

Kindness, Connection & Community

Trish Sanders McGann and Bishop Franklin on Kindness & Co., Christian Community, and Making Room for God to Move

Trish Sanders McGann with Bishop Franklin

Tuesday, September 8, 2026

Program Summary

In this Tuesday edition of Mark & Friends, Mark Burns welcomes Trish Sanders McGann and Bishop Franklin for a conversation about Kindness & Co., a nonprofit Christian bookstore and community space preparing to open in Springfield. Built around Ephesians 4:32 - kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and Christ-centered relationships - the vision is larger than retail. Trish describes a place where people from many churches can gather, study God's Word, pray, volunteer, connect with local nonprofits, and experience practical kindness. She also shares how God redirected her from corporate leadership toward this new calling after a trip to Israel. Bishop Franklin explains why he sees the project as an important new Christian intersection for Springfield, especially after the loss of local Christian bookstores. The conversation ultimately moves beyond the store itself to a Gospel invitation: make room for God to move, draw near to Him, ask honest questions, and trust that Jesus welcomes those who seek Him.

Key Takeaways

- Kindness is not a small virtue; Ephesians 4:32 connects kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and the way believers reflect Jesus.
- Kindness & Co. is designed as more than a bookstore - it is intended to become a place of compassion, connection, community, prayer, study, and service.
- As a nonprofit bookstore, the organization plans to highlight and support a different local mission partner each month after expenses are met.
- God's calling does not always fit my existing plans; Trish's transition from corporate leadership into ministry began with a clear sense that God was redirecting her life.
- Christian community is strengthened when believers from different churches and denominations have spaces where they can meet, encourage one another, and learn together.
- Practical service can become a doorway into deeper discipleship, especially when people are gently invited to volunteer, pray, study Scripture, and serve their community.
- A healthy ministry does not merely offer good customer service; it intentionally notices people, listens, prays, and makes room for compassion.
- Honest spiritual questions are not a threat to God. A sincere prayer such as, 'God, if You're real, make Yourself real to me,' can be an honest first step toward seeking Him.
- James 4:8 gives a simple invitation for the spiritually curious and the mature believer alike: draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.
- The Gospel remains the center: human sin separates us from God, but God made a way through Jesus for people to know Him personally.

Scripture References

- Ephesians 4:32
- James 4:8
- Romans 5:8
- Romans 3:23
- Romans 6:23
- Galatians 5:22-23
- Hebrews 10:24-25
- Matthew 5:16
- 1 Peter 4:10
- John 14:6

Quote of the Day

“God, if You're real, make Yourself real to me.”

Broadcast Notes

Bishop Franklin opens the program by reading Ephesians 4:32 and is introduced as a Springfield pastor, prayer leader, Great News Media board member, and president of the Springfield and Vicinity Ministerial Alliance. Mark then turns to Trish Sanders McGann and the vision for Kindness & Co. Trish explains that the organization is a nonprofit Christian bookstore and community space where volunteers - called 'kindness curators' - will greet people, explain the mission, help in the store, and support prayer and connection. Each month the bookstore plans to feature a local mission partner, with proceeds after expenses benefiting that organization. Trish says the project was not on her 'bingo card' for 2026, but following a job transition and a trip to Israel she sensed God clearly redirecting her from corporate leadership toward working for Him in a new way. She later partnered with Kathy Strueckle, a former Memorial Health executive. Bishop Franklin emphasizes the loss Springfield experienced when Christian bookstores disappeared, describing them as natural intersections where believers from different churches could connect. Trish describes couches, a farmhouse table, a conference room, prayer stations, Bible-study opportunities, and volunteers prepared to pray with guests. The conversation then becomes evangelistic. Trish suggests a simple prayer for someone unsure whether God exists: 'God, if You're real, make Yourself real to me.' Mark connects that invitation with James 4:8, and Bishop Franklin closes by encouraging people who feel far from God to trust that Jesus will receive them. He then prays for Kindness & Co., its volunteers, and the people who may encounter Jesus there.

Practical Applications

- Practice Ephesians 4:32 in one specific relationship today by choosing kindness, compassion, and forgiveness.
- Look for one local ministry or nonprofit doing good work and pray for it by name this week.
- Ask whether there is a place where God may be redirecting my plans rather than merely blessing the plans I already made.
- Visit or support Christian community spaces that help believers connect across church and denominational lines.

- Before I enter a conversation, ask, 'How can I show this person genuine compassion rather than simply being polite?'
- If I volunteer somewhere, remember that service is not only about completing tasks; it is also about seeing and caring for people.
- Pray for someone who is spiritually curious and may never feel comfortable walking into a church building.
- If I am unsure about God, pray honestly: 'God, if You're real, make Yourself real to me,' and stay attentive to how He may answer.
- Use James 4:8 as a personal invitation: take one concrete step to draw nearer to God through prayer, Scripture, worship, or Christian community.
- Find one way this week to become a 'kindness curator' wherever God has already placed me - at work, church, home, school, or in the community.

Today's Challenge

For the next seven days, practice one intentional act of kindness each day. Make it specific and personal - a prayer, encouraging note, practical help, invitation, gift, listening ear, or act of forgiveness. At the end of each day, ask: Did I merely do something nice, or did I make room for compassion, connection, community, and Jesus to be seen?

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for the kindness You have shown me through Jesus. Make me tenderhearted, compassionate, and ready to forgive as You have forgiven me. Open my eyes to people who need more than polite words - people who need to be seen, heard, encouraged, prayed for, and welcomed. Show me where You are asking me to make room for You to move, even if Your direction is different from the plans I had made. Help me support the good work You are doing through churches, ministries, nonprofits, volunteers, and ordinary believers in my community. Give me courage to invite spiritually curious people to seek You honestly, and deepen my own desire to draw near to You each day. Use my words, service, relationships, and resources to create compassion, connection, and community. Above all, let people encounter Jesus through the kindness You produce in me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

About Today's Guests

Trish Sanders McGann is helping lead the launch of Kindness & Co., a nonprofit Christian bookstore and community space in Springfield. Raised in Springfield with a Christian foundation, Trish later pursued a deeper personal relationship with Jesus while building a successful career in corporate leadership. After a job transition and a trip to Israel, she sensed God redirecting her toward ministry rather than returning to corporate work. That calling eventually developed into Kindness & Co., a vision for a welcoming place centered on compassion, connection, community, prayer, Christian resources, volunteering, and support for local mission partners. Bishop Franklin is a Springfield pastor, prayer leader, president of the Springfield and Vicinity Ministerial Alliance, and a member of the Great News Media board. He has strongly encouraged the Kindness & Co. vision because of its potential to create a new Christian gathering place for believers and seekers across the community.

About Today's Host

Mark Burns is General Manager of the WLUJ Family of Stations and Great News Radio Network and host of Mark & Friends. For decades, Mark has been involved in Christian radio and ministry, with a heart for helping listeners know Jesus and grow deeper in God's Word. Through Mark & Friends, he brings pastors, ministry leaders,

teachers, missionaries, authors, and everyday believers around the microphone for biblical teaching, testimony, conversation, and encouragement. His desire is that each program help listeners learn, grow, and faithfully live out their relationship with Jesus.

Proofread Broadcast Transcript

We're glad you're here. We're glad you're here. Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're near.

It's so good to see you. We hope that it's clear. Everyone loves you.

We're glad you're here. We're glad you're here. We're glad you're here.

Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're near. Reading from Ephesians chapter 4 verse 32. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

That is Ephesians chapter 4 verse 32. And that was Bishop Franklin, a good friend, a prayer warrior, a pastor in Springfield, and a part of our Great News Media board. Appreciate his wisdom, his insight, his input, his heart for people, his desire for all to come to know Jesus, and his desire to equip the saints, all of us that follow Jesus, to finish well and to use our gifts for God's glory.

So I appreciate the many ways he works for this radio ministry and how he ministers to people throughout Springfield and the vicinity. He's also the president of the Springfield and Vicinity Ministerial Alliance and a real prayer warrior. We've talked about that many times because he loves to involve people in prayer and get them over to the Ministerial Alliance house in Springfield to pray.

I think he's still trying to have 24 hours a day prayer, 365 days a year. And I think he has just about every day covered with groups, with churches, with ministries, with individuals. But now he wants to impact it every hour of every day because that's the power of God at work when we pray.

Well, anyways, Bishop, it's not about you today. It's about Trish Sanders McGann, and she's got an exciting opportunity for us to be involved, but more than that, for us to attend and make purchases and to see this space used for community and for connection and for compassion. So she's going to talk about that.

It's a special gathering place in Springfield. It's a bookstore, but it's so much more. So we're going to talk all about that, but we began with Ephesians 4.32. Why is that a special verse for you? In this day and age, kindness amongst man is so rare, but it's something that we are calling Springfield and beyond to do for and with each other.

And we're hopeful that kindness and co can be a space where people can gather and be compassionate to each other and find a space where maybe they can connect with each other, connect in a small group, connect with their God, and then even serve their community. And the website's kindnessplusco, so KindnessPlusCo.org. What are they going to find if they stop there? Yeah, if you stop there, you can sign up to receive our newsletter. You can also sign up to volunteer.

We're going to open in the fall of this year, and at that time, we're going to need what we're calling kindness curators. It's our volunteer squad, and they're going to help us in the store. They're going to greet those people who come to the store.

They're going to tell them about our mission partners. Our mission partners are those organizations that we are going to partner with and donate to. You see, our bookstore is a nonprofit bookstore, and so what that means is that after we pay our bills, we are donating our proceeds to one mission partner each and every month.

So when you go to our website, you can also nominate a mission partner. So if you have a favorite nonprofit organization that's doing good around Central Illinois, we hope that you nominate them. We'll have a table right

when you enter our space that features that organization and all of the good work that they're doing.

We know there are plenty of people doing good work in Springfield, and when we felt God's calling on our life to do good work, to bring kindness to Springfield and beyond, we didn't know what that meant at first. I didn't have on my bucket list of life or my bingo card for 2026 to open a bookstore and community space, but I did have Follow God, and very clearly, he told us that this is what we're doing. And we're truly just following his lead here because we're not professional small business folks who are doing this, and so we are actually looking for volunteers.

I'm currently acting as a general contractor. I didn't bring my tool belt with me today, but I have one, and we are looking for volunteers to help us with some finishing touches, some trim work, some painting. We are looking for professional volunteers in carpentry, but also in floors.

So if we have anyone in the listening area who has professional services who might be interested, head over to that website. There's a form there they can fill out, or they can reach out to us, and that's available on the website as well. KindnessPlusCo.org, C-O, KindnessPlusCo.org, and stop by, view it, be praying it all up because this will be a great meeting place.

Yeah, it'll be a retail shop, if you will, retail store selling books and Christian ministry, resources and tools and various things. Yeah, resources, tools, but we'll also have some jewelry, some apparel, some home goods, things like that. But we're also really hoping that what happens is that people are able to connect with each other and use those resources within the facility to study God's Word and to figure out how that applies to their life.

Now, Bishop, you had Trish, I think, to two different gatherings on the Saturdays when the Springfield and Vicinity Ministerial Alliance members meet, and you're pretty excited about this. In fact, you called me up and said, Mark, we got to get Trish in the studio. This is a great thing.

Why are you supportive as a pastor and just as a person that lives in Springfield? Well, I'm always concerned about the footprint of Christ in a city and especially this city where we live. We had a number of Christian bookstores in the past, but they all went away because of the direction that society is going. Everything is digital, and you can read it on your phone or on your tablet.

And so people think that bookstores and physical books are a thing of the past. What I grieved, literally grieved, with the closing of the last Christian bookstore here in Springfield was that bookstore served as an intersection where Christians would meet other Christians from different churches, from different denominations, and that helps to strengthen the overall church when we know that we're not the only ones. And so it was a great loss.

And so when I found out about this one, and I don't even remember how we got connected, but when I found out, I'm like, yeah, let's work this because it's very much needed in this time that we're living in. The diminishing of Christianity in our society worldwide is a very bad thing. And so a space like this will again make those connections where people can come in and they can be fed on the Word of God.

They can be nourished by the fellowship of those that they'll meet going in and out of this facility. And Trish, before I have you share the three C's, I'll call them, the compassion, connection, and community, why Ephesians 4.32 and then intersperse in answering that some of your own faith journey? Because I know you're like a high-powered executive in a company. And so how did God work in your life to bring you into a saving knowledge of Jesus and your vision for kindness plus co? Yeah, absolutely.

I was born and raised Catholic. I went to Christ the King here in Springfield, Sacred Heart Griffin, and that laid an outstanding foundation for my faith. I learned a lot about who God was and what words were in the Bible.

But after college, I found myself wanting a more personal relationship with God, and I wanted to know more about the Savior and the Holy Spirit that was living inside of me. And so with that, I found a restoration movement church.

I did climb the corporate ladder and enjoyed my life in corporate America.

Our company was purchased by a company out of Spain, and as it goes with mergers and acquisitions, I found myself without a job. But that was just before a trip to Israel that my husband and I had booked. Before we left, one of our competitors had reached out to me, and they said, Trisha, we have the perfect job for you.

It's your old job plus a promotion. And I said, look, I'm going to Israel. I'll call you when I get back.

Let me just go on this vacation. I'll come back regrouped, and we'll talk. Well, but God, right? It's the biggest but in the Bible.

But God, and he met me over there, and he told me that I was to work for him. And so I came home, and I didn't even apply for that job. I told that company that I wouldn't be applying for their job.

Thank you very much anyways. And I think my husband about fell over, but I said, I really think that we're supposed to work for God. And he said, what are you going to do? And I said, I don't know.

So I started meeting with a lot of my Christian friends, Christian business partners, and this idea came to fruition. And here we are. I have partnered with Kathy Strueckle, who is a former executive at Memorial Health, and with her leadership.

And as a fellow sister in Christ, we are so excited about what a community like this, that Kindness & Co. is going to be able to do and how it can impact the city of Springfield by spreading kindness and forgiveness. We feel the spirit moving in Springfield.

There is a revival happening in people's hearts, which is where it starts, right? But then it happens in our community. And I really think people are searching. People are thirsty.

And we're hopeful that while you can order a book from Amazon and it'll be here overnight, that you might want to come into the bookstore and look at it and touch it and feel it first. And maybe, rather than buying that book online and lining the pockets of someone in corporate America, maybe you'll want to come in and buy that book and have those profits benefit another nonprofit organization here in Springfield. And I like what Bishop Franklin's vision is, that community and bringing people together and different churches and people, you know, not just seeing this as a bookstore, but as a connection place.

And will there be tables or chairs? Or what's the setting? Like, is it somewhere they sit on a couch, can read a book and open up a discussion, like two people are in the same section? And, I mean, you want to foster kind of relationships. That's right. So our facility is not associated with any church in Springfield.

And that's intentional, because we know that we're not the only Christians. We're Christians only, but we're not the only Christians. Our facility is unaffiliated with any church in Springfield.

And that's intentional so that people do feel comfortable coming from any denomination in town, coming to our space. We have big couches that are on their way. We have a large farmhouse table.

We even have a conference room already built. We'll have tables in there where people can sit around and have a formal Bible study. You could have an informal conversation there.

But we do, we want that to be a place of compassion and connection for individuals in Springfield. And so those three Cs, the compassion, connection, and community, you've kind of touched on all of them, but how did you come up with the three Cs? Did God just put it on your heart or you prayed it up and suddenly as you were going through the Scriptures you saw, oh, the love of Jesus, the compassion He showed, that's something we should do. Oh, connection, yeah, we need a place where they can connect.

Well, how did you figure out a bookstore? Like, how were you led to have that be your meeting place? Yeah, well, actually, this started when my little boy was younger. I wanted to get him into volunteering and to understand that as followers of Christ we are called to change our actions because of the love that we've experienced. And so I wanted him to have those volunteer experiences, but I wasn't quite ready to take him out into the mission field yet.

I'm pretty sure he was just two at the time, and to be very honest, I wasn't in the mission field very much. So this started by wanting to create a place where people could come out and be safely led into volunteering in the community. And so when we talked about how could we easily do that, we said, well, it would be nice if we had a store where they could meet.

And then we figured out that, yeah, all the bookstores have left. Well, maybe we could have a bookstore, a Christian bookstore. And so it naturally led itself through that.

And talk a little about your desire that the community happens because there's volunteers that are coming in with intentionality. They greet the people at the door, how may I serve you? I mean, good customer service, but I think you want them to go further than just good customer service, right? Yeah, absolutely. So our kindness curators, we want to greet each person with compassion when they come in.

We want people to be able to be prayed for in this place. We'll actually have prayer stations around the store, but also individuals there who can pray with people, who can engage in conversation. So if people are missing that compassion in their lives, we're going to have specific volunteers in the store.

They're looking to make that connection. Now, I'm going to refer back to that Ephesians 4.32 that Bishop Franklin read and we opened up the program with. Be kind and compassionate to one another so everyone that's been tuned in can see how those are parts of your goal.

Forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you with some of your faith journey that's been shared I'm thinking there's many listeners that are tuned in and I shared this at our recent gathering because of some of our frequencies being between rock and roll stations. People are scanning the dial looking for that rock and roll song and then they tune into us and they're like, this is kind of an interesting concept. They're talking about a relationship with God.

I don't know if I even believe God exists and who's this Jesus? They're talking about him being a savior, being personally known and talked with. So in your faith journey, when did that personal relationship where you really sense that God was listening to you, that he cared for you, that he loved you, because there's somebody that's tuning in today that has never contemplated or thought about a God that loves me. Can that be? Yeah, sure.

To individuals who are looking to find God, who wonder about God, the one thing I always say is I challenge them to pray this prayer. God, if you're real, make yourself real to me. And it's a simple prayer that God will respond to.

God, if you're real, make yourself real to me. It makes room for your doubt and it makes room for God to move. And then all you got to do is stand back and let him move.

And that's really all of us Christians are doing. And that's really all we're doing at the bookstore. Because, like I said, this was not on my bingo card for 2026.

I am just standing back and making room for God to move. That parallels so well with one of my favorite verses that if anyone called on me, Hey, Mark, we need a testimony or we need a witness or we need you to share, that James 4.8, draw near to God and he'll draw near to you. Some versions come near to God and he'll come near to you.

But I have said that as a challenge to anyone that's far from God. Hey, just draw near him. Believe that he exists.

Or even if you don't believe he exists, say, God, if in fact you exist and I draw near to you, this Mark guy, Tricia, Bishop Franklin, they all say that if you'll draw near to God, he'll draw near to you. Well, test him, and he will. And it could be revealed through a caring word from somebody that day, a Christian that you come across, or something that you read or you hear on the radio.

And God makes himself known in mysterious ways, but his intent, because you are created. You didn't just happen. You didn't just self-exist.

You're not because of primordial slime coming together years ago and then just you got evolved. God designed and fashioned you. He gives you certain gift sets and abilities, and he desires all to come to know him.

But because of sin in the world, there's separation from God. But he made a way in Romans that talks all about it. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God loved us. He sent the very best. He sent himself in the form of Jesus Christ, a man, and yet God, who died on the cross for our sins.

Because God is perfect. God is unapproachable. God is high and lofty.

But God made a way for each of us, his creation, his humans, you and I, that he created to come into a relationship with him. But it's through Jesus, and it's through getting to know him. And, Bishop, you love to preach on that.

And any closing thoughts in our last minute or two on how somebody may be far from God or feels like I can't measure up or I can't live the Christian standard or I don't know, would Jesus really accept me? What would you say to them? Well, Jesus will accept you. He will accept any and everybody because he created everybody. And he created us for his own pleasure.

He does not take pleasure in our failures, in our misery. He desires the best for every one of us. And they talk about the God-sized hole that can only be filled by God.

There is something in every human being that knows that God is real without knowing how they know. But that prayer that Tricia gave is spot on, God, if you're real, because there are people who have those questions. If you're real, make yourself real to me.

And when you do that, God will convict you and he will make himself real in your spirit, in your heart. And all you have to do is say, okay, tell me what to do and I'll do it. In fact, last Tuesday and Wednesday, we talked about that on the programs because God's not intimidated by your questions or by your wonderments or could he really exist? He's not like, oh, Jesus, what are we going to do? They don't believe in me.

He's strong enough, he's mighty, he's sovereign, he's good. He loves you and he does care. And he has made a way and he desires to communicate with you, to hear from you, to praise him, to pray to him, to seek him out and he will be found.

And as you mentioned, draw near to God and he'll draw near to you. Well, Bishop Franklin, I'm going to give you the closing prayer for Trish and this KindnessPlusCo.org, KindnessPlusCo.org. Stop by, learn more. They could use volunteers to help with some of the final remodeling and upgrading and future volunteers.

What do you call those people that help and assist? Kindness curators. Curators, kindness curators. We all want to be about that.

In fact, we were talking about kindness on the Friday edition of Mark & Friends, the importance of those fruit of the Spirit being evident in us all. Kindness is a big part of that. Kindnessplusco.org, find out more there.

And Bishop, maybe close out with a prayer for Trish for the vision of kindnessplusco and the work that you desire, not only in Springfield, which is where God has placed you, but I know your heart is that these kinds of things are happening in all the communities. Amen. You know, Mark, there are people that will not step foot in a church because they've seen things, experienced things, and they want nothing to do with it.

But here's an alternative venue that they might step into and find Christ through the kindness that's offered there. So, Father, as we draw closer to the time of the opening of this Kindness & Co. Christian bookstore and community venue, we pray, Lord, that it will be a place where your presence will be felt the minute people walk through the door.

We pray, Lord, God, that people that don't know you but are inquisitive may find their way there, and we pray, Lord, that people may receive Christ as Savior through the ministry of this bookstore. God, we thank you, Lord, for Trisha and Brian and those that work with them and all of the volunteers, Lord, that you are going to raise up to make this venue a success. We thank you, Lord God, for the glory that you will get from this venue.

We thank you and praise you in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Amen and amen. Listening friend, if you missed a portion of today's broadcast, want to hear it again or pass it on to a friend, somebody that may want to volunteer or wants to buy books in the coming days in the fall when this is up and running, KindnessPlusCo.org, KindnessPlusCo.org. And you can also stop by our website, GreatNewsRadio.org and WLUJ.org. You can listen to this program, read the transcripts, other ministry resources, and even the Ephesians 432. There'll be talking points and tips and a challenge for you and also a prayer for you at GreatNewsRadio.org, WLUJ.org under the Mark & Friends tab.

So use that resource. A lot of people are using it as an additional Bible study because we have so much offering at the website there. So I hope you'll use that and tell your friends in the fall that KindnessPlusCo.org will be in Springfield.

That's the website. And KindnessPlusCo.org will be selling books and jewelry and other artifacts and fun homeware and good stuff. Homewares and apparel, yeah, that's right.

Any food there yet? Any food ideas? We'll have some nugget ice and coffee available at no charge, 739 South 5th Street. 739 South 5th Street. And if you miss that or you're driving, just call the station and we can give you that address.

And you're hoping in the fall? Yep, sure are. All right, listening friends. Thanks for listening.

Thanks for being a part of our radio listening family. This is Mark Burns, Bishop Franklin and Trish Sanders McGann with the Ministry of Great News Media. God bless you and have a great day and night.