

# REFLECTIONS

VOLUME 46 NUMBER 1 | SPRING 2024 | HOME



WILLOW BROOK CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

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### LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Gentle Readers,

As busy as this time of year is, you may not have even noticed, but this spring issue is late! We ran into a delay and are glad to be getting it out now. Nonetheless, we apologize, and do expect the summer issue to arrive soon.

The theme of this issue delves into the concept and reality of home, and all the ways home manifests in our lives. If you have ever said that a place or person "feels like home," you will appreciate the sentiments within. Is home simply "where you hang your hat," or is it something more?

As a retirement community, we are all too familiar with the way home can be created, at all care levels, at each of our three campuses. On the flip side, most people who come through our doors have left another home, an act fraught with emotion. Whether moving from across town or across the country, leaving a beloved home is never easy. It is a transition that takes time. The good news is, you are in fine company! Your neighbors have gone through the metamorphosis, too; they understand, and their presence is yet another reminder that home is within reach here.

We hope you enjoy perusing this issue and look forward to sharing our summer issue with you soon.

Cover Photo: Baby ducklings and their mom in the assisted living Cafe 100 Courtyard at Willow Brook at Delaware Run. Photo by Christina Dresdow.

## WILLOW BROOK CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

*Three campuses • Not-for-profit • Churches of Christ*

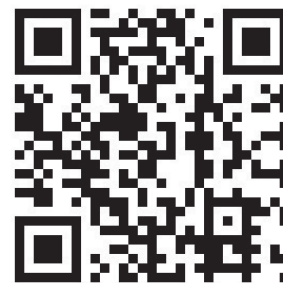
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[willow-brook.org](http://willow-brook.org)



# FIRESIDE CHATS WITH CEO TROY MCKNIGHT



Photo by Christina Dresdow

Troy McKnight, CEO of Willow Brook Christian Communities.

“ WE CAN HANG OUR HAT IN ALL KINDS OF PLACES, BUT DOING IT ALONGSIDE PEOPLE WE LOVE IS THE REAL GIFT OF HOME. ”

## HOME IS WHERE YOUR PEOPLE ARE

6821. This address number was home to me for 52 years. I have so many memories of the house I grew up in, and called home until just a few weeks ago. Many, if not most, of you know the expanse of memories collected in one place over this length of time. You also know that time brings change, and sometimes that home of many years is no longer the most ideal place for the later years of life. So, it was with my parents, who made the big decision to sell my childhood home and relocate closer to family. The time was right, and the transition was practically seamless! (Yeah, right!)

In truth, the transition was packed with decisions and emotions. So many decisions, each day ranging from the smallest of items to the largest. It just wears you out. Then come the emotions! Leaving home and starting over is not easy. We leave behind a physical place, and must hold in our hearts the memories and relationships that have sustained us for so many years.

Making this change is not for the weary, as you may well know! Thankfully my parents are settling in now in their new home and beginning to plant new roots, to create a new concept of home.

Home is our anchor, and like a boomerang, we launch forward and in a roundabout way, make our way back. Home may look different for each of us, but we have all experienced a sense of home – sometimes it is a place, and sometimes more of a space of comfort, of being at ease, of feeling known and loved.

Returning to Colorado to say goodbye to our family home of 52 years was bittersweet. We celebrated with just the original five of us – mom, dad, me, and my two brothers – by loading up the car (first time in decades!) to go out to eat and reflect on the big change. The conversation was full of laughter and joy, just like the good ol’ days!

Home, most of all, is where our people are. We can hang our hat in all kinds of places, but doing it alongside people we love is the real gift of home.

# NEW BEGINNINGS, ROOTED IN FAITH

Did you know that Willow Brook is home to over a dozen retired clergy from a variety of denominations? With a 50+ year history of being a faith-based not-for-profit organization, our campuses welcome people of all faiths (as well as no faith) as they make their way through their aging journey.

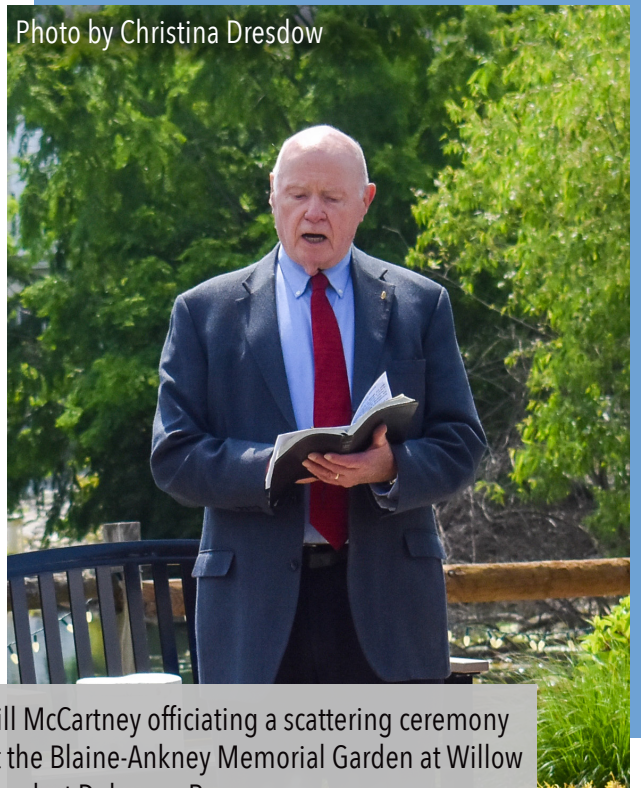
Our retired clergy have found a home at Willow Brook for many distinct reasons, including on the recommendation of fellow church members. In the case of retired pastor Bertie Dell, a fellow pastor introduced her to the community and parishioners invited her to dinner. Dell says, "Those personal contacts, along with Willow Brook's excellent reputation in Delaware, informed my choice. I also knew from prior experience that a church-sponsored nonprofit senior community is the best choice." Retired pastor Vince Frey echoes the importance of input from others when contemplating the decision to move into Willow Brook. "We have friends whose parents were at Willow Brook, and they believed it was a good, reasonably priced place, and our daughter and son-in-law also knew the children of those parents, and they highly recommended Willow Brook."



Photo by Christina Dresdow

Bertie Dell shares words of wisdom at the Ash Wednesday service at Willow Brook Christian Village.

Photo by Christina Dresdow



Bill McCartney officiating a scattering ceremony at the Blaine-Ankney Memorial Garden at Willow Brook at Delaware Run.

While many retired clergy who live at Willow Brook have been members of the larger Delaware community at one time or another, others moved here from other cities and states to be closer to family who live in the area, a trend we have noticed more and more over the years.

Willow Brook is a place where spirituality can continue to be nurtured, which has been an important factor for more than one of the clergypersons we spoke with. Stan Fawley, a retired minister who continues to voluntarily serve in Willow Brook's memory care unit, says, "[My wife and I] have found so much community at Willow Brook. Willow Brook is here so we can continue lives of service and love. Many of us aren't so good at mowing the lawn anymore, but we love and share and care—all the important stuff."

Some, like Mary Holm, participate both in their home church and help to plan and lead worship celebrations at Willow Brook. Holm volunteers to open and set up the chapel at Delaware Run most Sundays and welcome attendees to the 2pm worship service at . She notes, "One of the most meaningful worship services I've had the opportunity to create was what I called, 'A Service of Reflection and Healing, Restoration and Hope' in March 2021, when we celebrated the reopening of the Willow Brook chapel after an entire year of no in-person worship gatherings because of Covid."

The presence of an onsite chaplain has added to a feeling of community, and the programming provided—from weekly church services to Bible studies to support groups and private spiritual care meetings—has enhanced the experience of living at Willow Brook and is a welcome addition for clergy and non-clergy alike. Especially as mobility becomes more difficult or driving becomes less preferable, the ability to go to church, and to have a spiritual home, only becomes more important.

There have been pleasant surprises for retired clergy moving to Willow Brook. Former seminary professor and pastor Bill McCartney says, "It hasn't felt like we're living in an 'old folks home!'" For others, the larger community of the growing city of Delaware has been noteworthy, including the amenities of Ohio Wesleyan University and downtown Delaware. Practicality and functionality is also valued, such as having elevators readily available, and not having steps and stairs required to get around. And, more than one person notes the joy of meeting people from other denominations and discovering people with a diversity of religious paths.

Finally, at Willow Brook, there is a sense of belonging to an ecumenical village that is profoundly different from many other retirement communities. Says one pastor, "Everywhere you turn, there is a sense that Willow Brook is run for and with the residents and that residents and staff are in this together. There is no corporate headquarters five states away, just a local volunteer board of trustees." Says another: "We assumed Godly care would be given. TRUE."

Photo by Christina Dresdow



Stan Fawley shares stories of his life as a minister.

Mary Holm reading scripture at Willow Brook at Delaware Run's Good Friday service.



Photo by Christina Dresdow

# Q&A

**What would you say to other retired or retiring clergy (or anyone - even non-clergy) who may be considering Willow Brook as a future home?**

*"Willow Brook meets a broad spectrum of people's needs, from very simple care to more extreme care as needed."*

*"Welcome to Willow Brook! You're making a good choice!"*

*"I can't imagine a better place for any retired or retiring clergy to make their home! As I often say to our friends and neighbors, 'We are all just walking each other the rest of the way home!' It is such a privilege to be walking together this part of our life's journey, with such a wonderful and caring community!"*

*"1. Don't wait too long to enter a retirement community! 2. Willow Brook is an amazing organization, where everyone is important. 3. Enter Willow Brook expecting to have your life enriched and enlarged."*

*"Honesty by all persons here has been superb."*

# Four Seasons of Haiku

by Brenda Spradling

A Willow Brook at Delaware Run resident

Crawl, walk, run  
Drive or fly.  
Who knows? Just travel on!

Fall apple picking  
Mutsu, a crisp juicy one.  
Eaten, bite by bite.

Coyotes howled,  
And wind carried the night sound.  
The moon came to mind.

Little May flowers...  
The perfume of a spring day,  
Incense for my nose.

Photo by Linda Gaffey



Purple irises in bloom at Willow Brook at Delaware Run.



Blossoming tree at Willow Brook Christian Home.

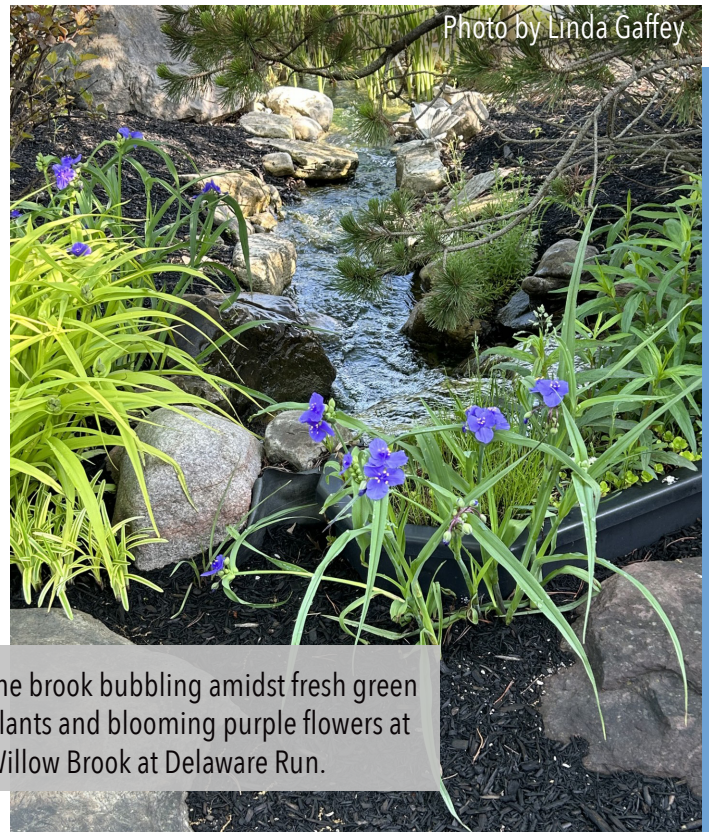
Photo by Christina Dresdow

Photo by Connie McNeal



A resident volunteer pruning the flowers at Willow Brook Christian Village.

Photo by Linda Gaffey



The brook bubbling amidst fresh green plants and blooming purple flowers at Willow Brook at Delaware Run.

# FLYING HOME

**D**o you hear that? Listen closely... lean in... that's it. A soft flutter. Now close your eyes and picture it: deep bright orange, like a sunset on the beach at the crisp edge of the horizon line - silhouetted by sharp black lines and edges. Now open your eyes, and watch as the monarch butterfly tentatively takes its first flight into the outside world.

A group of residents at Willow Brook Christian Home had the honor and privilege of taking part in the raising and release of several monarch butterflies this spring. The mesh butterfly habitat was located in our assisted living at the Home, where residents could watch the entire metamorphosis process, from caterpillar, through the many larval stages, to chrysalis, and finally, the emergence as a butterfly. When the butterflies were ready to be released outside, our residents gathered with excited anticipation outside of our assisted living entryway (several staff and residents even wore butterfly wings in honor of the occasion!).

A Willow Brook Christian Home resident joyously holding a new butterfly as it drinks nectar.



Photo by Christy Turner

Residents held nectar on plates so that when the butterflies emerged they would have a ready energy source. The joy and wonder of the residents matched the beauty of this momentous occasion.

The word "metamorphosis" means transformation or change in shape. How many times as we age do we feel like we are going through a metamorphosis of our own? Sometimes all we can do is follow the lead of the butterflies - taking each stage of life as it comes, letting it shape and change us as it will, until we emerge stronger and more beautiful than before.

Photo by Christy Turner

Residents and staff excitedly anticipating the butterfly release at Willow Brook Christian Home.

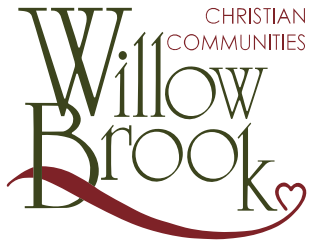


# REFLECTIONS

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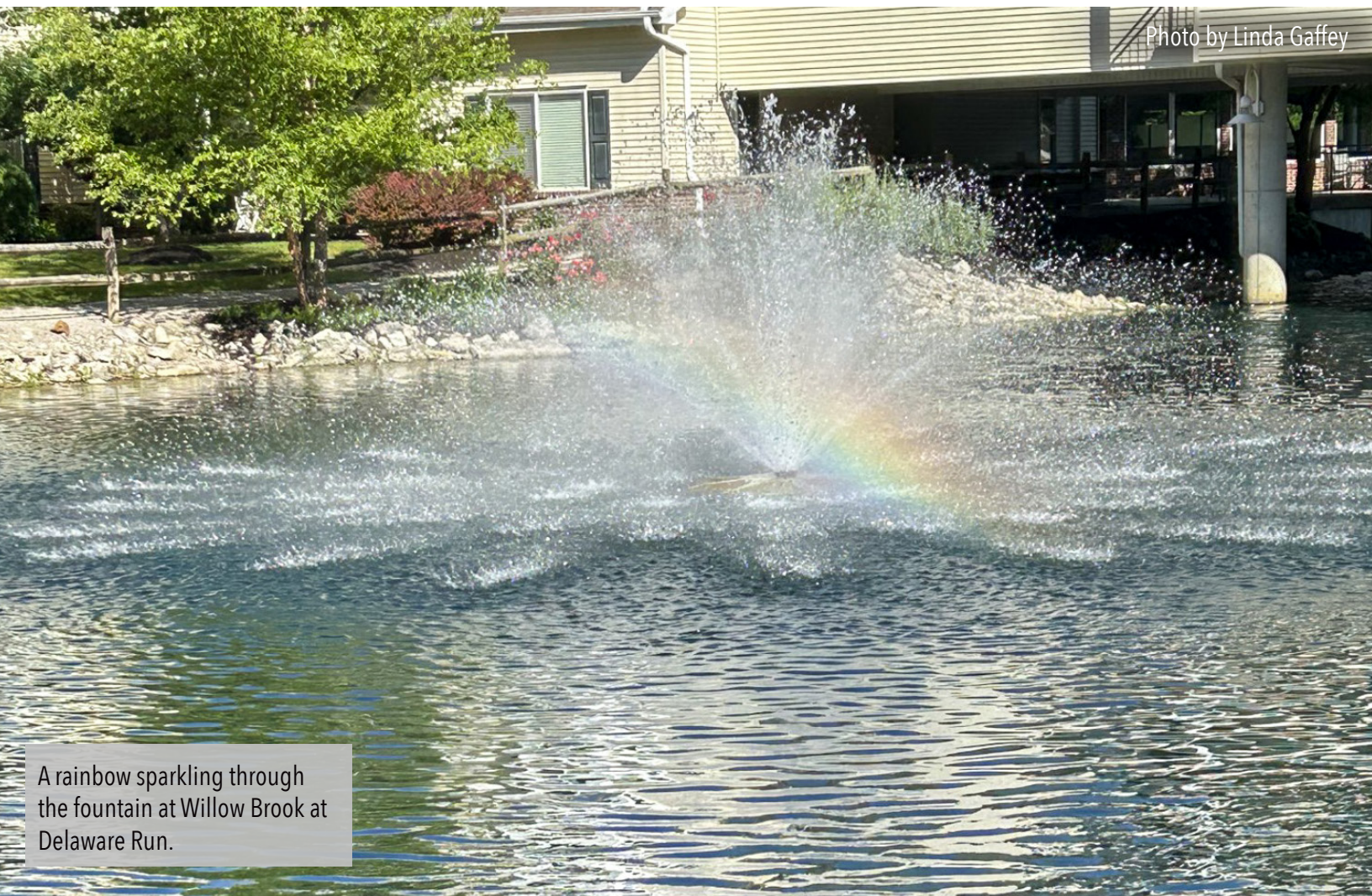


Photo by Linda Gaffey

A rainbow sparkling through the fountain at Willow Brook at Delaware Run.