

Opening Thoughts – Elder Meeting, November 3, 2025

Brothers,

As we begin tonight, I want to take a step back and look at the **wider landscape** that is McKnight Crossings Church. It's easy to see the hard things — the challenges, the work still ahead — but it's also good for us to pause and notice the *good* that's happening all around us.

God **is working here**, even when it sometimes feels hard to see.

Since this is **November**, my mind naturally goes to **Thanksgiving**. It's often good for us to slow down, take a breath, and get some perspective.

We really do have **a lot to be thankful for** — and much of that is right here at this table.

After more than **two years**, over **twenty-five candidates**, and countless Zoom calls, we finally found our **Lead Minister — Andrew Owens**.

That long “liminal period” wasn't wasted. It gave members of the congregation a chance to step up and preach — and they did a great job.

It also forced us to think deeply about what we were looking for — not just in a minister, but in our church. As Philip Metheny reminded us, that in-between time was hard, but we'll look back and see it as a **blessing**.

Bringing Andrew on staff didn't just end the pain of being without a minister — it gave us the **right person** for this season.

It's only been two months, but I feel good about Andrew's leadership. Now, Andrew isn't the leader of this church but he *is* our Lead Minister. He's the one in the pulpit, and it's human nature to need a **flag to rally around**. Andrew has become that rallying point that's been missing since Jeff Kryder retired.

And **Steve Awtrey**, thank you for faithfully scheduling sermons during that long stretch.

We're also blessed to have **Devin Daniel** here now. That was another long process — but what a blessing to finally have him on board.

And we can't forget **Jeff McGlawn**. Jeff, you've extended your “temporary” role several times and done an amazing job — and without complaining!

Thank you, and thanks to **Beata** as well.

And we're thrilled to have you officially joining this table of **chuckle-heads** as we keep serving God together.

Nathan Strickland has been an anchor for us through all of this — steady, consistent, and full of love for our teens.

He's done a couple of excellent sermons, and he's got a gift for music too.

We now have **Andrew, Devin, Nathan, and Kaylyn** as our ministry team — a younger team, which is another blessing.

They're working well together, and my prayer is that they'll keep challenging each other and us — not to do what's easy, but to do what's **right and faithful**.

We also want to honor **Don Fitzgerald**.

Don, you've been an elder longer than anyone here.
You've blessed hundreds over the years with your wisdom, patience, and intelligence.
We're going to miss you around this table —
and yes, I'll say it, you do the **best job with congregational announcements** of anyone here!
You're genuine, respected, and always point people toward God.

We'll miss your voice, but we know you'll keep shepherding, even without the title.
Thank you, Don — and may God bless you and Debbie.

With Don stepping down, **Brad**, that makes you the senior member of this group.

Your “institutional knowledge” is valuable, and you've got a solid grasp of Scripture — especially the Old Testament — where I sometimes get lost in which patriarch had which kids!

You remind us that the *whole story matters* — that Jesus didn't come to abolish the Law but to **fulfill** it.

Dave Weiler, you continue to model **balance** — wisdom mixed with real-world practicality and trust in God.

You care about the finances and the budget, but you also trust in God's provision.
I often find myself watching you and quietly praying for that same balance in my own life.

And I want to thank you for the calm faith you showed through your health scare — walking through the valley of the shadow of death with peace and trust. That sounds overly dramatic, but you went through a hard time.

I'm thankful that the valve issue isn't life-threatening and that you have a normal retirement ahead — full of travel, grandkids, and continued ministry here.

Now for **the two Steves**.

Steve Walker, what a blessing you've been as Administrative Minister.
You've filled so many of the gaps that Jeff Kryder left behind — some we didn't even realize were gaps until you were here. You've been a steady anchor in the office, a mentor to Nathan, and a huge help during the minister search.

You and **Steve Awtrey** handled the lion's share of those Lead Minister interviews — and you stayed calm through it all. Thank you.

And **Steve Awtrey**, in your retirement you've poured your time and energy into the youth ministry — thank you for that, too.

We have **so much to be thankful for.**

We have the men at this table along with their wives, we have new visitors and new members.

But I'm reminded of Jesus' words when the seventy-two came back from their mission, full of excitement about all the amazing things that had happened.

He told them,

“Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” (*Luke 10:20*)

A church is made up of people. And like us, these people are fragile and broke, and the work is hard. We sometimes need to step back from the trees and see the forest – that God is good and faithful and that we have much to be thankful for.

Like Andrew preached yesterday, the Good News of the Gospel is that we can go to court knowing we owe nothing! (Someone else still needs to pay the penalty, just not us.)

Closing Prayer – Elder Meeting (Nov 3, 2025)

Father in Heaven,

We pause tonight with thankful hearts. You have been faithful to this church through every season — through times of waiting, of searching, and of renewal.

Thank You for the people around this table, for their love for You and for Your flock. Thank You for Andrew, Devin, Nathan, Kaylyn, and all who serve — for the ways You have provided, guided, and sustained us.

As we lead, help us to remember that this is *Your* church, not ours. Remind us that our greatest joy is not in the work we do or the results we see, but that our names are written in heaven.

Give us eyes to see where You are already at work, hearts that are open to those who need care, and courage to follow wherever You lead.

Bless this meeting, Lord. May every word we speak tonight honor You and strengthen Your people.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

McKnight Crossings Elder Mtg – Nov. 3, 2025

Tentative Agenda (2 hours)

- 1. Opening Thoughts – Bret (15 min)**
- 2. People – All (15-min)**
- 3. 2025 Budget Update & Congregational Appeal – Dave Weiler (5 min)**
- 4. MX Leadership Class – Steve Awtrey (with Don Fitzgerald & Andrew Owens) (20 min)**
 - a. Week 1 – status update
 - b. Week 2 – outline & speaker
 - c. Week 3 – outline & speaker
- 5. Rolling-Quarter Planning (Preaching & Classes) [please provide handouts](#)**
 - d. Andrew Owens / Devin Daniel / Nathan Strickland – Preaching and Class Schedule (5 min each)
 - e. Jeff McGlawn – Adult Class Schedule (5 min)
- 6. Back-Pocket Readiness – Communion & Sermon Coverage (Steve Awtrey 5 min)**
- 7. Pepperdine Compelling Preacher Initiative Update – Andrew Owens (10 min)**
- 8. Old Business (10 min)**
 - f. Updates on North City Church and Mauritius (Dave Weiler & Jeff McGlawn)
- 9. Ministry Event Reviews**
 - g. Fall Festival Retrospective – goals & outcomes (Jeff McGlawn 10 min)
 - h. [Faith in Action](#) Retrospective – goals & outcomes (Steve Awtrey 10 min)
- 10. Food Pantry Update – Immediate Push During Government Shutdown (Steve Awtrey 5 min)**
- 11. Small Groups - Possible Next Steps (Bret/Andrew/Devin 5-min)**
- ~~12. People – All (15 min)~~**