

Meet the Member

Rick and Linda Allen

From a self-destructive atheist to a pastor is too much to write in this short article, but Rick's journey is a process of grace and redemption that spans his lifetime. Rick and Linda have been married for 41 years and so our focus will be their lives together that includes four children and two grands.

Rick was raised just north of Philadelphia and Linda in Paramus, New Jersey. Linda received her associates degree from Centenary University in Hackettstown, NJ, but her parents moved while she was in college and so after college she relocated to Washington Crossing, PA to be with her parents. Rick's father owned a bar in that same area and in 1978, Rick and Linda were introduced to each other at the bar through a friend who knew them both. Two years later, they were married. At the time, neither were Christ followers and they had little to do with the church.



It wasn't until after the birth of their first daughter (Kirsten) in 1984 that Linda felt the need to search for spiritual significance in her life and the life of her baby. It was a spiritual turning point for her and started her journey of faith. She joined a local Bible study in 1986 and then a second one that focused more on Christian parenting. The Lord worked in her heart and on January 12, 1987, she made a public proclamation of her faith. As she says, "It was a line in the sand."

She hid her Bible from Rick who was a hard driving businessman and self-proclaimed angry atheist who had absolutely no interest in either God or the church. His childhood experience as an altar boy did not endear him to the church. But Rick saw the change in Linda and after the birth of their third girl in 1988, agreed to go to church with Linda for no other reason than to support her and the girls. They walked into this small church and were invited after the service to lunch by the pastor and his wife. (It's hard to hide a family of five in a church with a few dozen people.) Rick felt uncomfortable to say the least, because joining them for lunch was a missionary couple from Central America. But what impressed Rick more than the discomfort of the situation was the genuineness of the people... regardless of their religious views. Rick agreed to join a men's group that met in the pastor's home and in 1990 made a profession of faith around the kitchen table in that home. As an acknowledgement of their faith both Rick and Linda were baptized.

Rick worked for a software company and had risen in the ranks to become the VP of global sales and marketing. It was a hot industry and in 1992 was purchased by IBM. Rick was transferred to CT to run their regional office and commuted back and forth from Yardley, PA until they could find a home they could afford in Fairfield County, one of the wealthiest counties in the US. They became involved in Black Rock Congregational Church in Fairfield and Rick was challenged by an associate pastor with the question; "Does anyone at work identify you as a Christian?" He became convicted by this, but in the spring of 2001 the bottom fell out of the ".com" industry and he left the company albeit with a healthy severance package. He took the summer off, but on September 11, 2001, the terrorist attacked changed everything.

Rick calls it "intentional surrender". Over the next few years Rick and Linda became very active in their church. Rick became the vice-chair of the Elders and Linda took on a position as the associate director of their preschool and nursery. In 2007 Rick agreed to pastor a small satellite campus while doing business consulting on the side. For the next eight years he saw lives transformed through that church but struggled to make the church an independent congregation. It was a challenging time in their lives.

In 2008 Rick became involved in MedSend, a missions program helping healthcare professionals serve in mission work. In 2015, he left the position in the church and took on the role full-time as CEO moving the offices to South Carolina. Today, they support over 150 health care professionals in 57 countries. For example,

medical students just completing their course work can serve in MedSend before they become ingrained in the American medical community and MedSend will pay their medical school bills while they are serving.

www.medsend.org

Their oldest daughter, Kirsten is married to Steven and lives in Colorado while Carly, their second daughter, lives in Fort Mill and is married to Tino. Dana, their third, will be getting married in the fall of 2022 in Hawaii where they live. (Rick and Linda are saving their shekels.) Their youngest, Tracy, lives in Charlotte.

Today, Linda is a full-time grandma to two of the best looking and smartest grandchildren ever and cares for her aging mother who lives nearby. Rick runs the monthly men's breakfasts at Eternal. They love the strong Bible teaching at Eternal as well as the emphasis on community something that has been difficult during Covid.

Rick's favorite verse is Ephesians 2:8-9. *"For it is by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast."*

Linda's favorite verse is Ezekiel 36:26. *"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh."*

Written by Paul Veerman