

The past few years have been an adventurous time for Pastor Daniel Brooks, to say the very least. When he and his wife, Gracen, decided to plant a new church in the quiet town of Galena, they weren't exactly sure what to expect. But thankfully, what's followed since then have been a multitude of blessings within and from the community. "We're grateful to be in the building", the pastor said about their current location, an old church building that sits behind the Greenville Township Fire Station on Highway 150.

The original building was constructed in 1848, followed by the current church house about fifteen years later. The location served a United Methodist congregation for nearly a century before they chose to consolidate with the Greenville United Methodist Church up the road. The building was later home to the Highlander Community Church for just under a decade before they too chose to leave.

It looked as if the building would remain abandoned until three and a half years ago when the Brooks came to town. The circumstances which brought them to Floyd County, according to Daniel, played out in one of those ways which only God can orchestrate things.

"We were youth pastors in Louisville," he recalled, "and we were trying to figure out what to do next." It was a season of prayer for Daniel and Gracen as they wrestled with the many directions that stood before them. "One day I was praying about it and I felt like God was telling me we needed to plant a church."

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The pastor, curious but cautious, told God that if this idea was seriously his will for the couple, then he would have to get Gracen on board first. "So I told my wife and her immediate response was 'let's do it!' I was floored."

The Brooks initially searched for a place in Kentucky before feeling lead to shift gears and look in southern Indiana. One thing led to another, and they eventually reached a deal to rent their current building from the Galena Cemetery Association, who currently own property and the nearby graveyard. "It's been a blessing," Brooks said, "the Cemetery Association has been very good to us."

He says the church has also been heavily blessed by the outpouring of support they've received from other churches and residents in the Floyd County community.

There's a rustic beauty about the Galena Church of God. While the facility has aged well over, it's has seen its fair share of repairs over the years. Most recently, an ongoing renovation project started in the basement's fellowship hall a year and a half ago. In a very unusual construction scenario, the fellowship hall was added on to the current building in 1955. Crews had to literally dig it out from beneath the main structure in order to build it.

The congregation currently has less than twenty active members, a roster Brooks proudly calls “small but mighty”. Despite their size, the church is very missional and outreach minded, managing to give generously to mission causes on a regular basis. Most recently, the church was able to provide Thanksgiving meals for three families in need thanks to contributions from their members.

“Half or more [of our members] were not involved in church before, or haven’t been part of the church for 20, 30 years. That’s our heartbeat.” The Pastor says they’re continuing to see people come to know Jesus better, and that any numbers on an attendance sheet would pale in comparison to that.

Of course, one of the benefits of shepherding a smaller flock is that each member has everybody has a much easier time getting to know each other on a more personal level. “Each individual who sits in a pew [here] would tell you ‘I’m growing some’ or ‘the congregation loves me and I’m wanting to grow’.” The congregation holds regular fellowship gatherings to help foster this family atmosphere within the church, hence why the current renovation is so important to the church.

The work is rewarding, but certainly not without it’s challenges. Daniel preaches regularly and sees to the the day to day functions of the church. Gracen plays piano during Sunday morning services and leads worship, a role she sometimes shares with her husband. Much of the other activities, from taking up the offering to cooking food for impromptu fellowship meals, involves an ample supply of volunteers from their member base.

Brooks says he would eventually like to get a thriving ministry off the ground, but he’s very pleased with the direction God’s leading them in at the moment, and they intend to remain true to the church’s vision of leading more people to know the Lord.

“We’re not monolithic, we want to reach as many people in the community as we possibly can”, Pastor Brooks proclaimed. “Jesus is hope. That’s our message.”