

Open Door Fellowship  
636 S. Baums Bridge Rd  
Kouts, IN 46347  
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## **ODF Biography, September, 2025**

We are seeking not only a permanent pastor, but also someone who may be willing to serve in an interim or fill-in role while we continue the search. At present, our pastor preaches two Sundays each month. One of the other Sundays is dedicated to a praise and worship service, and the fourth Sunday features a different type of service.

Our church, Open Door Fellowship, is located at 636 Baums Bridge Road in Kouts, Indiana, approximately an hour and a half drive from Grace.

We would like anyone interested and willing to serve in a small church in Northwest Indiana to please contact Matt Good at (219) 241-3922, [mattandmindigood@aol.com](mailto:mattandmindigood@aol.com)

### **The Beginning:**

In the summer of 1995, a group began meeting on Sunday evenings to worship and pray about a new vision they were developing. This group decided it would be best to begin a separate new body rather than continue in their present church. September 3, 1995, the group met on a Sunday morning at the John Perzee farm. The following week they began meeting in the KHS cafeteria. They remained worshipping there until the school began a remodeling project and closed the building at which time they began meeting at Birky's Café in Kouts. The majority of this group was from Hopewell Mennonite Church in Kouts. There are still 5 families from this group that still support ODF.

Along with the worship services, they established a name Open Door Fellowship, elected leadership and developed our children's program. Small groups (cells) were a vital part of our body. Next, was discerning who we would call to be our pastor. We knew Jerry Kandel would be available beginning that November, so we asked him to be our lead elder/pastor. In the meantime, our elders, along with a few others, led our morning worship services.

An Apostolic oversight team consisting of men from other ministries and churches was established to assist this new congregation and help them stay true to God's word.

Missions are important to the body. Along with financially supporting various missions at home and abroad, several members have in the past participated in missions around the world.

### **Significant events:**

1997: Lee & Elva Birky purchased land on Baums Bridge Rd. and offered a part of it to ODF.

1999: A ground breaking service was held in May and a dedication service was held November 28 for phase 1.

2002: The Bible Memory program was started for grades 2-8 and still continues.  
Decision was made to move ahead with Phase 2 of our building, adding the Prayer Silo.

2003: February: we began construction of the Silo. And by May 18, children ages 3-5 now have a classroom on the lower level. The upper level began use as a Prayer Room.

2011: Phase 3 construction was completed and our first service was held November 19 in what is now the sanctuary.

2020: COVID: Volunteers were used to check in with a small group of people so all regular attenders had weekly contact. Zoom services were held. When the church was again able to meet, the arrangement of the chairs was changed from rows to placing them around tables. This gave us the choice to spread out and also to have discussion groups as part of our service.

#### Current services:

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month we have breakfast fellowship together from 9-10.

1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays: Pastor Jerry has a sermon followed with round table discussions and sharing.

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday: Communion, praise, worship and prayer focus on current sermon topics. Open mic for any to share as the Holy Spirit leads.

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Opportunity for attenders to plan the service. If no one signs up pastor has the input.

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday: No service at ODF building. We are encouraged to meet with someone who isn't currently following Christ or with someone who could use encouragement.

Children: Nursery is staffed. Kidzone class for grades K-5<sup>th</sup> grade after praise portion of service.

Currently as of December 2025, average attendance is 50 to 60 including children.

#### Ways our building has been/is used by the community free of charge:

1. In Phase 3 showers were installed, an AED donated so our building is designated an emergency shelter.
2. Girl Scouts have used our building
3. Home School groups
4. Community weekday Bible Study
5. Montessori school
6. After school program when the public school had early dismissal.
7. Kouts annual Christmas craft show for those who aren't able to have it in their home.
8. Family events and class reunions
9. Men's homeless shelter one night a week for six month period for several years. This has been discontinued since the homeless shelter now has a permanent building in Valparaiso.
10. Baby/bridal showers and weddings.

### **Town and County Demographics**

#### **Kouts, Indiana Demographics:**

- **Population:** Approximately 2,000 (as of the 2020 Census)
- **Age Distribution:**
  - Median age: ~36 years
  - Percentage of the population under 18: 25.5%
  - Percentage of the population 65 and over: 15.8%
- **Gender:**
  - Male: 48.5%
  - Female: 51.5%
- **Racial Composition:**
  - White: 97.3%
  - Hispanic or Latino: 2.3%
  - Black or African American: 0.5%

- Other races: 0.6%
- **Education:**
  - High school graduate or higher: 93%
  - Bachelor's degree or higher: 22.5%
- **Household Income:**
  - Median household income: \$59,500
  - Per capita income: \$30,000
- **Poverty Rate:** Approximately 8%

**Porter County, Indiana Demographics:**

- **Population:** 170,000+ (as of the 2020 Census)
- **Age Distribution:**
  - Median age: 40.4 years
  - Percentage of the population under 18: 22.3%
  - Percentage of the population 65 and over: 16.8%
- **Gender:**
  - Male: 48.9%
  - Female: 51.1%
- **Racial Composition:**
  - White: 83.2%
  - Black or African American: 8.6%
  - Hispanic or Latino: 8.5%
  - Asian: 1.5%
  - Other races: 1.8%
- **Education:**
  - High school graduate or higher: 93.5%
  - Bachelor's degree or higher: 31%
- **Household Income:**
  - Median household income: \$65,000
  - Per capita income: \$33,000
- **Poverty Rate:** Approximately 9.3%