

# FELLOWSHIP NEWS



## The Ascent Church Merges with First Baptist Church to Share New Building in Galesburg, IL

Two years ago, First Baptist Church in downtown Galesburg, Illinois faced closure and prayed for a solution. During that same season, The Ascent Church, a former multi-site campus of Northwoods Community Church, prayed desperately for a building to call home. God orchestrated the two churches to find each other and begin a conversation. Nine months later, after many prayers and discussions, they merged into The Ascent Church and now meet in First Baptist Church's beautiful 176-year-old building. Andrew Wingo, a senior leader at Ascent, says it has been a life-giving experience.

Dorothy Lam, previously the teaching pastor at First Baptist Church, led her church through a critical point of needing to either close its doors, revitalize, or join with another church. Together, she helped her congregants navigate the lengthy and sometimes difficult discussions necessary as they began speaking with the leadership team at Ascent. "Our missions aligned, our values aligned, so that was

the first green light to keep talking." She has now joined the staff at Ascent to assist with benevolence and outreach. This role will enable her to continue serving the impoverished in the community, discipling believers, and helping people when God "gives them a spark" to find a way to serve those in need. Dorothy is excited about what this means— what they can accomplish together.

March 17th was the first service when both churches met in the new building. Many volunteers from both congregations came together to paint, clear things out, and prepare the building for the merge. "The community of people coming together was really cool," Andrew says. He sees how the Ascent's history with temporary meeting places like the YMCA and a high school will help the body of believers keep their focus in the right place. "Our church has been built on a desperation for Jesus to move," Andrew says. "He has been so incredibly faithful. This was not on any of our radars, but it was on his."

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### Moss Brook Church Celebrates in New Building After 20-Year Journey as a Mobile Church

God stirred the hearts of a few individuals in South Paris, Maine to reach their loved ones for Jesus in 2002. After prayer and discussion, a church began in a house, then a fire station, then a high school. Over the next two decades, Moss Brook Church (MBC) continued on a journey, meeting at a fairground during COVID-19, greenhouse, parking lot, movie theater, and tent. Rain or shine, with camp chairs or snow shovels, Moss Brook waited patiently for a permanent building to call home.

On February 25th, 2024, MBC had its first service in their brand-new building. Pastor Mike Booker, one of two teaching pastors who leads Moss Brook, said the energy in the congregation was electric. "Everybody was so excited to be together."

Over the past 20 years, Mike has been deeply moved by the people's positivity and perseverance. "We have dozens and dozens of people who will do anything necessary," he says. "We've just seen God bring us these people with a heart for this community." Many worked on the new building, donating equipment and labor, as a result 85 percent was completed by volunteers. Mike says this enabled MBC to step into its new building debt-free.

In the days ahead, Mike is excited about ministries blossoming throughout the weekdays, not just on Sunday mornings. Having a permanent building and land will enable Moss Brook to build a stronger bridge between itself and the community via the soccer field, hiking trails, a playground, picnic tables, and many ministry events they look forward to scheduling throughout the week.

### 48 Scholarships Awarded to College Students by the Christian Service Foundation in 2024

This year, the Christian Service Foundation awarded 48 scholarships to students attending Christian-based colleges in 2024. This is more than double last year's total. CSF president Bruce Wright says he'd love to see that number keep growing. "We feel college-level Christian education is very important for our young people."

CSF increased the scholarship amount this year from \$750 to \$1000 and opened the application to incoming freshman. This, along with spreading the word to our FEC families, will enable more students to receive this support. Students can apply for the CSF scholarship in November by filling out an application by visiting the CSF website.

Bruce is always impacted by the faith portion of the application process where students share their faith story, as well as the thank you notes CSF receives. One student wrote, "I'm so grateful to God for continuing to open doors so that I can go where he leads. Thank you and God bless."

CSF, whose roots date back to 1949, works alongside FEC to provide investment options, loans, and scholarships. When FEC churches or individuals invest funds with CSF and receive competitive interest rates, their funds are used for loans that help other churches build or renovate. The interest these churches pay CSF is then used to fund scholarship programs for college students and campers attending Miracle Camp or LifeChange Camp, and to provide a general donation to FEC. This circle of ministry is a "win-win-win", Bruce says. "It really impacts you that this is why we do what we do. This is the Lord's work, not CSF's work."



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