my relationship with my wife and, uh, almost first, which obviously the Bible says we need to be a strain of three cords, you know, with our wife and God and ourselves. Uh, but, um, when that strand started to strain, uh, I think if I had a close friend at the time, um, it could have been, it could have been mended easier.

Um, you know, so, so definitely, um, you know, have a, have a close friend, somebody you open up with and be willing to not only be rebuked with, but also celebrate with, you know, being able to weep with, but also rejoice with, right. Uh, so, uh, I've had multiple over the decades. Um, it hasn't always been the same person, hasn't always been the same group, but what's great is, um, if I, you know, since we're out here in the St. Charles group now, if I go over to St. Louis, uh, church, um, I still see a good handful of those people, you know, 10, 15 people that, that over time I've spent hours and days with that I've, um, you know, turned into decades, you know, that I know, um, some very closely and some on the surface, but at least there are people that I know I can trust and, uh, I can open up with, I can talk to and, and they not only be, um, open up to me, but they'd be honest and truthful, you know, so.

KS: Okay. So is there anything else you'd like to add or any questions I should have asked that I didn't ask?

MK: (66:07) Uh, let's see. Not, not necessarily. I guess, um, uh, I think we've covered it. I was trying to, uh, I wasn't really sure, um, how deep or how far to go in some of these, but, uh, yeah, I think, I think we've covered a lot of it. Uh, I'm sure if something else comes up, I could probably tap you on the shoulder and we, we can amend it.