



## 2022 Irving Lambert Outstanding Urban Ministries Award

THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH PRESENTS

THE 2022 IRVING C. LAMBERT AWARD TO

JOHN (BIG JOHN) PHILLIP PERKINS



For dedicated and dynamic leadership as a church planter, pastor, community development practitioner, and Love Mercy and Do Justice advocate.

Big John's creative vision for fostering connection, ensuring belonging, caring for the afflicted, lonely, and oppressed, and using his many gifts to facilitate resources for those most at the margins embodied and exemplified Christ's intent in instructing us to preach good news to the poor, proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the

blind, and set the prisoners free. Big John was a "gentle man," who never lost sight of Christ's call to go and make disciples, even as he was caring for the "felt needs" of individuals, families, and the entire community. His work inspired those with whom he co-labored; mobilized and empowered a fresh generation of talented and committed young people; and encouraged local businesses, investors, church partners, and others from the marketplace to be drawn into God's mission to create concrete, life-changing initiatives toward the transformation of the community.

Long before CovEnterprises was a ministry of Love Mercy Do Justice, Big John was pioneering entrepreneurial ministries in Jackson, Mississippi, to foster economic and educational development. The Common Ground Cuts, a barbershop and beauty salon which Big John founded, aided returning citizens in their efforts to turn their lives around, find gainful employment, and pursue their dreams as craftsmen and craftswomen. Common Ground Lawn Care similarly employed young men and women

in an entrepreneurial endeavor which paired training with discipleship and prevention methodologies, helping to ensure that young people would stay on a trajectory toward success. Finally, Big John's Common Ground Catering provided opportunity for young people to develop culinary skills and to use those skills for the common good of a food-insecure community.

Big John loved the church and never stopped believing that it was God's answer for a lost and dying world. He was a church planter and mentor to others who were called to establish churches in under-resourced communities. He actively encouraged Covenant churches to embrace their call to be the integral, seen-and-felt hands of Jesus in the communities in which they were planted. Neither his work, nor his ideologies were ever confined to bricks and mortar, however. "Wherever we are," he would often say, "is where the gospel has an opportunity to go forth."

For executive directing the Spencer Perkins Center and giving his life's work to the cause of rescuing young men and women;

For serving Common Ground Covenant Church and through it, the surrounding community in Jackson, Mississippi;

For serving Covenant denominational ministries in church planting and ministry coaching;

For helping to pioneer CovEnterprises in tangible ways on the ground in Jackson;

For moving the needle forward on matters of equity, access, racial righteousness, and reconciliation within the Covenant and well beyond;

For challenging us to be people of integrity, whose words would be borne out in our actions, and whose actions would proclaim that we are followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one who gives voice to the voiceless, remembers the forgotten, pursues justice for the oppressed, and empowers the marginalized;

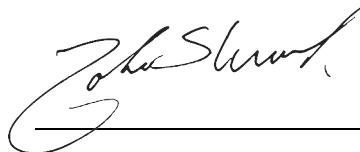
For modeling the character of Christ, blessing all whom he encountered with a humble and welcoming spirit, deep compassion, a joyful presence, a warm hug, and a prophetic witness of the never-ending love of God;

For hosting countless Sankofa journeys and opening ministry doors to all who came to listen and learn;

For being a “gentle man,” who answered the call to proclaim God’s Word in all seasons.


Big John was a pastor and a model to all in the Covenant through his words of wisdom and encouragement; through profound, convicting, selfless, and empowering actions, in his community and ours.

Presented in the city of Kansas City, Missouri, on the 26th day of June in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-two.



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John S. Wenrich, President



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Paul Robinson, Executive Minister, Love Mercy Do Justice