

Faith & Fellowship

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Editor In Chief: Troy Tysdal
ttysdal@clba.org

Contributing Editor: Brent Juliot

Media Relations Specialist:
Tim Mathiesen

Copy Editor: Aaron Juliot

Cover Photo: *bernardojbp/Jesus Christ and disciples at Emmaus/Adobe Stock*

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Church of the Lutheran Brethren
DISCIPLE-MAKING CHURCH
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CALL
to Follow

PARTNER
in Mission

UNLEASH
New Leaders

MULTIPLY
New Disciples

Last summer, during our little-league championship game, an eleven-year-old on my son's baseball team stepped up to the plate. The kid had not had a hit all year, and there was little reason to expect anything different now. The opposing team was pitching their fourteen-year-old ace, and except for a couple of batters, he had been unhittable all day. To our surprise, the eleven-year-old took the first pitch from the ace and drove it deep into the right-center gap. When the dust settled, the young man was standing safe on second base, the go-ahead run had crossed home plate, and all those in attendance were reminded that baseball is a team sport.

The Church is a team, and the Lord has given every member a unique gift for the benefit of the whole. It is tempting to

place more importance on those with the gifts of preaching or teaching, but the true identity of the Church is found when each part is working together. Leaders must empower others to lead, to step up and unleash their God-given gifts for his glory. Had the coach given up on the young man batting at the end of the lineup, the championship would have been lost. We must not forget the new and young leaders among us. The Lord certainly has not. He has equipped everyone to participate in his great victory. It is time to unleash.

Rev. Troy Tysdal is Director of Communications and Prayer for the CLB and serves as editor in chief of F&F magazine.

Unleash New Leaders

PAUL LARSON

As baptism and communion, rest and life, God come near in Christ—all in the new covenant are anticipated in the old, signaled by such things as circumcision, Passover, promised land, Jerusalem, temple; so while less obvious yet as profound is Jesus' commission to go *make disciples* pre-echoed in the very first commission of the Old Testament. Even before God's directive concerning the tree in the garden, God gives hint of his heart and way of spreading his blessing and kingdom within boundaried time and earth: *be fruitful and multiply*. The atomic center of life and identity and mission are anchored in this blessing of calling: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply...'" (Genesis 1:27-28, ESV).

This whisper of essential calling ever stirs in the hearts of God's people; it beckons us to dream with Abraham and Jacob of generations to come; it bonds us in core familial human love, and at the same time voluminously expands our contemplation of our Father God's love for us. This absorbed urge to be fruitful and multiply moves humanity to venture out in pioneering risk; in it we expectantly labor and endure; we build homes and communities of protection and provision, and do so less for our sole blessing than for those to come. *Be fruitful and multiply* summons and wills the stretching and sacrifice of our comfort and preference. In this calling we even content ourselves in the rapid path of life, embracing the humbling aches of aging and end—calm, glad, and enthusiastically expectant for the generations that follow.

And so, it is decidedly essential that one of the four core objectives of our vision as a Disciple-Making Church is that we would: *Unleash New Leaders*.



The confirmation class at Elim LBC in Malta, Montana.

It is our great desire and intent to: "Call, empower, and support young men and women to lead in making disciples and forming disciple-making communities" (DMC case statement, 2022 CLB Biennial Convention).

Two brief personal engagements with the Church in the last couple weeks give me an encouraging hint that this is happening, and absolutely is our rightful priority. A brief morning text from Pastor Orvin Solberg with attached picture of the students of the Elim LBC confirmation class (Malta, MT), and the affirmation that these students are diligently seeking after the Lord, led to a brief facetime call with the class the following Wednesday. After introductions they were given the opportunity to ask a single question before I said goodbye and their class resumed. A young man named Lane asked, "When did you first *get in* to God's Word?" I told them, when I was actually about their age I realized, from the influence and modeling of mentors, that this book, the Bible—it was not so much anymore that I was reading *it*, but that it was reading *me*. A little conversation followed about the

pulsing, living Word of God that works in us repentance and faith.

Then, the Sunday following after worship, a young husband and father, a family friend and former confirmation student, approached me and wanted me to know that he and his wife had given time to do some life planning to set out before them the priorities and dream for their family, and that what they came to—that their children trusting and following Christ was the only thing that mattered—was rooted in what they had heard and seen modeled in the church.

Yes, Lord. May it be that we...

Be fruitful and multiply.

Go, make disciples.

Unleash new leaders.

Rev. Paul Larson is President of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.



Visit the CLB online at: www.CLBA.org

God Gives More Than You Ask or Imagine

KAMÏLLA QUADE

The first seven years of my life were spent in Ethiopia. I remember life there being very challenging. Water was scarce. Food was scarce. I feared the weather, as it contributed to the scarcity of food and could also often lead to the lack of shelter. Nothing was easy or convenient as I look back on life in Ethiopia. There was no need to track our steps each day with a Fitbit, as survival required many, many daily steps. And death was a constant in our village. It seemed that someone near me was always grieving the loss of someone they loved. My family experienced this kind of loss as well when my older brother and dad died. My younger brother and I still grieve these losses each day.

But God... Throughout the harshest of circumstances that I experienced in Ethiopia, God was a constant source of hope and strength for me. I was blessed to have a mom who loved the Lord. I cherish the memories I have of her worshiping God with her whole being. I knew her circumstances weren't easy,

but I also knew she trusted God in the midst of those difficult circumstances. It was clear that she did not measure God's faithfulness to her by the ease of her life. Instead, the tougher life got the more she leaned on him and trusted him.

Psalm 28:7 reminds me of my mom: "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him." If my mom's understanding of God had been based on her life's circumstances, she likely would have thought that God was unkind and unloving. However, she chose to understand that God is good and kind and loving regardless of life's ever-changing circumstances. This gave her strength and joy no matter what we were facing.

This understanding of God became an anchor for me as well. After my dad and brother died, my mom made the very difficult decision to bring my younger brother and me to a local orphanage. Watching my mom walk away that day is a vivid memory for me. I felt abandoned

and confused. Of all the challenges I had already faced, this was the most difficult.

But God... God did not abandon me. He stayed with me and my brother each step of the way. His grace and kindness were with us and went before us through all the ups and downs of that year spent in the orphanage. God also had not abandoned my mom. I later learned that her deepest prayer was that her children's adoptive family would be one who loved the Lord and would continue to teach her children about Jesus. She had no control over who would adopt her children, but God heard and answered her prayer. When she met my parents and found out that they love and trust Jesus, she dropped to her knees in worship. I'm sure when she found out my dad is a pastor, it was an extra special blessing and evidence of how God gives us more than we even ask or imagine.

My mom's example of faith has shaped where I find hope, joy, and strength. Often, we look for these things in places that only lead to disappointment. May we all learn a lesson from my mother and

look to Jesus. As he heard my mother's prayer, he will hear yours. Trust in him in all things and he will give you more than you ask or imagine.



Kamilla Quade is a member of Bethesda Lutheran Brethren Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.



Indygnity Women and Child, Ethiopia/istock



THANK YOU

Alexas_Fotos/Unsplash

Living in the Ordinary, Living out the Extraordinary

BRAD HOGANSON

To my faithful pastors who preached hundreds of sermons on discipleship over my 57 years, I am sorry. To my Sunday School teachers who faithfully prepared lessons on being a fisher of men and to youth leaders who shared engaging and moving illustrations on following Jesus, I am sorry. To the excellent presenters who shared stories and slides at various seminars on being more like Jesus and to the talented authors of countless books and articles on the power of mentoring, I am sorry. To the creative podcasters and YouTubers who crafted inspirational and imaginative media about the life of the disciple, I am sorry.

I'm sorry that I have forgotten the three points to your sermons, I've forgotten the illustrations, I've lent out the books and can't even remember the title or who borrowed them. The podcasts, though more recent, have faded into my ever-diminishing memory bank. I wish

it wasn't true, but it is. In fact, I'm sure most, if not all, of my sermons preached over 27 years at churches and camps and retreats and chapels—and likely this article too—will fade into the realm of the forgotten.

But what I remember is you.

I remember you. I was a small child who had recently lost his mother to illness, and you joyfully sang *Jesus Loves Me* over and over again. Sometimes in a group at preschool you held me on your lap, because I just needed to be held. Thank you! You are not forgotten.

I remember how you took time to work side by side with a preteen boy as we fixed doorknobs and oiled hinges on countless Saturday mornings at Hillside Lutheran Brethren Church and how, in your soft and familiar Norwegian accent, you spoke to me of the privilege of being a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord. Thank you! You are not forgotten!

I remember you. I remember how,

as I worked for you as a freshman at Tuscarora Inn, you encouraged me by conveying the value of my role. As I was washing pots and pans into the evening, you showed me that families were hearing the gospel without distraction. Lives were transformed for eternity as sin was confessed and forgiven, as relationships were healed through new life in Christ. Thank you! You are not forgotten!

I remember you, when you invited me—a high school student at Hillcrest Academy—into your home with my classmates for many home-cooked meals and conversations about faith and life. It happened so effortlessly over plates of spaghetti and boxes of pizza. Thank you! You are not forgotten!

I remember you. I remember how you took time out of your busy week to tinker on my seldom running car in the evenings. The car has been sold (or junked, I can't remember that either!). But as we replaced alternators and distributor



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caps and things I still know very little about, we talked about what was most important—my spiritual journey. Thank you!

I remember you. I remember that I wasn't alone as I walked through the cold valley of grief, because you made time to talk to a young father about loss and love and the unfathomable goodness of my Father in seasons of darkness and silence. Thank you!

My point is this: the sermons and lessons were theologically sound and Christ centered, the illustrations were thought provoking, the seminars were encouraging, and the podcasts inspiring. I'm thankful for all of it. But when I think of mentorship and discipleship over my 57 years, I always recall people first. Men and women freely and joyfully shared their faith and lives with me, pointing me to Jesus because they loved Jesus and loved me, especially when I wasn't very lovable.

When I think of discipleship, my mind immediately goes to Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (ESV):

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall

write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

In my life, discipleship seems to have happened less through extraordinary discipleship events or programs and more in the everyday routines and common events of life. In my experience, discipleship has been and is the extraordinary spiritual work and process that takes place in the arena of the ordinary. It is extraordinary because it deals with the supernatural essence of God in the world of his natural creation. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one"—an amazing statement of the supernatural God! R.C. Sproul wrote:

The Christianity of the Bible is a religion that is uncompromisingly supernatural. If we take away the supernatural, we take away Christianity. At the heart of the worldview of both Testaments is the idea that the realm of nature is created by One who transcends that nature. That God Himself is "supra" or above and beyond the created universe.¹

So, thank you, Ruth and Olga, thank you, Haakon and Jon, Herb, Helen, and Allen. Thank you, Steve, Erik, Ole, and Yvonne. Thank you, Ken, John, Kevin, Martin, Stephen, Larry, Mike, and Owen. The reality is that there are dozens more of you that I don't name. It takes a lot of people to do discipleship.

You were with me along the way. I hope I'm doing it as well as you did.

Dear reader, as you go through the routine of life, know that your demonstrations of grace matter. They

matter to the young man in the driveway next door, trying to get his car started. They matter to the teenage boy invited over for a home-cooked meal. They matter to the kid using his gifts to fix the doorknobs at church. And they matter to the small child sitting in your lap, grieving the loss of his mother.

As you walk along the way today, you live in the ordinary. But you live out the extraordinary grace of God as you invest time, truth, and love into the people around you. You are making disciples.



Rev. Brad Hoganson is President of Hillcrest Lutheran Academy in Fergus Falls, Minnesota.



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Source

1. <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/supernatural-faith>.



Inquisitive Beagle Hound/bpretorius/iStock

The Hound of Heaven

DAVID MARTIN

During a recent lunch with some newer friends, the question was posed: “How did you decide to become a pastor?” My answer usually catches people off guard. “I didn’t.” It’s not that I didn’t want to or that I haven’t settled on being a pastor. No, I’m saying that I became a pastor, not as the result of my desire and resolve, but only after submitting to the relentless pursuit of a loving God.

I always wanted the American Dream: to be a respected man with a “good, secure” job, a nice home with a white picket fence, a beautiful wife, and 2.2 kids. That became my life’s ambition and singular focus. I married Amy, who had a similar plan, and we worked toward our collective goal. But after the loss of our second daughter, Elizabeth, our faith was challenged, and God took a central position in our daily lives.

We still pursued our dream, but strange

things started to happen. We joined a church and were given a Spiritual Gifts survey. It said my gifts were teaching and preaching. I thought, “Yeah, that can’t be right. If you really knew me, you would know what a bad idea this is.” I was still very rough. I did drink, smoke, and chew, and I did associate with those who do. But often our conversations centered around God and the Bible. So as it turned out, it wasn’t a bad idea. The church leaders encouraged me to start teaching a young adult Sunday School class. I really enjoyed it, and many people affirmed my calling.

About seven years ago, I was visited by Dr. David Veum, the President of Lutheran Brethren Seminary. I will always remember my first time meeting him. He had traveled from Fergus Falls, Minnesota all the way to Mentor, Ohio—a suburb of Cleveland. He asked to speak with me. As we strolled around

the property at Pilgrim LBC, he asked me about myself and my family. Then he asked me the question: “Have you ever considered going to Seminary?” My answer... “No.”

Up until that point in my life, I had been working hard to build the life I had always dreamed of. I had determined to become a career Firefighter and Paramedic, a job that, in my mind, commanded respect. I had spent years training and competing for a good paying, union job with security and benefits. I had my dream job, and we were raising our kids in our dream community, living in a home nicer than we dreamed of.

At about the same time, we also got a Fox Hound/Coon Hound-mix puppy named Milo. He looks like a long-legged beagle. He’s the kind of dog you see in those classical paintings of red-coated hunters on horseback riding alongside a large pack of dogs, usually with a lone

Jesus said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:8

fox in the lead. We had never owned a hound dog before, but we quickly learned they are not like your common Black Lab or Golden Retriever. We were told, “If he ever gets off the leash, don’t chase him. They can easily run more than 50 miles when they hunt.” Hounds are very stubborn, focused, and relentless, especially when they hunt.

Bob Heggstad is Pastor at Pilgrim. I had heard that his father, Rev. Knut Heggstad, would tell people, “Do not go into ministry unless you can’t get out of it.” For me, it all started when Dr. Veum asked if I had thought of going to Seminary. He asked me to consider it and pray about it. The first issue was that it would require us to move our family to Fergus Falls, MN. Amy said, “I don’t want to go to Nineveh!” After talking it over, we determined we couldn’t. “Sorry, can’t go.” Dr. Veum responded, “That’s OK, we just renewed our accreditation and started online classes.”

“Well, we really don’t have enough money to pay for classes.” Again, Dr. Veum encouraged us to pray about it. Within a short amount of time, Pastor Bob let us know that some church members wanted to help support us financially. We were told this was another affirmation of my call. It was also affirmation that, like a hound, God was pursuing me and gaining ground. I had run out of objections.

Hounds are pack hunters. When one catches a scent and gives chase, they all become excited and join in. That’s what happened when I applied and was accepted to the Seminary. So many members of the church became excited and supported me with encouraging words, prayers, and finances. One of our congregation members built me a special

laptop computer. When we opened it up, it read: “Nineveh.”

My professors at Lutheran Brethren Seminary also affirmed my calling. So many times, I felt inadequate and wanted to give up, but they encouraged me and were patient. They challenged my ideas and taught me that we all are called by God to join him in his *Missio Dei*, which means the “Mission of God” or the “Sending of God.” It is God’s great mission to restore humanity to himself through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. He calls us, his Church, to take part in this same mission. Not only did God pursue me, but he caught me and invited me into the pack.

I graduated from LBS, and I am currently serving as the Associate Pastor at Pilgrim. I returned with a newfound motivation to call others to follow Jesus, to partner in mission and to unleash new leaders of the church. We have developed a vision statement based on three Scriptures:

Jeremiah 29:5-7 directs the Babylonians in exile to,

Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.

Matthew 28:19-20, the Great “Co-Mission,” instructs us, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing


them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

And finally, Jesus tells us in Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

From these Scriptures we discerned God’s vision for Pilgrim: “Reach our Community, Grow in Christ, and Go in Mission” or “Reach, Grow, Go.” We are reimagining our local communities as our own personal mission fields. I would encourage congregations to identify and empower those whom God may be pursuing in your churches. Unleash new leaders and help them get into the hunt—God’s *Missio Dei*.



Pastor David Martin serves Pilgrim Lutheran Brethren Church in Mentor, Ohio as associate pastor.


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CLB Shared Ministry: Contribution Report

\$3,100,000

2022-23 Fiscal Year Goal

\$1,454,383

Received Through 12/20/22

The CLB Fiscal Year ends April 30, 2023.

God Loves a Cheerful Giver

JASON and LISA OLSON

Throughout our lifetime, we have been involved in a few different congregations. We have been worshipping at Our Redeemer's Church in Minot, North Dakota since 1993. This large, active congregation has offered a variety of ministry opportunities for our entire family. We believe that it was through the influence and teaching at Our Redeemer's that our oldest son was led into ministry with the Church of the Lutheran Brethren. He is currently a student at Lutheran Brethren Seminary (LBS) and serving as Campus Pastor at Word of Life Church in New Prague, MN—a second campus planted by Word of Life Le Sueur, MN. The knowledge that he garners through instruction at LBS will hopefully have a similar impact on the people of his church. Our giving to the Seminary helps spread Christ's message to all corners of the world.

Even though we have been part of a large congregation for many years, we also know the joy of being part of a small congregation. When Word of Life, Le Sueur was considering a second campus, it took us back forty years, to when our family was part of a church plant. The

experience of participating in a brand-new congregation stays with a person forever. The relationships that are built and the anticipation of being able to bring God's Word to a new community—it's like nothing else! We are grateful to be able to support North American Mission, who are walking alongside Word of Life Church's New Prague campus.

We are thankful that the CLB family supports one another. Following the devastation caused by Hurricane Ian in Florida, our support for Living Word Church in Cape Coral was doubled due to matching funds from other CLB members around the country. It is a blessing to know that we are part of the family of God, whether we are worshipping at home or in congregations across North Dakota, Minnesota, and Florida. CLB congregations welcome us with open arms, and we are confident that a sound, biblical message will be shared.

As we reflect back, our parents and grandparents were supportive of Christian ministries, and we believe that our support of LBS and the other CLB Ministries would find favor with them. Their stewardship and generosity have

given us the opportunity to continue their legacy. We are encouraged by the words of 2 Corinthians 9:6-8.

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

We encourage all our fellow believers to give what they have been called to give in support of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren. Our Father in Heaven can and will use it for his glory!

Jason and Lisa Olson are members of Our Redeemer's Church in Minot, North Dakota.

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The Joseph Project

KAREN STENBERG

Women Together is the tagline for the Women's Ministries of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren (WMCLB) vision and values statements that were formed this past year. This has also been fitting for this year's WMCLB focus project, which supports a group of women meeting the physical needs of their families and community all the way across the ocean from us in Chad, Africa.

The focus project is called *The Joseph Project*. It is focused on the community of Hille-Allah, a Bilala village where a Chadian missionary partner has been working with a women's agricultural cooperative in the community. This relationship is not only benefiting the community as a whole, but it serves as a powerful platform by which the gospel is being heard. The agricultural cooperative needed a new storage facility to continue their work of gathering and storing grain for their community. The previous buildings sorely need replacement, as they were no longer able to keep the grain dry and safe. Plans were made to build a new storage facility, measuring 20 feet by 33 feet, with solid concrete floors and walls, iron trusses, tin roof, windows for ventilation, and a solid door for security purposes. This building will protect the grain from weather, rodents, livestock, and theft. The cost for this structure is \$12,000, and work was begun as soon as WMCLB approved this gift. We are excited to share the news that it is now finished and ready to use! The picture here is of the women standing outside the new facility.

The timing of completion of the new facility is amazing, as there was major flooding this year that will affect their crops. The facility will be a dry, safe place for the community's grain storage. God's attention to detail and timing as he cares for people and uses us in his mission is always perfect!

We are blessed with the opportunity as women



The Joseph Project.

together here to support women together working in Chad. While these women care for their neighbors, they do not yet know our Lord and Savior. We believe that this ministry will not only bless the community in terms of food security, but will also serve to further the sharing of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in this village. We are excited to be able to address this physical need and also to be praying that God will open their hearts and meet their spiritual need of a Savior!

Will you pray along with us for those sharing Christ and for those hearing the message, that their hearts would be receptive to God's love and forgiveness extended to them?

This project and others like it are only made possible with your faithful support in giving to the WMCLB. Thank you for your gifts and prayers!

If you would like to consider giving to the WMCLB, please go to our website, WMCLB.org for more information.

Karen Stenberg is Co-Director of Women's Ministries of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.



Visit: www.WMCLB.org



Called to the Body of Christ

ELLIE BOURQUE

So, how were you called?" During this past year and a half of studying at Lutheran Brethren Seminary in preparation for mission work in Chad, I've been asked that question more than a couple of times. What does it mean to be called?

The first time the idea of being a missionary ever crossed my mind was when I was about six years old, riding in the car with my dad. We must have been talking about what I wanted to be when I grew up, and he got kind of serious and said, "You know what would be really cool? A missionary." I had heard about missionaries but wasn't sure what they were, so he explained. It sounded important and exciting. I doubt I had fully grasped the gospel at that point, but

I did understand that God loved me and that it was important for other people to know he loved them too. I sat there in silence, thoughtfully considering it. Then I responded, "You know what I think would be really cool? A scuba diver."

What a Jonah moment! Was it flippancy, or stubborn disregard? I can see now that I didn't really even want to be a scuba diver, and I'm pretty sure I forgot all about that within days. Whatever caused me to ignore the clear direction of God in that moment, it would take many gracious divine interventions over several years to redirect the course of my life and bring me to acceptance of my true calling.

Does that sound far-fetched? I kind of hope so. I don't believe that conversation was especially important. Not, at least,

in the sense that in that moment, God was revealing his singular calling on my life, or that if I were now pursuing some vocation other than mission work, aquatic or not, I would be failing to live up to that calling. What can be said is that, even if I wasn't aware of it, a seed was planted in that moment. It would later be watered and eventually take root. On the grand scale of God's will for my life, it may have been a significant moment. But I wouldn't even remember that conversation today had my dad not told the whole church about it when it was his turn to offer Scripture reading and prayer in the worship service.

There are other moments that I look back on and know have been significant milestones along the path of my calling



Ellie Bourque is working with Lutheran Brethren International Mission in preparation to serve among the unreached peoples of Chad. Lord willing, she will receive a call from the CLB's Council of Directors, and deploy to France in the fall of 2023 for a year of preparatory language study.



to the mission field, and to Chad. The simple words of my uncle, who helped lead a mission trip to Guatemala when I was 13: "You know, you could go." The willingness of my parents to bring me on that trip, and to trust in the days and years that followed that it was more than youthful excitement that was compelling me to go back.

The incredibly simple and profound question of my pastor when I was terrified of making the wrong decision about going to college or joining a mission organization in Central America: "What do you *want* to do?"

A prayer time in Costa Rica where I first felt an incredible burden for the unreached. A closed door to the people I was sure the Lord was calling me to in Asia, after I had spent several years preparing, going to nursing school and learning about their culture and religion. An opportunity to visit Chad. The sense of having found a home, and the affirmation, through much prayer—my own and others'—that my particular set of gifts and interests, especially in the areas of nursing and languages, would fit well with the ministry of Lutheran Brethren International Mission in Chad.

That's basically the path that has led me to where I am right now, in this season of preparation at LBS. Here, I have had the opportunity to study God's Word in depth under professors who not only know it, but love it. I've learned about the doctrine and history of the Church and gained practical skills and experience in giving spiritual care. I've also received training in remote village medicine and linguistics from some excellent organizations outside of the Seminary. These are some of the ways I am being equipped for the

specific ministries I hope to be a part of in Chad.

But I'd like to take a step back now, away from the specifics and out to the big picture. Before and between and beneath the specifics of my calling and equipping—which I cherish and give thanks for—there's another steady storyline. It's the story of the Body of Christ. It's the story of faithful people who, from the time of my birth and baptism, have walked with me, calling me continually back to the grace I was given at first.

They've opened God's Word to me, helped me to hear it and read it. They've shown me how to pray, and prayed for me. They've taught me to love God and my neighbor, and taught me *why*. They've modeled hard work and humble service and invited me to participate in it with them, even though I've often been more of a nuisance than a help. They've patiently listened to my dreams, knowing most of them were fleeting. They've gently encouraged me to use my gifts, absorbing the mistakes and the awkwardness as I learn how. As I've grown and matured, they've helped me discern how those gifts can be used for the Kingdom, and they've been willing to trust me, invest in me, and send me out. When I've stumbled, the grace of God through their hands has helped me get back up. When I've strayed, the wisdom of God on their lips has redirected me. When despair has silenced my song of praise, the strength of God in their voices has lifted my eyes and my heart again to heaven.

The way this Body works is mysterious, but mysteriously simple; it's so mystical, yet also so concrete. And it's a continual,

ongoing process, in different places with different people, but in one and the same Body. That Body might not always work just as it should. It isn't perfect. But its Head is perfect. He is the One "from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love" (Ephesians 4:16, ESV).

I can't think of anything better than being a part in this growing Body. Yes, there's so much joy in feeling like I have a place here, an identity and a purpose. But it's so much bigger than that. It's here, in and through this Body, that Jesus reveals *his* identity and works out *his* purpose of reconciling this whole broken world to God. Whatever our specific callings and gifts, we are called to exercise them in this Body—where we encourage and strengthen one another, and where together we rejoice. We get to be a part of that great ministry of reconciliation. We get to be the Body of Jesus Christ, in all the earth.

Ellie Bourque graduated from Lutheran Brethren Seminary in 2022 with a Certificate in Theological Studies and continues to take courses at LBS in preparation for ministry in Chad.



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The Pines at Tuscarora.

Young Adult Ministry: Rooted

ROGER VIKSNES

When I was in high school, the band Alabama came out with a song titled, *I'm In a Hurry*.

I'm in a hurry to get things done
Oh, I rush and rush until life's no fun
All I really gotta do is live and die
But I'm in a hurry and don't know why

I admittedly had a very short country music phase, but deeper than that embarrassment is the sad fact that the above lyrics described my own thinking during that time of my life. I needed to hurry up and go to college, so I could hurry up and get a good job, and then hurry up and get married, and hurry up and have kids. Looking back, I can't

really understand why I was in such a hurry. Now I don't say all this because I wish that I had backpacked across Europe to find myself, but I do wish that I had taken a little intentional time to become more rooted.

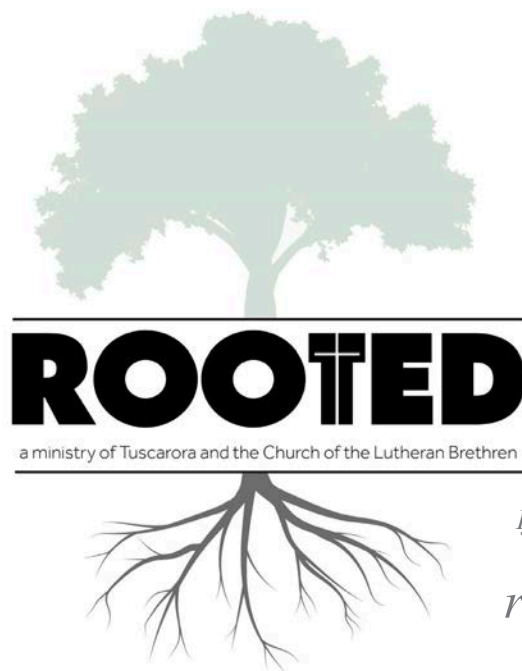
Colossians 2:6-7 says, "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."

Now, don't get me wrong, I appreciate my home church immensely, including all the teaching and leadership opportunities that were afforded to me. But I wish I'd had more time in training. Looking back, I wish that I wasn't in such a hurry to

"grow up" that I overlooked opportunities to intentionally be rooted and built up.

The word "rooted" has been chosen as the title of a partnership between Tuscarora Inn & Conference Center and the Church of the Lutheran Brethren for the creation of a young adult gap year program. The goal is to give adults of ages 18-25 a place to grow in servanthood, leadership, and a deeper understanding of God's Word, as well as in their relationship with God himself, as disciples in a community setting.

For too long the narrative dominating high school guidance counseling offices was that you need to go to college, and you need to do it fast. Don't wait and certainly don't pause, or you will never



*If you are interested in being part of the
Rooted program, please contact:
rooted@tuscarora.org*

finish. But why does that have to be the narrative? Even if your goal in life is to be as professionally established in your career as you can be, why does that need to be the narrative? I especially don't understand it if your goal in life is to be the best disciple of Jesus Christ that you can possibly be, wherever he ends up leading you in the years to come. If that is your goal, then please consider hitting the pause button for a year and get rooted.

Now the Rooted program is most certainly not a new idea. Less than eight months after the first convention of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren at the start of the 20th century, a man named S.O. Bridston wrote an article, in what was the equivalent of *Faith & Fellowship* magazine. His article was titled, "Do We Need a Bible School?" His answer in that article was an emphatic, "Yes!" Just a few years later, on November 2, 1903, the Lutheran Brethren Bible School was born, and it trained young men and women in the faith for decades. It later morphed into the "Alpha Way" program and "Lutheran Center for Christian Learning," but the goal of rooting young adults continued throughout all the manifestations.

In more recent years, IPoint, our Lutheran Brethren camp in Minnesota, established a gap year program on their campus called CheckPoint. So the Rooted

program is not new, and it is also not intended to stand alone. The hope is that this program acts as a pilot project and that similar programs develop in different parts of our denomination, all with the goal of rooting and building up young adults in the faith.

So why Tuscarora? The board of Tuscarora has been feeling a pull and making plans in this direction for some time. Prior to the outbreak of COVID, Tuscarora was very close to beginning a trial run of Rooted, but then, like for many things in life, the pause button needed to be pushed. At the same time, a growing number of leaders throughout our denomination were asking the very same question that S.O. Bridston asked over 100 years ago... "Do we need a Bible School?" As these two groups found each other it was clear that a partnership was the perfect solution.

As planning has progressed, the goal is to start in Fall 2023. Students will be living at Tuscarora on a portion of the property that was donated 20 years ago and has been prayed over since that time for God to open a door for it to be used for some new ministry initiative. That property, known as the Pines, includes a 19th-century cottage-like house that gives off the feel of sitting down with great disciples throughout the ages to mull over the incredible character of God,

which is exactly what the students in this program will be doing. The goal is not to be in a hurry, or even to be busy, but to intentionally slow down to allow God to mold minds, hearts, and character into exactly what he desires.

For all of us, no matter what our age, God didn't design us to be in a hurry. Let the band Alabama deal with that problem themselves. As children of God, let us instead learn to be still and know that he is God, and let us allow ourselves the time to be rooted and built up in him so that we can know him, love him, remain in his love, and learn to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Rev. Roger Viksnes is Pastor at Bethany Lutheran Brethren Church in East Hartland, Connecticut.

Now Hiring

The Rooted leadership team is looking for a program director. If you have a passion to see young adults grow in their faith, and think this position might be right for you, we would love to hear from you. Please email:

rooted@tuscarora.org



Pathfinders

DANI HANSEN

My brother, Ben, is on the autism spectrum. Growing up, his disability presented a barrier for my family to attend church together. Thankfully, when we were invited to Bethesda LBC in Eau Claire, WI, Ben's needs were accommodated, and our family unit felt genuinely welcomed and cared for. When I received the gospel message at Inspiration Point, I hesitated in committing my life to Christ until I understood God's nature and addressed fears that I'd held for my brother's eternal life. These experiences shaped my entry into a saving faith and were a catalyst for developing Pathfinders, a special needs ministry.

The Apostle Paul describes the Church as a Body: "There is one body, but it has many parts. But all its parts make up one body. It is the same with Christ... God has placed each part in the body just as he wanted it to be. If all the parts were the same, how could there be a body? As it is, there are many parts. But there is only one body... If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If one part is honored,

every part shares in its joy. You are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of it" (1 Cor. 12:12, 18-20, 26-27; NIRV).

The Church body was designed by God to include all people. People with worldly disabilities need to be included or, ironically, the Church body is spiritually disabled. God intentionally creates each member of the Body with gifts that contribute to the health and wellbeing of the whole. Diversity in the Church is needed; our differences should be celebrated.

Unfortunately, as I testified, people with disabilities and their families experience factors that interfere with their access to the Church body and the gospel message. Serving this often-marginalized population, reaching the unreached, is a need that Pathfinders is seeking to address. "Pathfinders is an answer to our prayers," caregivers have expressed. The aim of our ministry is three-fold: to facilitate growth in members' relationships with God, each other, and the Church.

To foster spiritual growth, we gather separately on Sunday mornings for

Bible study before participating together in corporate worship. Bible study instruction is multimodal with adapted curriculum content, in an effort to meet different learning styles, strengths, and interests. For example, we accommodate various literacy skill levels by showing a video, referencing a graphic-novel style Bible, and using a traditional Bible. Through our lessons we identify "big ideas," or theological truths, that are regularly reviewed and integrated with new learning. It is remarkable for guests to witness the high-level concepts that are understood and explained by Pathfinders, such as the metanarrative (the "big story" of the Bible: creation, fall, redemption, restoration), Law and Gospel distinctions, justification, etc. Our LifeGroup also engages in prayer and worship, and is provided materials for personal devotions. Each semester, we offer robust experiences: we host a weekend retreat in the winter and travel to Inspiration Point Pathfinder Camp during the summer. These are highlights for many members.



Moving forward, we have intentions to develop curriculum, implementing principles of universal design for learning, that will cover Confirmation content. It's our vision that whatever is produced could be shared within the CLB Forge (CLBForge.org) and made available for others. We hope more churches might feel equipped to offer a similar ministry.

To promote friendships and community among our members, we coordinate monthly special events. We've experienced lots of different gatherings, across venues and with a variety of activities, such as backyard bonfires, pool parties, bowling, BINGO, movies, and more. The broad spectrum of offerings fulfills different interests and entices newcomers. Introductions are made and conversations are shared, while we enjoy fun, food, and fellowship. Individual social skills and the health of group dynamics are intentionally monitored and supported. Additionally, we exchange prayers, acknowledge birthdays, and celebrate milestones for one another.

Bethesda is preparing to host *Night to Shine*, sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation, on February 10, 2023. The vision of this extra special event is to

provide an unforgettable prom night experience, centered on God's love, for people with special needs, ages 14 and older. Every guest of this complimentary event will receive the royal treatment and be crowned as kings and queens with the gospel message that God sees them that way every day. We pray that this opportunity serves to enhance and extend our ministry within the community, and can be a vehicle for the Good News to all who might become involved or learn about this event.

To encourage connections within the church, Pathfinders participate in corporate worship and church-wide events. We invite guest speakers from the congregation and collaboratively organize cross-over events with other LifeGroups at Bethesda. It has also been remarkably special for Pathfinders and those they interact with to serve in volunteer roles. For example, Pathfinders are ushers, involved with Children's Ministries and Vacation Bible School, contribute during worship services, assemble Operation Christmas Child boxes, etc. It is a delight for them to be seen and valued, recognized for what they have to offer instead of for their limitations and needs. It is powerful

for them to be truly integrated within the church family, even beyond just included.

We are grateful for the opportunity to share the heart behind Pathfinders, hopefully expanding awareness and casting vision more broadly across the Disciple-Making Church of the Lutheran Brethren. May we, as a united Church body, faithfully call individuals with disabilities and their families to follow the Lord. May we, as Pathfinders and far-reaching recipients of this publication, partner in mission. May we unleash new leaders, within our own spheres of influence, that God has prepared for this work. May we, as one Church, experience the joy of multiplying disciples.

"Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21, NLT).

Dani Hansen is a member at Bethesda Lutheran Brethren Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

May We Teach a Few, So They May Teach a Few

KATHLEEN KJOLHAUG

Upon bended knee she went one day with her head bowed in prayer. Never having seen the likes of it from this grandchild—sheer silence erupted as I watched on. Moments went by before she stood and the day went on as if nothing had happened.

But something had happened. She'd been *not only prayed for* by the adults in her life, but those who matter most spent time *in prayer with her*. Alongside of others we come because we are called to do so.

2 Timothy 3:14-15 (ESV) encourages, "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from your childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

"I wrote a song," the same grandchild whispered into the ears of her parents after an evening of prayer with her.

I heard a voice—a voice from heaven.
I'd never heard it before.
It sounded bold.
And it sounded like a still small voice.
But it was getting bigger.
And it said to me,
Go tell the others about Me.
There's more than you think.
It's more than you think.
There's more to know.

The morning after, the attentiveness of the adults in her life quickened as the encouragement offered from the little disciple was bearing fruit. The job of all adults in the lives of all children is to tell them about Christ, his death, and his resurrection. If we don't do it, who will?

"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19). He not only entrusts us to participate in the call to make disciples, but the call is actually more of a command.

It's easy to think about the word "GO!" as a sending out of sorts. Going to the nations is one thing, but what if that one thing leads to another, and lo and behold,

one who needs the gospel is right there before you? What if "GO!" means to go read a story about Jesus to the little ones as they grow? What if "GO!" means to go and bring them to church? What if "GO!" means to go to a ballgame and be present so they know you care? What if discipleship means "GO!" give a camp scholarship so others may go to Bible camp and experience discipleship opportunities poured out upon all who enter in?

Discipleship is not only about living the faith but about unleashing it in every aspect of our lives.

Weeks later the fore-mentioned child entered the farmhouse with one request. "Can we go to your prayer room, grandma?" And so we did "GO!" as *Wading into the Deep* (a devotional written by grandma) had become an adventure of sorts. The next forty-five minutes flew by as upon the floor we sat—reading, writing, and talking about why she chose the words within the verses read within the devotional gifted.

Intentional was our time taken beyond the scope of the day. The laundry sat in wait—waiting to be folded. The dishwasher patiently awaited unloading, while the art supplies supplied for such a time as this made life messy. As the makings of miracles are messy, 'twas an honor to be a part of.

When our time was complete, she proclaimed, "I LOVE looking back at each page made!" Creatively embedding her thoughts grew a desire to have it wash over again and again.

A hymn written back in 1644 by Martin Rinkart, *Now Thank We All Our God*, helps us remember the ongoing process of discipleship. The final words of the hymn describe the ongoing command to "GO!" He wrote: "For thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore."

Obedience is our business—the fruit all his. One never knows when the fruit will ripen and the harvest bring all glory to him. And guess what? Discipleship opportunities will not wane, because as soon as another little one is born, there



before us, right there in the bassinet, is one who needs the gospel.

Like any newborn, one must learn to crawl before one walks. One must wade in, rather than dive into the deep, when learning how to swim. *Wading into the Deep* is a gentle discipleship tool to be used as an invitation to enter into the life-giving waters of God's Word.

May there be no one without the gospel among us... as we begin to teach a few so they will one day... teach a few. We intentionally pray this be so in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, three in One.

Kathleen Kjolhaug lives on the family homestead with her husband Peter. They attend Elim Lutheran Brethren Church in Clearbrook, Minnesota and have six adult children and twelve grandchildren.

Wading into the Deep

Kathleen Kjolhaug has written this 33 Day Devotional for readers from 4 to 104. If you would like to purchase a copy, please reach out to Kathleen at:

wemenews@gmail.com

Accreditation Assessment



Dr. Brad Pribbenow teaching at LBS.

This past summer, Lutheran Brethren Seminary successfully completed an in-depth accreditation assessment of our institution. This included an evaluation of the thoroughness and consistency of all policies, procedures, and publications. We are humbled to report that, on the basis of our submitted assessment, our accrediting agency (TRACS) has determined us to be in full compliance with all educational standards. Praise the Lord! We value our accreditation for the primary reason that it tells our students and the churches we serve that you can trust LBS to deliver what we promise: high quality theological education and ministry training which will equip pastors, missionaries, and lay people for faithful and fruitful ministry in the CLB and in the broader church. We thank the Lord for his provision, and we thank the churches of the CLB and the many supporters of the Seminary for your consistent and generous support.

Dr. Brad Pribbenow is Dean of Lutheran Brethren Seminary in Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

Harper Installed



L to R: Dr. Eugene Boe; Elders Kenneth Roed, Charles Strand, Paul Carlson; Mitzi, Gideon, and Rev. Mars Harper.

On October 30, 2022, Rev. Mars Harper was installed as pastor at Bethel Lutheran Brethren Church in Antler, North Dakota. Dr. Eugene Boe officiated.

Ebenezer LBC Celebrates Centennial



Members and friends of Ebenezer LBC gathering to celebrate God's faithfulness.

On August 6-7, 2022, people gathered from all over the United States... messages and letters poured in from all around the world... all to a little church in a little prairie town called Rolette, in order to greet Ebenezer Lutheran Brethren Church in celebration of its 100th Anniversary!

We had a wonderful time of fellowship and shared memories, as loved ones reunited, and pastors who had served the church in past years returned for the celebration.

Ebenezer Lutheran Brethren Church was planted by Ox Creek and North Ox Creek Lutheran Churches in 1922 following evangelistic tent meetings in the town of Rolette, North Dakota, located mere minutes from the geographical center of North America. And ever since, Ebenezer LBC has faithfully gathered and preached God's Word, administering the sacraments and gifts of Jesus Christ to his Church. Over this last century, Ebenezer has raised up pastors who served throughout the CLB, has helped raise up missionaries who have gone throughout the world, and was integral in planting Grace Lutheran Brethren Church in Bottineau, ND nearly 70 years ago.

Today, Ebenezer continues to follow in the footsteps of its founders as God continues to call us to spread the gospel to the Rolette area. In 2021 and 2022 Ebenezer put on a week of summer tent meetings in conjunction with our Vacation Bible School to invite children and their families, neighbors, travelers, and other Christians to hear the gospel, to come for prayer, and even to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior for the first time.

We are grateful for the encouragement we've received from so many throughout the CLB who share a connection to Ebenezer in Rolette. May God grant Ebenezer many faithful years to come! And may he be glorified in her as she continuously seeks to be found in him!

Rob Røise serves as pastor of Ebenezer Lutheran Brethren Church in Rolette, North Dakota.

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Trusting the Lord

There was a self-perpetuating youth organization called Lutheran Brethren Youth Fellowship. I was an officer in the Central District LBYF. Rev. Elroy Vesta was our advisor. My friend Tim Anderson was the president, and when he graduated from college, I found myself in that position. I had been mentored for the task by Elroy and Tim. For the next couple years I was responsible for organizing rallies and retreats for teenagers and young adults in what is now called the CLB Central Region. *Until I got too old.*

I didn't have to quit, but I knew there would be other opportunities for me, and it was time to unleash new leaders. I had noticed at our events a high school student from Clearbrook, Minnesota, who seemed enthusiastic and gifted to serve. He was young, but I had once been that young myself—four years earlier. So, as I neared graduation from college, I approached Paul Larson to take over the LBYF duties, and he did so admirably... Yes, *that* Paul Larson.

The Church has always done this. Unleashing new leaders is a God-ordained, on-going process. Acts 14:31 reports, "Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord..." The missionaries raised up new leaders, then moved on to God's next mission for them. In Acts 6, the Apostles ordained the seven Deacons to take responsibility for the thousands in the Jerusalem church. How old were the Apostles then? Thirties or forties? How old were the deacons? Some must have been in their twenties.

How are we doing today at unleashing new leaders? This isn't about age, because individual Christians can become leaders at any age. But then again, we can make it about age. This also isn't about opportunity. Calling and mentoring young leaders is happening in many ways, for example, IPoint, Tuscarora, and the planned Rooted program. Potential leaders are knocking on the door of opportunity all the time, whether they are fully aware themselves or not, and whether the established leaders hear it or not.

So, if age isn't the issue, and the right vehicle for developing new leadership isn't the issue—what is the issue? How about trust? Trusting a younger generation than yours and mine to serve in leadership now. *Trusting the Lord* enough to loosen our grip, and share responsibility. Why wouldn't we? Perhaps we are so focused on accomplishing *our* mission that we are simply inattentive to raising up and unleashing new leaders. But the mission isn't ours; it is God's, and it is to be owned and shared by all of us.

LBYF is long gone, but my old advisor Elroy is still mentoring and encouraging new leaders in his own way. Paul went on from LBYF president to other opportunities for service in the kingdom. Today, as CLB President, he and synodical leadership are issuing the call: *Unleash new leaders.*

Rev. Brent Juliot is Contributing Editor of F&F magazine and Pastor of Living Hope Church in Menomonie, Wisconsin.

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