



Pastor Profile: Joe Banks Transforms Abundant Church Through Faith and Family

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - Joe Banks was called to ministry before he was born.

Seven months into his tenure as the lead pastor at Abundant Church, he is more certain than ever about his path as a Christian and a religious leader. He has enjoyed watching Abundant Church grow over the past few months, and he is excited to bring the Gospel to more people throughout the Riverbend region.

On this Easter Sunday, Joe is a perfect person to spotlight with his commitment to his faith.

“The church has just been incredible in the first seven months, just a ton of excitement, a ton of growth, a lot of new young families,” Banks said. “When you have a church that is full of young families and children, it’s going to be a church that feels very alive.”

Banks noted that Abundant Church has brought in many new pastors over the past year, most of whom are young. This has encouraged more young families to join the congregation. He said this is unique, as many churches “don’t put their foot towards the next generation.”

In that effort, Abundant Church has also set aside over a quarter million dollars to remodel their children’s wing. Banks hopes this will encourage more families to join them while providing space for the congregation’s youngest members.

“What’s unique about Abundant Church in the sea of all of that is not only have they been willing to hand that off from older pastors to a younger lead pastor, but also empower a young lead pastor to reach forward and build and dream and really put our foot firmly into reaching young families,” he added. “Especially in a church that’s 110 years old, to have this much excitement and to feel so, in a way, young — but also there’s a lot of seniors as well, so we’re very diverse in our generations — it’s just incredibly an exciting time for a church with a very rich legacy in the area.”

Banks said Abundant Church is unique, and he would know; he has ministered at many churches throughout his life, starting when he was a senior in high school. A mission trip to Africa helped him answer his calling as a pastor.

“I just knew at that moment, there’s nothing else in my life I can do than help people who are struggling in life or don’t have purpose in their life to understand that Jesus gives us life and He gives us purpose,” Banks said.

This calling has guided him throughout his journey. Banks and his wife preached in Jerseyville over a decade ago, then moved to Georgia, then Minnesota. He said they're happy to be back in the Riverbend, especially as he learns more about Alton's supposed hauntings and supernatural activity. He wants to help Alton become known as a place for love and God, not ghosts and demons.

This is part of the "greatest rescue mission in the history of the universe," Banks explained. He said God uses his children — us — to save humanity, and "nothing touches" the chance to serve God in this way.

"To be able to partner with God in the greatest rescue mission in the history of the universe...how can one compare to that? There's just something to being a part of something bigger than your own life," he said. "Church isn't something we have to do. Pursuing God isn't something we have to do. We get to do this. It's a privilege and an honor to be a part of all that God's doing."

Above all else, Banks wants people to know that Abundant Church is open to everyone. He noted that they "stand on the Word of God," and they believe that God is "certainly allowed to tell us no on certain things." But they don't cast judgment on anyone they disagree with; they love all people, like Jesus did.

"We're not just sitting on our hands and having a cool little club over here, because the last thing I want is a country club," he added. "We were created to make a difference and so we really want to make a difference, understanding our purpose to make a difference in the Riverbend area and globally through our missionaries as well. So I'd say a church that feels alive is really what makes us unique. It's not a funeral. A lot of churches feel like a funeral, like someone died. But we're very excited and alive about the God we serve who conquered death."

For more information about Abundant Church, visit their [official website at Abundant Church](#).