

Prayerwalking in Pingree Grove

Asking God to do what they say can't be done

By Andrew Woodrow

(Editor's note: Watch the video "Prayerwalking in Pingree Grove" at missionillinois.org, part of the 2018 state missions story collection. And use set of videos and download teaching materials to lead a state missions study.)

"Pingree Grove," **Tim Bailey** said, "is a small town in desperate need of a church."

Situated in the far western suburbs of Chicago, just west of Elgin, Pingree Grove was once a small farming community with less than 200 residents. The markers were a tiny white clapboard church that would close, and a cemetery. That was in the year 2000. Now, this rapidly developing city is expected to grow to over 15,000 people by 2020. The residents live in neighborhoods sprawling across what were once cornfields and they commute to work in the suburbs and the City.

But this burgeoning bedroom community had no church.

"During a visit to Pingree Grove, I recognized there was nothing of a spiritual nature there," said Bailey, an IBSA Church Planting catalyst in Northern Illinois. "But as I prayerwalked in that community, I recognized that there was something special there—something that God wanted to do."

Bailey was praying and walking the area last summer when he had an idea. Several groups of teens from all over Illinois were coming to Chicagoland for a week in July to assist church planters. Calling on **Ken Wilson**, his IBSA counterpart from Southern Illinois, Bailey put forth his plan.

"He said, 'I want to plant a church in four days, and they say that we can't do that,'" Wilson recalled. "And the last thing you want to tell a southern Illinois redneck is that you can't do something. So, I wanted to be part of something that only God can do."

"For the first time we decided instead of going and helping a church planter," Bailey said of the usual summer project teams teens and planters in Chicagoland, "we were going to attempt to plant a church with just eleven people in four days."

The eleven people included several teens from First Baptist Church in far south Metropolis, led by associate pastor **Cliff Easter**, and the students from Clarksville Baptist Church in central Illinois with their youth leader, **Leslie Propst**.

The group divided into groups of two and prayerwalked Pingree Grove, knocking on more than 650 doors in those four days. They prayed for the people in the community, asking the Lord to

save the lost, connect them with people looking for a church, and to help develop friendships in Jesus' name. And they invited the people to a Bible study on Thursday night.

As Church Planting Catalysts, Wilson and Bailey are part of a partnership between IBSA and the North American Mission Board. Gifts to the *Mission Illinois Offering* help provide support services for these church planting missionaries, allowing them to recruit and train men who will plant and pastor new churches in some of the 200 places in Illinois where IBSA has identified the need for new congregations. With Mission Illinois as both a goal and a calling, IBSA seeks to establish evangelistic, gospel-teaching churches within easy reach of every lost person in Illinois.

"The Lord granted us immense favor," Wilson said. "We met many people interested in knowing more about a church plant possibility and a few more who even recommitted their lives to Christ." The superintendent of a local school gave them permission to have a meeting there. Four families attended, Bailey said, that was the start of a church.

But we need a leader

"We were far from finished," Wilson said, "We prayed for Pingree Grove, that God would send a church planter to lead where we began." Little did they know, God had begun his work in Pingree Grove three years earlier.

R. T. Maldaner and his family of eight had moved to Illinois from Idaho. Maldaner was serving in church staff position in Elgin, but he sensed the Lord leading him to plant a church. "But we really didn't know where," Maldaner said.

Maldaner's desire for church planting was encouraged by a mentor who told him that he had the DNA of a church planter. "He told me of IBSA's need for solid gospel-centered men to plant solid gospel-centered churches," Maldaner said, "and he then connected me with a gentleman from IBSA by the name of Tim Bailey."

In January, six months after that summer outreach, the two met at Starbucks in South Elgin. "Tim and I were sitting down drinking coffee," Maldaner said, "talking about my desire to church plant when he asks me his final question for the interview: 'Where do you live?'"

When Maldaner said, "Pingree Grove," Bailey pounded the table and yelled, "Praise the Lord!"

"R.T.," Bailey told him, "we have been walking around Pingree Grove, and driving around Pingree Grove, and praying around Pingree Grove for a year that God would send us a church planter for Pingree Grove."

One month later, Maldaner started a gathering. Since that Sunday, 150 people have attended faithfully, Bailey said, "and we have yet to begin the major push in encouraging people to come."

Maldaner recognizes that the “Lord has orchestrated a miraculous thing....Knowing that our church isn’t a church plant in isolation, knowing that we have IBSA and a plethora of other brothers standing alongside us and helping us is a very liberating feeling.”

The church, called City of Joy, is set to launch officially on September 9.

“It is nothing we did,” Bailey insists, “It was only because of prayer, and more prayer, and even more prayer, that God decided to open the door to this church.”

Wilson remains invigorated by the experience of prayerwalking for a church plant. “I see God wanting to do this in multiple places, even rural areas across Illinois... Because He wants to touch Illinois (even more) than we want to reach it.”

A call to prayer

Please encourage your church to pray for state missions during the *Mission Illinois Offering & Week of Prayer*, September 9-16. Pray especially for church planting across the state, to reach more than 8 million people here who do not know Jesus Christ as Savior. Pray for Church Planting Catalysts Tim Bailey, Ken Wilson, and other members of the IBSA Church Planting Team. And pray for R.T. Maldaner as he leads the new City of Joy Church in Pingree Grove.