

# Still Moving

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, hey, thank you so much for tuning in today. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana.! And as always, if you'd like to learn a little more about us, you can go to FCCgreensburg.com or you can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, today we're pumped to get into the Word of God, but most of all, let this Word get into these hearts and truly change us. The title of the message today is called Still Moving, and we are in a series that is all about our new strategic plan here, and it's called Move.

You know, my favorite story about the history of our church family comes from 1908. That's 118 years ago when James Miley was the minister.

Evangelist James Small from Columbus came and preached a revival for five straight weeks, and the Holy Spirit moved in such a powerful way that 180 new members joined the church with so many of them being baptized into Christ.

During that same revival, Leroy St. John was singing the song, His Eye is on the Sparrow, and sure enough, as he sang it, a sparrow flew in the open window and landed on the organ, joining in worship to the king.

[ 1 : 2 0 ] Now, that is a cool story. And every Sunday morning, when I walk into the quietness and even the darkness of our sanctuary by myself, I walk in grateful to be a tiny part of what God has done and is doing through FCC.

And you're a part of that too. So if you weren't with us last week, we kicked off a very important five-week series called Move. This is a three-year strategic plan that our elders, staff, and some other key leaders have been praying through and working on for eight months now since August of last year.

Last week, I opened asking this question. Will we choose to survive, to stand, or will we swarm as a church?

Will we be like the boxer that's just running around the ring simply trying to not get knocked out, trying just to survive? Will we be the church that's just happy to pay a preacher, keep the lights on, and pull a service off on Sunday?

Or second, will we be the boxer who just kind of stands in the ring on defense the whole bout, content to just make it out of the ring on his feet? The church that does some good, isn't worried about the doors closing, but also just plays it safe, focused on comfort and preferences rather than living out God's perfect plans for our church.

[ 2 : 5 0 ] Or, and this is my suggestion because it's biblical, will we dare be like the boxer who swarms his opponent, knows his tendencies, has a battle plan, always moving forward, ready to stand in victory over the enemy?

A church equipped to storm the gates of hell, just like the early church in the book of Acts. A church who loved God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, as we love our neighbor well, sharing the hope of Christ.

A church that moves, moves forward for the glory of God. And guys, I love our history because we have been a church on the move since 1832.

A church that started with the idea of simply going back to the Bible in everything we do. No more man-made ideas or creeds guiding us.

No more well-meaning traditions that can easily turn into idols. Like the founders of this unity movement said, where the Bible speaks, we speak. Where the Bible is silent, we are silent.

[ 3 : 5 8 ] And if you look at the almost two-century history of this church family, you can speak of the first church building in 1840 and how that 30 by 60 structure held 200 people in a service.

It worked great for a few decades until the railroad came to town, laying tracks right next to it. That's when our church family took a massive step of faith, and they bought this property we're now at on the edge of town.

Yes, it was the edge of town. And they built the current sanctuary in 1870. Three major additions later, including the Family Life Center, and here we are.

And I could tell of thousands who found Jesus hearing the gospel, generous stewards of Christ who sacrificed for the kingdom, and even wonderful servants who walked in the power of the Holy Spirit until their days came to an end, and they were ushered into Jesus's presence.

But can I also be real with you today? Not everything has always been perfect because we're human. There have been times of plenty, and there have been times of lean.

[ 5 : 11 ] And some of you know better than I, having experienced it, which makes seasons of growth and unity such a joy. And listen, I want to be so tender in how I say this because I wasn't here, and I also know that there may be some sensitivity still there.

But in the mid to late 90s into the early 2000s, this was a hard season for our church family. Moral failures, disunity, a split, heartbreak.

Listen, spiritual warfare is real. Satan loves to steal, kill, and destroy. And let's just be honest, he won a couple battles. But God, let me say that again, but God, full of grace and healing showed up. And some of you, when you could have left, you stayed. When you could have fought, you hugged. When you could have demanded, you prayed. To you, we say thank you. Because we wouldn't be where God has led us today without your faithfulness.

The Holy Spirit began a process of healing. And I'm convinced that from somewhere around the year 2002 to 2020, this body of believers had to heal.

[ 6 : 23 ] But do you know what? The Lord knew what he was doing. He brought the right person to be the lead pastor in Danny Wolford, along with some faithful elders.

And Danny would be the first one to tell you, I've heard him say it, that he's not perfect. And listen, neither am I. No matter who stands in the pulpit, there'll always be a sinner saved by grace, who has strengths, and who has weaknesses.

And over Danny's 18 years of faithful service to Jesus at FCC, his loving, peaceful, and grace-filled approach made a massive impact.

He was the right guy for the right season of healing that had to happen. And I saw this in 2005, just three years into Danny being here. I saw it when he allowed me as a college junior going into my senior year to do my college internship here.

And I got to know this church family over that summer. And I even came back for a year in the fall of 2006 to do a longer internship. When that ended, the church launched me out into my first full-time lead pastor role in Rush County.

[ 7 : 33 ] And for 11 years, I stayed connected. Whether it was a preacher swap, where Danny would preach for me in Rush County, I'd come here and preach for him. We probably did this for probably three or four years.

Or even times where my family would just have a week off of vacation, and we would come and worship with FCC. I stayed in communication with Danny and some of the other pastors who served here.

And I've always known that my connection here has been helpful. But listen, what God has showed me was not only was it helpful, but it was on purpose. He knew what he was doing.

And sometimes when you're in the middle of something, it's hard to see the big picture, isn't it? That's why they call it hindsight is 20-20, right? But I got to stand back.

I got the opportunity just to stand back and watch that healing process for 13 years. Kind of from a distance. I had a cool vantage point. And I got to do that for 13 years before you asked me to be your next lead pastor when Danny retired.

[ 8 : 38 ] And when I started in August of 2018, Danny and I were together for about a year and a half. But when I started in August of 2018, I prayed the Lord would reveal to me his heart and the future for FCC.

And he has, a little at a time. And right away, I could see something even though I didn't say a word for a couple years. I could see that FCC had healed well.

I saw that a new generation had made FCC their home while many others had continued faithfully. A new season was beginning and where this family had no choice in the early 2000s to somewhat

go into survival mode, to quickly start to stand in there and to heal.

But listen, in 2020, when Pastor Danny literally handed me the baton as lead pastor, I knew this church family was positioned to swarm because of Danny and the elders' leadership, because of your heart for the kingdom.

And what a wonderful almost six years it's been since Danny retired, seeing Jesus' kingdom come and his will be done in and through this family.

[ 9 : 49 ] And please hear me. If you're getting nervous about this three-year strategic plan that we're sharing, please don't. Please don't jump to any conclusions. Please don't let Satan steal, kill, or destroy.

It's more so just a continuation of what the Lord's already been doing as we bow and worship to King Jesus, saying, this is your church.

Lead us, guide us, wherever you want us to go. Because that's where we want to be, amen? That's where we have to be. And can you imagine, and some people do this, but can you imagine standing before Jesus someday, having stood in the way of his plans?

I think we'd all agree that we don't want to do that. And starting next Sunday and going through Mother's Day for the last three weeks of this series, we're simply going to talk about three different areas that we want to strengthen.

And that's discipleship. That means growing in Christ. That's next gen or next generation. And evangelism. But one thing our team noticed as we were praying for the Lord's wisdom in all of this is that five things, we noticed five things kept coming up regardless of what topic we were on.

[ 11 : 01 ] And we're going to call them core initiatives because they're at the heart of everything the Lord is leading us to in 2026, 2027, and 2028. So thank you for allowing me to share our leadership's heart and even what the Holy Spirit has shown me over the last eight years as we're following in the footsteps of so many faithful saints.

And listen, we're still moving for the glory of God like the generations that came before us. Now, let's get to the note-taking side of our message as we talk through these core initiatives.

And here's the first one. The first core initiative is fervent prayer. Listen, we don't just want to be a church that prays. We want to be a praying church. Do you see the difference?

We don't want to just have a few prayer warriors among us. We want to have a church family that commits everything to prayer because our God is powerful. We want a whole church family of prayer warriors. And I love what the Lord's been doing.

See, in our 930 and 11 o'clock services in the far corner of our gym where we currently worship for our two contemporary services is a big wooden cross.

[ 12 : 14 ] And during the invitation time, we invite people who need prayer just to come up to the cross. And we have some wonderful godly volunteers who pray over them. Men pray with men.

Women pray with women. And it's awesome the change that we're seeing in people's hearts. I also love the prayer experience we had on Palm Sunday a few weeks ago where about 35 to 40 of us gathered.

Pastors Mitch and Tyler and our 220 youth, they led a time of worship and then prayer at different stations in the gym. And it was awesome to see adults and students alike praying over many different areas, over many different people.

But listen, here's the coolest part. We had students and adults praying together with one another. And the reason this is important is because God teaches us how vital it is for the church to come before him in prayer because a prayerless church is a weak church.

And in Philippians 4, 6 and 7, the Apostle Paul, through the power of the Holy Spirit, he says, Do not be anxious about anything. I don't know about you, but I can easily struggle with anxiousness.

[ 13 : 24 ] He says, Do not be anxious about anything. But in every single situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Or James 5, 16, Therefore, confess your sins to each other and do what?

Pray for each other so that you may be healed. Listen, our God still does miracles. And then it says, The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

E.M. Bounds once said, Faith thrives in an atmosphere of prayer. And I hope you're already seeing some new prayer initiatives like the ones we just talked about and others that we will be rolling out over the next three years.

But it's this simple. Too many churches talk about prayer. And we've been guilty of this, but we just don't do much of it, right? We talk about how important it is, but we don't actually pray.

[ 14 : 25 ] And we want to be a church where prayer is our culture. And we've had these conversations in our leadership that when someone comes up and says, Hey, I got a prayer request.

We just stop right there and we pray over them. And the best part is that he hears our prayers and he answers them in his perfect will.

Now, the second core initiative is healthy structure. I've also seen in my 21-year relationship with this body of believers at FCC, I've seen the infrastructure or what you might call leadership structure change and grow, honestly, in a lot of ways.

So that's good. Some of you have been a part of those positive changes, and I thank you for it because you've seen the fruit of that. And if you're familiar with the Christian church brotherhood that our church is a part of, the reason this unity movement started in the first place in the early 1800s was to go away from man-made ideas guiding us and to simply go back to the Bible and let it be our guide in everything.

And listen, that applies to how we run the church, our leadership structure. And when you look at the book of Acts that tells the story of the early church, it lays out the leadership structure that honestly doesn't look much like any of the governments that we've seen play out in history.

[ 15 : 52 ] Nowhere do you see a democracy in the church. But instead, it's what's often been called a Christocracy. Jesus is the head of the church.

His word is our guide, and he puts godly men called elders in place to lead his precious bride. Not just random guys who've been around for a while. No, these guys are marked by spiritual maturity, Christ-like ability, right?

Qualified, they're compassionate. Jesus-first type of leaders. I didn't say they were perfect because elders are sinners saved by grace too, right? But their hearts beat for Jesus with no other agenda but to follow the word of God and the Holy Spirit's leading.

And in Acts 14, starting in verse 23, it says, Paul and Barnabas, so this is kind of the model of the early church that we want to follow. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders.

They didn't vote on them. They appointed elders for them in each church. And with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord in whom they had put their trust.

[ 17 : 00 ] And then in 1 Peter 5, we see the heart of an elder when Peter says, Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them, not because you must, but because you are willing.

So it has to be a desire of your heart to be an elder. He says, as God wants you to be. Not pursuing dishonest gain. So listen, elders are people of integrity, but it says eager to serve.

Not lording it over those entrusted to you. So there's no power trip here, but being examples to the flock. So over these three years, we're going to be looking at our church structure, making sure we are fully elder-led, while also doing a better job of empowering the body of Christ to serve with our unique giftedness.

And we'll continue to be transparent in all this, as some things could require bylaw changes with church members' approval. And if I can speak to our administrative-minded people for a second. As a church family grows, we have to make sure that our infrastructure can support and lead a church family of our size. And it may look different than it did when we were a church of 300.

[ 18 : 09 ] And just like when Sam Walton started Walmart, it was a mom-and-pop store run like a mom-and-pop store, run very well, by the way. But today, they can't run Walmart the same way Sam Walton did.

We want to be a biblically healthy church with biblically healthy leaders who lead this bride with boldness and compassion, with no agenda other than Jesus first.

And then the third core initiative is functional facilities. It's human nature to jump to conclusions. And I've had a couple people come up to me who are making all kinds of assumptions from last week's message.

So hear me, okay? Hear our hearts, because we're trying hard to communicate this with complete transparency. It's this simple. We are maximizing our facilities right now, and we're still out of room. You could double our parking, and it may be enough for now. But what about the lost that he will keep bringing in? And I know you guys are feeling the pinch, too, because you've told me. That's

why we went out to North Decatur High School on Resurrection Sunday, because we sort of had to. [ 19 : 21 ] And our elders have been praying about this for a couple years now. And through this three-year strategic plan, we've put together the BAT team. We've been talking about this for a few months now.

The building assessment team. The BAT team. These are six committed followers of Christ under the leadership of our elders who love FCC and just so happen to have strengths and gifts and professional experience in the areas needed to do an objective look at our current facilities and grounds, weighing all the solutions until the Lord shows us what he's leading us to do.

So there's no juicy secret behind the scenes, okay? We do not have an agenda or know what he's leading us to do at this moment. It's all about God's perfect timing as we trust that he's going to work through his church so that Jesus can be proclaimed by FCC in this community until Jesus comes again.

And as the strategic plan team was dreaming and praying for the Lord to do a work through FCC that will blow our minds, no matter what topic we were on, our current setup kept coming up. And it keeps us from going where Jesus is leading. And I want to thank the BAT team as they have just been meeting regularly. And the hope is that we will have their evaluation towards the end of 2026.

[ 20 : 48 ] And hear me. The elders will be in communication about all of this because we love you and we're family. But we need you to pray every single day. Pray. Not my will be done, but yours, Jesus.

Lead us as a church. Use us to reach the lost. Grow each of us in spiritual maturity. Help us impact our community meeting needs in Jesus' name. Okay, core initiative number four.

Effective communication. So what you are hearing right now in this five-week series, what you see in the bulletin, when you get emails, texts, and calls about church happenings, all the info at Connection Point, up on the screens on Sunday, through social media, on the Church Center app that has sermons, sign-ups, check-ins, opportunities to give, and more, you are seeing our leadership work really hard to keep everyone on the same page.

And trust me, I have my weaknesses, but communication is not usually one of them. I drive our staff nuts with this idea that we have to communicate in several ways until we're blue in the face, and then we do it some more.

And over the next three years, we're going to continue to work harder on our communication to our church family. But please, do me a favor. Be here. Read the announcements. Get the Church Center app.

[ 22 : 08 ] Look at the screen. Put your contact info on a connection card so you can get all these different ways of communication. Let's not give Satan a chance to get his foot in the door.

Let's stay unified and on the same page. And then the last core initiative is excellence-driven. So in everything we do as a church, we want to do it with excellence for the glory of God.

And here's why that mindset of, and I know you've heard this before, maybe you've said it, I've said it before, I'm guilty, but this mindset of, eh, it's good enough, that's not a godly way to look at the work that we produce.

And in Colossians 3, verses 23 and 24, the Apostle Paul, through the Holy Spirit, says, whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for human masters.

Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward, it is the Lord Christ you are serving. I think about it this way. Two to three years ago, my wife and I went with some friends to a restaurant called Ford's Garage.

[ 23 : 21 ] And I bet many of you have probably been there. And as you walk up, there's an old Ford, a couple of them actually, in the one in Cincinnati we went to, an old Ford sitting out front that you can get your picture taken.

You walk in and it's decked out in Ford equipment. One restaurant, the one we first went to, had an old Model T or A, I'm not great with which one. And it was on an assembly line on the ceiling and it was moving all around the building.

You walk into the bathrooms and the sinks are made from car parts, okay? And I haven't even gotten to the food yet. Everything's themed out. They brand the bun of your hamburger with a Ford logo.

Your napkin's a shop rag with a hose clamp. The burgers are fantastic. Really good gourmet stuff. And you know what we do when we have such a good experience like that? We go and tell everyone around us, don't we? And then we keep going back too. Excellence makes a difference. Perfection is unattainable and we don't expect that.

[ 24 : 19 ] But God deserves our best. Whether you serve with our kids or youth or you greet people in the parking lot or at the door. Whether you clean the toilets or preach on Sunday. Whether you teach Sunday school or lead as an elder.

Whether you're a staff member or you just started serving. Whatever your role. We as a church want to do it with excellence so that Jesus really is first.

And you know what I've noticed as I seek to put in the time and the effort that maybe a message requires to go the extra mile on a message. Or even spend time with a family before a funeral where I learn about their loved one and just make it very personal.

You know what I've noticed? That God takes that excellence and he uses it. And so as your lead pastor, there will always be areas that we can improve upon as a church.

After this three-year strategic plan will come another one. And this three-year strategic plan will be driven by a heart of excellence to Jesus because, listen, he's worthy. So today as we step back in awe of what the Lord has done here in 194 years, we simply seek to carry on the legacy of what this church family has done since 1832.

[ 25 : 37 ] In fact, I'm inspired by past ministers like D.R. Van Buskirk from the 1800s to Danny Wolford in the 2000s.

Motivated to keep building on the kingdom work that's been done. And I'm so thankful to serve alongside elders and staff who love you and who want to make sure we lead this church family well. So FCC, we are still moving for the glory of God. Pray with me. Father, we are so very thankful for all that you have done in the 194 years that FCC has been in Greensburg impacting this community through ordinary people just like us who have been redeemed, who have been transformed, and who want to shine Jesus into the hearts of others who need him.

So, Father, it is my prayer that as we embark upon this three-year strategic plan, as we lay it out in detail a little bit over the next three weeks, It's my prayer that you will just do immeasurably more than we could ever ask or imagine.

It's my prayer that you will get us out of the way. It's my prayer that it will never be about me and what I want or anyone else wants. But it's all about your will, Lord.

[ 27 : 04 ] It's all about your will being done and your kingdom coming. So, Father, do an awesome work in Greensburg and beyond through FCC, but through other churches as well.

May we be a united body of Christ in this community as we serve you and love you with all that we are. And we just thank you in advance because we know, Holy Spirit, you are guiding this. And so we trust you and we know that you're going to do an awesome work. And we pray all of this in Jesus' holy and precious name. And God's people said, right from wherever you are, Amen and Amen.

Hey, real quick, I want to give you this invitation. I know today we kind of focused in a little bit more on our church family and kind of where we're going. It wasn't necessarily what you might call like a salvation message.

But I just want to share with you real quick that Jesus loves you. That he came to this earth to set sinners free. He lived a sinless, perfect life, showing us the kingdom of God, performing signs, miracles, and wonders.

[ 28 : 14 ] And he was nailed to a cross because he challenged the religious hierarchy of his day. And so not only did he suffer and die on that cross, a death I can't imagine, but on that Sunday morning, the grave could hold him no longer.

Death is strong, but life is stronger. And he rose from the grave, conquering death, offering life to you and to me. Anyone who would dare pick up their cross and follow him.

So right now today, if you don't know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, he holds that gift of grace out in front of you. But here's the question. Will you open it? And what that looks like is by faith saying, Jesus, I repent of my sins.

I confess that I have done wrong. And I confess you as Lord. And I'm ready to follow you for the rest of my days, truly surrendering to him. And we would love to talk with you about that.

Or if you have questions about the church or anything else that we can help you with, my name is Ray Sweet, First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana. You can call us at 812-663-8488. [ 29 : 23 ] Or you can email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com. Hey, God bless you. Hope you have a great week. Hope you have a great week.