



"It's Always Been About the People:" Pastor and Wife Started Metro Church With Humble Hearts

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - Pastor Paul and Melody Westbrook have become household names not only throughout Edwardsville/Glen Carbon but around the area with their dynamic ministry for the past 31 years.

Paul and his wife moved here in 1991 from Oklahoma to start Metro Community Church in Edwardsville.

When they started, they began their journey in a basement of a home. Pastor Paul has always been able to captivate people with his messages and the aura he exhibits.

Quickly, Metro Church grew to where they had services at nearby Edwardsville schools - LeClaire School and ultimately, Lincoln Middle School and for several years that was their home.

Pastor Paul said at the start, he led a group that contacted 20,000 people around the Edwardsville region to see if they had a church. He said they only really tried to move people toward his new church who didn't have a place of worship. Their intent was not to take people from other churches but to bring new people to Christ.

A total of 35 members, counting kids, started their journey in a home basement. Initially, they grew to about 200 members and that enabled them to move to the school for weekend worship. Now, the church reaches literally thousands and has a separate campus in Vandalia.

Riverbender.com live streams the Sunday services.

"We had skeptics and doubters but we loved the Lord and where we were," Pastor Paul said. "We wanted our heartbeat of the church to be user-friendly."

Paul said what has happened at Metro Community Church has been an incredible journey.

"What God is doing here is very special," he said. "Some were shocked, and sad when we announced we are leaving, but there has been very much understanding and excitement of what the next season holds for us. The good thing is we are staying in the area. The hard part is letting go of the people and families, knowing the connection we have had through highs and lows. The highs and lows really pull you together and there are many people we have known for so long here with the church."

SEE PASTOR PAUL AND MELODY'S FAREWELL VIDEO MESSAGE:

Metro Community Church purchased the land where it presently rests and moved into the present facility more than a decade ago.

"It was just a farmland and cornfields when we first built it," he said.

"About 14 to 15 years ago, we started the Vandalia campus."

Pastor Paul said the reality is the church has tried to stay simple with a lot of small groups for not only adults but youth and teenagers.

“Probably what touches and moves me the most is seeing the lives that have been changed here,” Paul added. “We have had some people show up at Metro very broken and others who are very successful in business but empty inside. To see what God has done in people’s lives at Metro and the impact on marriages and families make it all worth it. Since last weekend, we have heard a lot of angles about our time here we didn’t realize. The influence Jesus is doing is how God used us to be a part of it.

"We know life is hard and challenging and to see people turn to Jesus and walk with Him through situations is definitely the most satisfying thing about being here. We have been here for them and walked alongside them."

Through it all, Paul said Metro Community Church "has always been about the people."

