

Friends, let me offer a brief review of what God has been doing at *The Benton Church* in 2025.

As I shared last year, our leadership team sensed God calling us to prepare for two things: an increase in young families and expanded opportunities for worship and discipleship. In response, we brought Leland Whitman on staff as our *Family Pastor*—and he has been a tremendous blessing. Through his leadership, and through the faithful efforts of our children’s and youth ministry teams, we continue to see clear evidence of God at work among us.

That fruit is visible both on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights, and the overall trend continues to move in a very encouraging direction:

- Sunday Worship Attendance
 - 2020: 73 | 2021: 104 | 2022: 119 | 2023: 143 | 2024: 160 | 2025: 174
- Sunday Children’s Church Attendance (no data for 2020–21)
 - 2022: 15 | 2023: 18 | 2024: 19 | 2025: 23
- Wednesday Awana Attendance
 - 2020: 48 | 2021: 41 | 2022: 54 | 2023: 59 | 2024: 74 | 2025: 71
- Wednesday Youth Attendance
 - 2020: 18 | 2021: 25 | 2022: 22 | 2023: 23 | 2024: 22 | 2025: 26

At first glance, some of these numbers—especially on Wednesdays—may not seem remarkable. But the challenge we face is not a lack of growth in ministry; it is a lack of space. In the eight services leading up to Christmas alone, we averaged 205 in worship and 30 in Children’s Church!

We are committed to discipling children and youth at their appropriate age levels, and that commitment has brought us to the limits of our current facilities. Wednesday nights, in particular, are stretched—most notably in our youth ministry, which meets in the Annex and becomes uncomfortably full whenever attendance exceeds 25.

Even more significantly, our space limitations prevent us from ministering to parents at the same time their children are being discipled. This limits our ability to come alongside families as a whole and ultimately affects the spiritual formation of our children as they leave each week.

Taken together, we see this not as a problem, but as a wonderful opportunity—a clear sign of God’s blessing and His work among us. For that reason, we are inviting our church family to pray with us about an expansion we believe God is calling us toward.

This is why you have begun to hear more about expansion. If we are to reach people and families when they are most available, our focus must remain on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings, and we must be prepared to steward those opportunities well.

[Will you join us in prayer, asking God how He desires to use each of us for His glory?](#)

Setting the statistics aside, I want to close with what I believe God is calling us to pray for.

After His resurrection, Jesus walks with two disciples who don’t recognize Him at first. He teaches them along the road, and later, as they sit down to eat, He gives thanks, breaks some bread, and shares it with them. And, in that ordinary moment...

their eyes are opened—and they recognize who He is!

May the same be true for us. My prayer is that Jesus would be clearly seen in the everyday lives and actions of all of us at *The Benton Church* as we live out our mission of “disciples making disciples.” May this be our prayer for 2026.

- Justin Lefto, *Pastor*

Please join us in prayer for 2026:

“Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.” (Luke 24:35)

May the presence of Jesus Christ be seen in the everyday things I (and we) do.