



**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.*

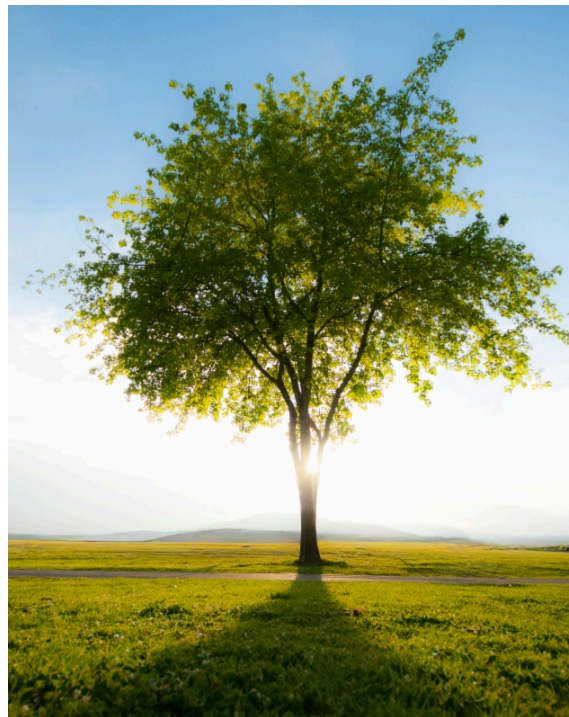
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### May 2026

Time to grow some roots!

For 25 years the Institute has been producing fruit and shade and lots of good work like the logo of the tree suggests. Like a tree, we see what is above ground, not what is below.

Below are the roots. The unseen part of the tree that provides nutrients and stability. For the work of the Institute, donors are the roots and for much of the Institute's history, it has had a few major donors who have provided a few deep roots. Now it is a new day.



I am so excited to be leading the “Where Disciples Grow” three-year fundraising campaign. The goal is \$1.5 million. And while we're building this important financial security, I hope to build a 100-family donor base. Not only will this successful campaign move the work of the Institute forward, but it will also provide

financial stability for years to come. Like a healthy tree, the root system needs to extend deep and wide.

The Institute is on the move! Good things are happening! Lives are being impacted on for the better! Every current donor and those to come are like the roots – nurturing and supporting though unseen.

Thank you for your continued support as the Institute lives out its mission.

God's best,



Steve Wilke  
Emeritus Executive Director

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## **Institute marks quarter century of growth, change April 10 in Winfield**



The 25th anniversary of the founding of the Bishop Richard and Julia Wilke Institute for Discipleship brought persons from around the nation to Winfield April 10 to celebrate the Institute's ministry. More than 60 guests attended the event at the Barns at Timber Creek, including former and current board members, IFD staff, current Bishop Scholars, friends of the Institute, and members of the extended Wilke family.

Established at Southwestern College in 2001, the Institute was founded following the extraordinary success of the *Disciple* Bible Study written by its namesakes. Its efforts today are in three main areas: BeADisciple.com, which has provided quality online educational experiences with roots in Wesleyan theology since 2006; BeADisciple Study App, delivering transformative experiences through app-based content and small groups; and several on-campus programs at Southwestern College.

The anniversary celebration brought together representatives of each of these three branches to give their perspectives on Institute programs. Institute executive director Cheryl Rude introduced board chair Stephen Hoskins to share comments on the evolution of the board.

- Jeana Clark, who lives in the Chicago area, spoke of her return to church participation after being invited to participate in a BeADisciple study group.

- Beth Galbreath represented instructors and pointed out that “In today’s contentious world, we are modeling healthy dialogue and creating a safe space for folks from around the world to learn and grow together.”
- Joseph Kasongo spoke as a Bishop Scholar at Southwestern, one of more than 100 international students who have been able to attend SC with the financial assistance of the Institute. Southwestern College also provides financial aid for these students.

The four children of Richard and Julia Wilke also have been intensely involved in the life of the Institute and three spoke at the celebration. Stephen Wilke, who recently retired from his position as the first executive director, is moving into a fundraising position at the Institute, and Paul Wilke and Sarah Wilke, who continue to work in leadership roles. Susan (Wilke) Fuquay was unable to attend the banquet.



*Longtime instructor and registrar for BeADisciple online courses, Beth Galbreath spoke to anniversary guests from her home in Michigan. See photos from the event [here](#).*

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