

Bishop Ackerman Council 5453 in Burlington, KY, was chartered as the Boone County Council on August 7, 1963.

The council's original meeting location was in the basement of the old Immaculate Heart of Mary School located on Limaburg Road in Hebron, KY, near the Greater Cincinnati Airport.



Aerial photograph of IHM Church and School. Circa 1962.

Clarence Boh was chosen to be the first Grand Knight of the Council, which he led for 1 term in 1963. After Grand Knight Boh, the following Brothers led the council during the remaining decade of the 1960s: Clifford Hauch (1964-1965), George Placke Jr. (1966), Kenneth F. Hill (1967-1968) and Joseph J. Meiman (1969).



Brother Sonny Acree, Holy Donut Founder ca. 1969

In 1967, Sanford 'Sonny' Acree joined the council. A baker by trade, Sonny owned the Colonial Bake Shop on Dixie Highway in Park Hills, KY. As the council began to look for ways to raise funds for their charitable efforts, Brother Acree suggested that the council make and sell fresh donuts at the Boone County Fair. From there, the Holy Donut was born. According to Brother Paul Becker, the council made \$300 during its first year of operations. Brother Becker remarked years later that while the council made only \$300, it felt like they had made a million.

As the decade of the 1970s dawned, Brother Acree was elected to lead the council from 1970 to 1971 (Who says no good deed goes unpunished?) as Grand Knight.

The 1970s would see the council hit the road, literally, to deliver the Holy Donuts to the masses. Beginning in 1970, the council purchased the first-generation donut trailer with a cooker and a hand-cranked donut maker that made 1 donut with each 360 degree turn of the handle. With the freedom of bringing the Holy Donuts to the world, our venues expanded beyond the Boone County Fair to include the Grant County Fair in Crittenden, KY, the Kenton County Fair in Independence, KY and the Florence Y'all Festival in Florence, KY. Sadly, Brother Sonny Acree, would not live to see the expansion of the 70s. He passed away in 1974 after a valiant battle with cancer.

The 1980s brought a new decade and a new trailer, with the help of a local RV dealer in Florence, KY, by the name of Tom Bonar. This was trailer #3. The original was replaced sometime during the 70s but was not built to sustain the work of making donuts. Trailer 3.0 had hook-ups and connections for running water, a water reservoir and a water heater. Donut cooking capacity was 48 per batch. New venues included Woolfest in Falmouth, KY, the Diocesan Catholic Children's Home festival and Marydale Retreat Center. The council purchased a home in 1981 as its meeting location but the costs of up-keep were excessive, and the home was sold in 1985. The council's meeting place became the rectory basement of Mary Queen of Heaven parish in Erlanger, KY. On November 12, 1988, the Boone County Council celebrated 25 years of existence with an anniversary dinner and program. During the 1980s, the council was led by the following Grand Knights: Daryl Laws, Dennis Longwell, Robert Gough, Donald Reddinger, George Hessler and Richard Zirkelbach.

The council continued the Holy Donut mission through the 90s and moved their meeting location from Mary Queen of Heaven to an office complex in Florence, KY. In 1993, members voted to change the name from Boone County Council 5453 to Bishop Ackerman Council 5453, in honor of the late Bishop Richard H. Ackerman, the seventh Bishop of the Diocese of Covington, KY, who passed away in 1992.

Along with the new name, the council found a new, permanent home. As the nearby Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport expanded through runway and facilities construction, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish was moved from Limaburg Road to Veterans Way in Burlington, KY, adjacent to Boone Woods Park in 1993. At this point, Bishop Ackerman Council raised funds to build a meeting hall on the campus of IHM. This facility was deeded to the parish and diocese upon completion. Acree Hall, named for Brother Sonny Acree and his family, is used for council meetings, parish functions and hall rentals.



Bishop Richard H. Ackerman.Covdio.org



Meanwhile, the Holy Donuts continued through the leadership of our 90s Grand Knights: Robert F.

Greene (1990-1992), Kenneth F. Hill (1993-1996), Paul Becker (1997-1998) and Fred Meade (1999-2000).



The new century for the Holy Donut began as it ended the old century, as the advances in donut technology didn't arrive until 2009, when Holy Donut trailer 4.0 came online. Brother Paul Becker led the layout and design of the new trailer, a 40-foot, self-contained assembly line from mixing and cooking at one end of the trailer through dusting, bagging and selling at the other end. Capacity was increased from 48 donuts per run to 72, although some may try to push that number to 100 in the cooker to just show off.

The same trailer is in use today (2019), although it did have a refurbishment in 2016 and upgrades to LED lighting in 2018.

Since 2000, the council has been led by Grand Knights Fred Meade (1999-2000), Greg Meier (2001-2002), Gerald 'Sparky' Merk (2003-2004), G. Keith Cahill (2004-2007), Dr. Dean Adams (2007-2009), Ray Rehtin (2009-2010), Mike Madden (2010-2012), Eric Ritchie (2012-2014), David White (2014-2016), John Doubrava (2016-2018) and Bill Isler (2018-present).

While the council has been known throughout the area for the Holy Donut, other programs have been a hallmark of its contributions to the communities and parishes served. The Ultrasound Initiative that is promoted by the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus, is a program that has been embraced by the council in defense of the unborn. For every dollar that is raised by the council for the purchase of an Ultrasound machine, a matching dollar is given by the Supreme Council in New Haven, CT. As of 2019, the council has led or participated in the fundraising and installation of 5 Ultrasound machines in the Northern Kentucky area. Beyond the donut, the council has reached out to the community with an annual Thanksgiving turkey dinner drive, where parishioners will take a box and a shopping list and purchase a Thanksgiving meal for a family who would otherwise go without. In 2018, the council collected 222 turkey dinners (the most ever) for families in the Erlanger/Elsmere, KY area. This program

has been steadily growing since its inception in 2015. Also, in the community, the council hosts an annual Spring Cruise-In with food, 50s music and of course, classic cars.

And for the Holy Donut? That one donut has allowed us to donate over \$34,000 to parishes and church-based organizations each year along with providing scholarships to incoming Catholic high school students. As of 2018, the council has given out over \$50,000 in scholarship money. From the idea of a baker in Park Hills, KY, that wasn't so half-baked after all, to all the Brothers and their wives and their children who have helped mix, cook, rack, dust, bag and sell that Holy Donut, just a little bit of gratitude is in order. Thank You! And thanks, Sonny, for making it all possible...



The Original Holy Donut Crew