



**Ambassador**  
*Nurturing the life of the Institute*

# Ambassador Update

## Institute for Discipleship

*Ambassadors nurture the life of the Institute for Discipleship through their prayers, advocacy, and financial support, advancing the Kingdom of God worldwide.*

### November 2025: Support

A while back I heard a wonderful talk here at Southwestern by a person who advocates for positive changes in his company and community. I was most struck by his comment on making progress. He said “You have to find who your friends are, and then support them, ask them for support, and then keep finding new friends.” I like that. I have found it to be true.

That is what keeps the Institute going!

Thank you for your friendship, for your commitment to our ministry, and for your support.



Steve Wilke  
Executive Director

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**Rude moves into top Institute**

## position on Jan. 1, 2026

Dr. Cheryl Rude will take over as the executive director of the Institute for Discipleship on Jan. 1, 2026. Current executive director Steve Wilke describes Cheryl as the perfect next person to lead the Institute.



“She is a highly competent administrator who has been with the Institute from its beginnings,” he says.

Cheryl was a long-time faculty member at Southwestern College, where she built and led an award-winning leadership program. Upon her retirement two years ago she joined the Institute as director of campus programs and operations.

“As the Institute prepares to celebrate its 25th anniversary in April 2026, the dream is to transition from a family-run organization to a family-supported one that is sustainable for the next 25 years,” Cheryl says. “I am looking forward to serving the Institute in a new way. Organizational capacity building is what I love to do. Our staff team and board have built a three-strategic plan that will guide our steps together.”

Steve and Cheryl currently are working together on the transition, which Steve says is making his shift into the role of director emeritus easy. His new position will focus on fundraising and networking related to the Institute.

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## 25th Anniversary Celebration Coming in 2026!

On April 10, 2026, the Institute will host a celebration of the work of the Institute with a glance at where we have come from and the excitement of where we are going. The celebration event will be a complimentary dinner at the beautiful Barns at Timber Creek. All who love the Institute will be welcome. More details will be coming!

**Mark your calendars for April 10, 2026.**

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## Our Course Focus and Vision

Our vision is to be the “go to” source for online continuing education focusing on both sound Wesleyan theology and practical aspects for effective ministry. Participants receive training with knowledgeable instructors and small group learning cohorts that are accessible everywhere. As the need for lay and clergy to continue to learn and adapt to our changing culture grows, we will provide online access to courses designed to strengthen the ministries in which they serve in local churches in the United States and around the world.

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## Our Study Focus Vision

Our vision is to be a worldwide leader in delivery of Christian small group Bible studies with the newly formatted Disciple Bible Study and other programs in a digital format. Our goal is to reintroduce the Disciple Bible Study program to the United Methodist Church and other mainline congregations in the United States and around the world.

Modeled after Acts 2:42, we will empower Disciples of Jesus to grow in their faith journey through small group interaction, supported by their local church, across town or around the world.

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