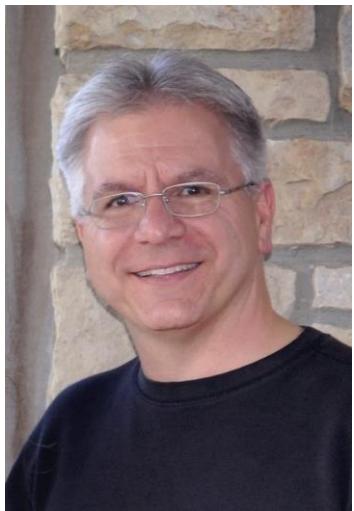


#GettingToKnowYou

-An interview with Pastor Vernon Risner
First Baptist Church, Pekin, IL

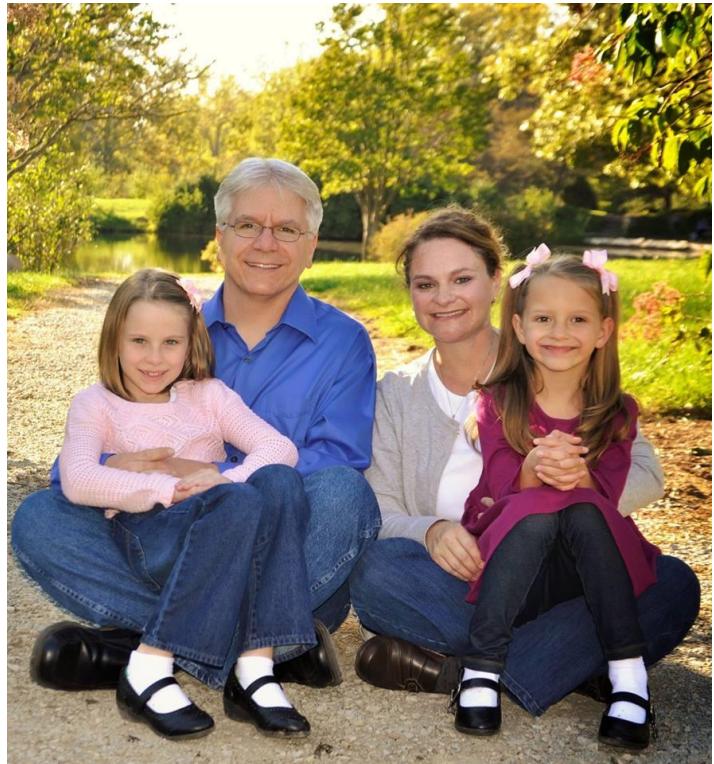


Pastor Vernon Risner is the new senior pastor at First Baptist Church in Pekin, IL. His ministry there began in August. We've asked him to share a bit about himself.

Vernon was nearly born at an amusement park in Ohio! Thankfully his mom was able to get to a hospital in Wilmington, OH before he arrived on August 2, 1960.

Vernon got married at the age of 35 and it has been great! He and Melissa have been married for 12 years. They have two daughters, Lydia 10 years old and Karis 8 years old. Lydia is their artist. She's a bit introverted and loves to make and create things. Karis is their social butterfly. She loves giving hugs and being out and about, content to ride her bicycle up and down the sidewalk saying "hi" to people. All four of them will often be on their bicycles. They have a park nearby that they love riding to as dusk nears. After they play at the park they head back home hoping to see anywhere from 1 to 9 deer grazing in a nearby field.

When asked about hobbies, Vernon says he really doesn't have any. In his words, "I'm actually pretty boring." His hobbies don't extend much beyond reading and spending time with his family. He reads regularly and is currently reading 'There's Hope for Your Church' by Gary L. McIntosh. He strongly recommends this book for those who desire to see their church revitalized. Vernon loves date nights with his wife and enjoys trips with just the two of them when possible. Several years ago when his girls were still very young a wise older friend told him to soak up and enjoy all the time he could with his girls because before you know it they would be grown. Vernon has taken this advice to heart and spends a lot of time with his family.



In December Vernon marks 18 years as a pastor. Prior to that he spent 6 years as an Associate Pastor and worked in youth ministry. He says, "I love what I do. It often doesn't feel like I have a 'job'." From the time he was a child he has always had a heart for the Lord. He carried his Bible in elementary school and many of his classmates thought he'd be a pastor someday. As he got

older he wanted to pursue a ministry singing in Southern Gospel Music and did end up singing in a Christian band for four years out of high school. During those years he was approached many times by people telling him he should be a preacher/pastor. The turning point came when one day he was working over at his job as a draftsman. An African American cleaning lady, that he'd never met before, saw Vernon near his work area and asked if he was a minister. Surprised that yet another person had said such a thing, He simply told her "no". She then responded by saying, "Well, you will be one day." When he asked her why she would say that, she asked, "Has anyone else ever told you that before?" He said, "Yes". Then she walked up to him and leaned in real close and said, "Then why don't you hear the call of the Lord?" Vernon went to band practice later that night and told the guys what happened. As he finished, one of them looked at him and said, "We knew that all along." It was that afternoon and evening that Vernon began to seriously contemplate ministry. From there the Lord began to open door after door after door.

During his family's recent move to Pekin, Pastor Vernon has been so encouraged and blessed by the outpouring of support, love, and kindness from the church family. They have been faithful to pray for him and his family. In coming to this church, Vernon ended 28 years as a member and 24 years on staff at his previous church. First Baptist Pekin knew this transition would be difficult for the Risner family and for their previous church, so they have bathed Vernon's family and the Ohio church in prayer. Upon arrival, the people of First Baptist Pekin helped the Risner family move in, put their beds together, provided gift cards, and brought them meals. Prior to their arrival in Pekin the church of First Baptist entered into a time of covenant with God to encourage Vernon in 7 specific Biblical ways. Many of the members gave him a copy of the covenant they had entered. This was Vernon's first pastoral transition and First Baptist Pekin has done a great job of loving and supporting him and his family as they've made Pekin their new home. Vernon says, "I will always be thankful to God for this blessing."