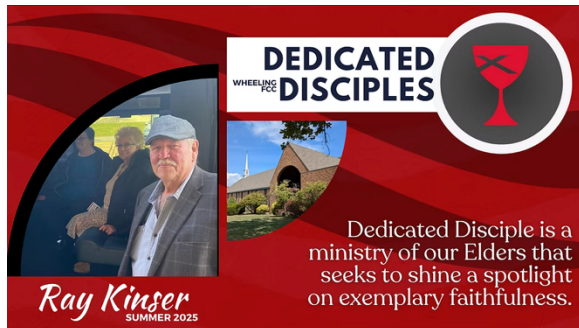




For 30 years, Ray has been a member of First Christian Church. He, his wife Jan, and son joined in the mid 90s. Ray is a steady, quiet presence in the pews each week. Over the years, Ray has helped with property maintenance at the church and served as an elder, a role he currently holds. Outside of his work in the church, Ray works part-time at Altmeyer Funeral Homes. He finds fulfillment in providing comfort to those in times of trouble. A conversation about a lost loved one or helping someone up the step are acts of ministry to Ray.

Ray has worked hard to provide for himself and his family, and credits God work in his life for this. "I put in the hours, I've worked hard, but it's through God I had the opportunity, the ability, and the desire," he says, "If it were for the things I'd done alone, I'd be in a gutter somewhere. Everything I have is because God's hand is in it." Ray sees God at work in everything, and it continues to sustain his faith. He saw how God brought Jan back to him after he had almost lost her. God's work in Ray's life is a large part of his desire to serve in church. When asked to be an elder again, he accepted. "After all God has done for me, it's the least I can do," he says.

While Ray is an active member of the church, it's his personal relationship with God that means the most to him. He is at church weekly, whether he is there alone or with family, Ray says he needs to be there regardless. Communion is his most treasured time with God and his fondest memory of church. He enjoys events at church and being involved, however communion remains his reason for attending. Over the years, the way communion is served has changed, but its consistency in the service and the time of reflection it offers is what Ray has enjoyed. A tradition that Ray shared with his wife and son during communion would be to take communion together; Jan would place her cup on top of Ray's and their son would place his on top of Jan's cup. It was symbolic gesture for Ray, showing how he carried and supported them spiritually and in other areas of life.

Ray finds inspiration in fellow members of the church, both past and present. Many admire global leaders, but Ray finds it is those he knows personally are those to be admired. David Kappel, a past member of First Christian, and John Parr are two men whose dedication to church he admires. Ray likes that both men take church seriously and admires how they handle their every-day life and their life in the church. In his own advice to younger generations, Ray urges people to build a close personal relationship with God

and appreciate what he has done for you in your life. He encourages going to church often and that being in church is helpful. Church is a balm for your soul.