

# CHAPTER 1: A DIVINE APPOINTMENT

## ACROSS THE STREET

The summer of 2022 started like any other in Gary, South Dakota. As I returned from another long stint away from home working on nuclear power plant turbines, I noticed my young neighbor across the street. His plans for the summer? Playing video games.

Something stirred within me that day. Here was a capable young man with his whole future ahead of him, yet no one had shown him the possibilities that lay beyond a screen. The question came naturally: "Do you know how to weld?"

He didn't. But more importantly, he was willing to learn.

With an old welder and a willing heart, we began. What started as informal lessons in my garage became something much more profound. As sparks flew from the welding torch, a different kind of spark ignited—one of purpose, confidence, and faith. By the end of that summer, not only had he learned to weld, but he had also been baptized and found a new direction for his life.

That's when I knew this was bigger than just one young man. This was a calling.





# CHAPTER 2: FROM NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS TO NURTURING YOUNG LIVES

My career in the power generation industry has taken me across the country, working on some of the most complex machinery in the world. As an Executive Board Member of Millwright Local 548 and a participant in the Billie Sutton Leadership Institute, I've seen firsthand how the skilled trades can transform lives and communities.

But nothing prepared me for the transformation I would witness when combining trade skills with faith-based mentorship.

The name SotaSoDak came to me during a motorcycle ride from South Dakota to Des Moines, Iowa, for a crane operator test. The last four letters of Minnesota (Sota) combined with the first two letters of South and first three of Dakota (SoDak)—it represented the bridge we were building between states, between generations, and between earthly skills and heavenly purpose.

