



identity

A PUBLICATION OF THE
CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN BRETHREN

A DISCIPLE-MAKING CHURCH: CALL. PARTNER. UNLEASH. MULTIPLY.



CALL

Being called by
God into faith and
into mission

PARTNER

Serving through
the ministry of
your church

UNLEASH

Saying "Yes" to
discipleship

MULTIPLY

Getting involved in
planting churches
and sending
missionaries



The Church of the Lutheran Brethren is a unique and vital part of the Bride of Christ. We have been entrusted as stewards of a great gift: an intersection of gospel truth by which we are saved and summoned to live and rest in gracious freedom; and a glad and expectant call to be joined to God's Mission in bringing that gospel of Christ to our neighbors, near and among the nations. Indeed, we are a people restful in grace and restless in mission. I ask you to join me as we seek more to be, and renewed as, a *Disciple-Making Church*.

Paul

Pres. Paul Larson
Church of the Lutheran Brethren

1. Call



CALL TO FOLLOW

We are a people called, shaped, and sent under the Word. We must hear this Word again to repent, trust, and follow Christ in sacrificially loving, serving, reconciling, and connecting our neighbors with Jesus, his community, and his mission.

2. Partner



PARTNER IN MISSION

Foster the interdependence of individuals, congregations, regions, and synod in disciple making.

3. Unleash

UNLEASH NEW LEADERS

Call, empower, and support young men and women to lead in making disciples and forming disciple-making communities.

4. Multiply

MULTIPLY NEW DISCIPLES

Mobilize our people and our congregations to disciple neighbors, near and among the nations, so new churches are planted and established congregations are revitalized.

CONTENTS

FALL // 2022



Ben Duchac / Unsplash

FEATURES

04 // CALL TO FOLLOW

Rev. Daniel Stenberg explores the faithfulness of God

06 // PARTNER IN MISSION

Beka Nadgwick writes about getting involved in your church

08 // UNLEASH NEW LEADERS

Ryan & Amy Garvin talk discipleship and discipling others

10 // MULTIPLY NEW DISCIPLES

Dr. Ryan Nilsen gives three ways to spread the gospel

12 // CURRENT CHURCH PLANTS

Learn how the CLB is engaging communities for Jesus Christ

13 // ISN'T IT INCREDIBLE HOW GOD WORKS?

Pastor Nick Olson on planting a church in New Prague, MN

14 // HOPE IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD

Dr. Gaylan Mathiesen offers hope for living in a divided world

17 // REACHING COLLEGE STUDENTS IN TAIWAN

Sara Hosch writes about life as a missionary in Taiwan

18 // PARTNERSHIP IN CHAD

Hear how three Church bodies are partnering to reach the unreached with the gospel

 **identity**

A PUBLICATION OF THE
CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN
BRETHREN

FALL 2022, Issue #006

Publisher | The Church of the Lutheran Brethren

Editor In Chief | Troy Tysdal
Media Relations Specialist | Tim Mathiesen
Associate Editor | Brent Juliot
Copy Editor | Aaron Juliot

Cover Photo: A combination of photographs by Ben
Duchac & Guilherme Stecanella on Unsplash

Church of the Lutheran Brethren
1020 W. Alcott Ave.
Fergus Falls, MN 56537

Contact: ttysdal@CLBA.org
Subscriptions: identity@CLBA.org



Pastor Daniel Stenberg and family

CALL TO FOLLOW

Daniel Stenberg

My father's voice rang out in the warm afternoon air calling, "Daniel! Daniel!" It was time for lunch, and my food was getting cold. But I wasn't playing in the yard, as I had told my parents I would be. I had gone to our neighbor's house. She was a wonderful old lady, and we were playing Uno, while I spoiled my lunch by stuffing my face with delicious homemade chocolate chip cookies. I didn't realize I was missing the call of my father. I was caught up in living my best life, playing games, and devouring sweets.

It's a natural thing to get caught up in trying to live our best lives. We have desires. We have dreams. We have things that we want to accomplish, and things that our parents, families, and friends expect us to accomplish. We have questions that need answering, like: What college will I go to? What job should I pursue? Who should I marry? We're excited to pursue answers. Some of these questions freak us out. Some of them we're not ready for.

So, as we try to answer these questions of life, and as we deal with our day-to-day struggles, we look for opportunities to relax. We find ways to chill, to procrastinate. We look for opportunities to visit our neighbor, play some Uno, and devour some still-warm chocolate chip cookies. Now this can be a good thing. It's not bad to take a break occasionally. It can

be healthy to just take a breath. It can be wise to hold off on making some decisions until we're ready. But as we sit on the couch juggling decisions and stuffing our faces, are we so distracted by living our best lives that we miss the call of our Father?

It can be hard to even understand what is meant by the "call of God." We might think of pastors and elders as being "called," but what does that have to do with the rest of us? Does God call us too?

Of course he does. God is continually calling us into deeper relationship with him, and into mission. Mission could mean having to learn another language and move across the world, but it often doesn't. While some of us will receive that call from God, the rest of us are called to follow God into his mission right where he already has us. In English class. At the coffee shop. At the baseball game. At the birthday party. In the library... just don't be too loud!

God calls us to follow him in his mission in our daily lives. He calls us to repent of the sin that we commit, and he faithfully forgives us. He calls us to be in his Word, the Bible. He calls us to trust in him, to have faith in him. He calls us to love our neighbor, yes, even the smelly one. He calls us to serve those around us. He calls us into faith and into mission.

So how are we doing with that?

How are we doing in responding to God's call to follow? Even as a pastor, I struggle to follow God's call. Sometimes it's just comfortable on the couch. The games are fun, and the cookies are tasty. As I sat there with the neighbor lady, that day all those years ago, I remember beginning to hear my father's voice faintly. It was distant, but I knew that voice. I got up, wiped the crumbs from my mouth, and responded to the call of my dad. By the time I got home, my mother was worried sick. Lunch was over and put away. They didn't know where I had been. They were concerned about me. I had to ask forgiveness for the pain I had brought them.

My failure to hear dad's call didn't stop me from being part of the family. And my lack of response did not stop my father from calling. So it is with us. Just because we don't hear the call the first time doesn't mean that we have run out of time to respond. For God will never stop calling. God will never give up on you. In fact, he can't wait to cover you in the fruits of forgiveness. He is continually calling you and me into repentance, into discipleship, into a deeper faith, and into mission. Will you follow the call?

AUTHOR

DANIEL STENBERG serves as pastor of Calvary Lutheran Church in Bergenfield, NJ.



RING... RING



Pearl / Lighstock

God is Calling People to Serve His Church...
ANSWER THE CALL!



Discipleship
INSTITUTE
www.lbdiscipleshipinstitute.org



Lutheran Brethren
Seminary
www.LBS.edu

LBDI is an online learning platform equipping men and women to be disciples of Christ who are carrying out his Great Commission.

LBS prepares pastors, chaplains, missionaries, and lay-leaders for a life of ministry in God's mission.



Beka Nadgwick (right) with Lauren Krause (left)

PARTNER IN MISSION

Beka Nadgwick

I do not think it would be a stretch to say that Lauren is one of the most talented worship leaders I have ever had the fortune of worshipping with. As she is blessing Word of Life Church here in Le Sueur and in New Prague, MN with her leadership, musical talents, and gentle worship style, Lauren has become a key part of the worship culture in our church, at only 15 years old. And that is no accident.

Recently coming on staff as Worship Director, I have had the privilege of watching Lauren bloom, and saying, “Yes, absolutely,” to her “Can I please...?” questions. Having started around the same age she did and now being around my 10-year mark as a worship leader, I view it as a gift to say yes to Lauren and give her the tools to lead in our church. God

clearly works in and through her every single time she picks up her guitar. It is clear by how smooth the services are, how well the songs are suited, and how unified her teams are, that Lauren follows the heart of the Lord in all she does.

Lauren has been raised up as a follower of Jesus here, and now is a leader here. She is a student leader and a congregational leader, a teenager chasing after God’s heart and bringing others with her. I almost can’t believe she only picked up the guitar five years ago. Doug Lang started casual guitar lessons with a few girls, including Lauren. They got together and learned new guitar chords and strumming patterns for worship songs. Doug told me he saw what a hard worker Lauren was when he told her to “practice as much as

you want to be good.” Lauren’s skills skyrocketed, as she began practicing for hours and hours.

Continuing the process of discipling, Eric Smith then took up the lessons, even asking Lauren and the others to lead worship during youth group, intentionally pushing them to the next step. Eric described his role using the word “encouragement!” He said, “Lauren enjoys playing guitar, but knowing that she was wanted, appreciated, and making an impact helped her to continue growing.”

The people surrounding Lauren are constantly uplifting her, praying for her, and telling her what she’s doing—leading them to God in worship. This makes a huge difference in growth, and it also overflows. Lauren is encouraged by others, and in turn leads worship to encourage others.



Lauren (right) with Eric Smith (left)



Lauren (left) with Jared Ronningen (right)

As the girls became more consistent players on Sunday mornings, Lauren was mentored by Jared and Joanna Ronningen, playing guitar on their team frequently. When I asked Joanna about the process, she said that when the time was right, “She took over very gracefully and confidently. She gets more confident as she leads more.” Lauren continues to lead on Sundays, playing in the band almost every week, leading Word of Life to the Lord in worship. She is unafraid in the face of the tasks God has set before her.

In 2 Timothy 1:6-7 (ESV), Paul is emboldening Timothy when he says, “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-control.” Lauren has humbly and openly accepted encouragement from those around her as they fan into flame her gifts from God. She continues to use those gifts to bring glory to God and bless his children, especially me. The beautiful work of God in Lauren, having been paired with her hard work, love for music, and willingness to go where God is leading, has been a great blessing to the Word of Life community. I am so thankful for Lauren. Praise God for his good gifts!

AUTHOR

BEKA NADGWICK serves as Director of Youth and Worship Ministries at Word of Life Church, Le Sueur, MN.

LAUREN'S STORY

Lauren Krause

When I'm worshipping, I get to sit in God's presence. It's how I talk to God. It's where I feel the closest to God. I sure hope that others feel the same and get to feel that God is close to them during worship. In fact, watching and hearing others worship with me is my favorite part. Sometimes I wish I could stop singing and listen.

I love worshipping and leading, but I love watching others worship with me even more. It's fun when you can feel it in the room, people singing the words and worshipping rather than going through the motions and not thinking about what they mean. When I lead with passion, I get to show the congregation how passionate worship can be.

I was never scared to lead worship; I think I knew I could do it. I've always loved to sing, and I love playing guitar, but I am a little surprised that I ended up here. I want to keep leading worship, maybe even for thousands of people someday. To hear that many people worshipping together sounds so cool. I'm young, so I have time to do all the small things, but I also get to learn. I want to get more comfortable speaking and opening up during services, connecting with the congregation.

In the beginning I never really wanted to practice, but I knew I wanted to be good, so I started practicing more often. Now, I practice to make sure worship goes well. I know the congregation won't care if I mess up, but I still want to do my best. I want to create an atmosphere where they can experience Jesus. And in the end, it doesn't matter if I mess up because it's all for God's glory anyway.

Thank you to Doug and Eric for bringing me closer to God. I hope I become more like you. Also, a big thanks to Jared and Joanna for showing and teaching me how to lead worship with the congregation. You have boosted my confidence so much!

UNLEASH NEW LEADERS

Ryan & Amy Garvin

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.

— Mark 1:17-18



Pearl / Lightstock

When Jesus stepped into the lives of these fishermen, inviting them into his story, what was actually going through the minds of these men? As they said “yes” to Jesus’ call, were they wondering inside, “Is this crazy? Am I doing the right thing?” Or were they so compelled by the invitation that those fleeting questions barely hit their radar?

When we read these stories of Jesus collecting his disciples, it’s easy to think of them as “other”—as some special species of human who were specifically created to be one of the 12 people in Jesus’ special club. In reality, Jesus was followed by way more than 12 men. Luke 10 tells us about 72 others who were sent out by Jesus to share the good news of God’s kingdom. They had followed Jesus long enough to know what he was like and the way he lived, and to have been given the power to perform miracles in his name. They returned to Jesus reporting that even the demons had obeyed them!

While “disciple” seems like such a foreign concept, does this change when we think of them as followers? We know about followers in our culture, don’t we? Look at almost any social media platform and you’ll see what I mean. We follow people all day: friends, classmates from middle school, second cousins, pastors, big name celebrities. And not only do we watch what they’re doing, we literally follow them! We follow them to the website with the great deal on jeans, we follow them to the band they just discovered, we follow them in using this funny audio clip over our own video.

It’s important to ask ourselves: Who am I following? Whose disciple am I? Who is discipling me?

To submit to being discipled means acknowledging that there is someone who knows better than me, more than me, and that I need to receive that information from them. I am in submission to someone in authority. Many of us enjoy living in blissful ignorance. We understand

that when we know more and know better, we are responsible for more, for better. Do I really want that? And in the case of submitting to Christ, it seems to carry even more gravity: I have a responsibility to learn from him, become like him, and invite others along.

As a Christ follower, what does it look like for you to share Christ? What grandiose and scary scenarios enter your head? If you’re anything like me, you picture yourself asking the wrong question or saying something the wrong way, resulting in some sort of unintended verbal ping pong game, ending with you frantically fleeing the scene of the misdeed.

Yes. Better not do that.

Recently, several Hillcrest Academy students went with long-time mission leader Mr. Peterson and chaperone Patty Zwiers to Orlando, FL to help a local church serve their poverty- and crime-stricken community. They served meals to the homeless, visiting with them and learning about their lives, and offering



to pray with some of them. Most were receptive to the offer and even excited to have someone pray with them. One person, born and raised in America, had never heard the Easter story: the story of Jesus' death and resurrection, and what it means for us. Upon the students' return, one shared with the student body that she realized that what she had experienced during this opportunity was something she could easily be doing "at home, or right here at Hillcrest."

She had simply been invited to walk alongside the adult leaders as they followed Jesus. She said "yes," and as she served, she experienced being a disciple. It really is that simple.

Being a disciple of Jesus simply means following Jesus. It means walking in his way—going the same direction, living the way he lived. When we "make disciples" of others, we invite others to follow Jesus, and help them learn to walk in his way. As they grow, they can share the gospel with others and eventually disciple others as well. Our goal as disciples is to

become more like Jesus and to lead others to become more like Jesus.

I know of many students who have graduated from high school and stayed in town for a few years who continue to help at the same youth group. This is a wonderful example of students saying "yes" to discipleship! They get to be disciplined by leaders who are further ahead of them, and they have an opportunity to learn how to lead, pouring the gospel into those who are coming after them.

When I go back to those verses in Mark, I am amazed at the obedience we see in the response of the disciples. They heard the call of Jesus, and their response was submissive reverence. With little knowledge of what they were getting themselves into, they dropped their nets and followed Jesus. And their obedience, over time, would grow into a humble boldness in sharing the good news of Jesus.

How many simple opportunities to say "yes" do we pass up? Whether I refrain from helping a neighbor paint the side of their home when I

know I have the time to give, or ignore a need to assist in the children's ministry at our church, or let myself get psyched out of reaching out to a person hovering on the fringes during a fellowship time at church, there is no end to the opportunities we are given to love like Jesus.

And all it takes is for us to leave our work, our proverbial nets, say "yes," and trust God to take care of the rest.

AUTHOR

RYAN & AMY GARVIN both serve in ministry at Hillcrest Lutheran Academy, where Ryan is on staff as an instructor and Activities Director. They live in Fergus Falls, MN with their four daughters.



Worship at Elevate: Lutheran Brethren Youth Convention

MULTIPLY NEW DISCIPLES

Dr. Ryan Nilsen

I will never forget the day that Gordon MacDonald spoke to our graduating class. Gordon is a renowned writer, pastor, and leader in the evangelical world, especially in New England where I come from. I was finishing my doctorate at Denver Seminary, and the day before graduation my classmates and our spouses gathered for a reception.

I don't remember his exact words, but it was something like this: "Up till now, much of your life and ministry has been marked by people pouring into you, building you up, teaching you. Now this marks the point in your life where that changes. Now the Church calls you to give back, to invest in others who come after you. Up till now, others have poured into you. Now you will pour into others."

I remember how exciting that moment was, realizing what this call to serve meant. It gave me a clearer sense of purpose and brought meaning to the work that had come

before it. I knew I was working on this for ministry service, but there was something about that invitation—that call—to be about the growth of others, that stuck in my mind.

Sometimes we start doing something because we can see a benefit to ourselves, especially with education and vocation. But even while we aren't yet thinking of those around us, God shapes us, equips us, and prepares us for a ministry to others.

All the articles in this issue of *identity*—about the call to follow, about partnering in mission, and unleashing new leaders—lead you to action. But it's not for yourself. It's for those God is calling you to serve. Let me paint a picture of what that could mean for you:

1. Multiply disciples. Wherever you wind up, be a part of multiplying disciples. This means investing your time in helping others to grow in their walk with Christ and

training them to help others do the same. You might do this with one person at a time or perhaps with a small group of three or four people. These might be people who are a few years younger than you, but it could also be with those who are your age or older. One form of discipleship relationship is called a "spiritual friendship," where two peers at the same stage of spiritual maturity help each other to nurture and grow in following Christ. If you've never had someone mentor or train you in discipleship, seek that out. There are many people out there who would love to help you with this, but they are just waiting to be asked. And at the same time, seek out someone that you can train, that you can teach what you've been taught. If you're hesitant because you think you need to have every bit of theology and biblical knowledge worked out



Launch Sunday - Word of Life Church (New Prague, MN)



Missionary Sara Hosch studying with a friend (Taiwan)



Missionary Sonja Narvesen caring for a boy (Chad)

first, that's not how this works! Take what's been entrusted to you—no matter how much or how little—and begin to share that with someone else. Start now. Here's the big secret—spiritual maturity as a disciple doesn't really begin in your own life until you're giving back and pouring into someone else.

2. Multiply churches. When I talk with people who have been a part of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren (CLB) for many years, they are always excited to talk about times when they have been a part of starting new churches. Instead of picking your next city and church based on where you plan to work or go to school, pick it based on where you could be a part of a new CLB church! Right now we are starting new churches in Boston, MA; Denver, CO; Red Deer, AB; Regina, SK; and just outside Bismarck, ND. All those cities

have post-secondary education opportunities. And soon we will be starting other churches near Minneapolis/St. Paul, Phoenix, Florida, New England, and other places. Our goal is to plant ten churches over the next five years, and after that to plant three churches per year. Every church plant needs a leading church planter, but they also need ten or more other people to serve in leadership roles—that could be you!

3. Multiply missionaries. Every church in North America and every global mission field needs missionaries. You could be a missionary by deploying to one of our global mission fields in Asia or Africa. You could also be a missionary neighbor wherever you live. You can be a part of an established church and bring vitality to the church by helping connect it to God's mission. Our churches are meant to be

mission outposts—places where we gather for worship, receive God's grace through Word and Sacrament, and are equipped and renewed for going back out into our neighborhoods and building relationships with the people God puts in our lives.

Our opportunities to invest in others begins for a disciple on day one! You can do this now! Jesus told his followers, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). It's scary, but it's exciting! The CLB is called to multiply—in North America and around the world. God is calling us to join him in mission, and you're invited to be a part of that!

AUTHOR

RYAN NILSEN serves as Associate Director of North American Mission for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.

CURRENT CHURCH PLANTS

Word of Life

New Prague, MN, U.S.



On March 27, Word of Life launched a new campus in New Prague, MN, about 25 minutes from their Le Sueur campus. In November, 2021, Nick and Brittany Olson passed a church planter assessment and Nick was called to be the campus pastor. Since Launch Sunday they've had new guests from the community nearly every week.

> [Read their story on the next page](#)



Nick & Brittany's story

CLB Forge Podcast - Ep. 91
clbforge.org/podcast

Grace Hill Community Church

Boston, MA, U.S.



Pastor Kristian Anderson has wrapped up the final moments of his pre-launch residency at Bethany Church in Connecticut and he and his wife Mary have moved to Boston. Kristian shifted the bulk of his time away from ministry at Bethany towards the planting of Grace Hill Community Church last spring. Kristian and Mary are currently raising prayer and financial support for this effort.

Isaiah Fellowship

Regina, SK, Canada



Isaiah Fellowship started as a ministry dedicated to fellowship of Word, Worship, Food, and Recreation—with a focus on young adults and young families. The first service took place on Father's Day, June 20, 2021 with about 12 people in attendance. Currently, Isaiah Fellowship meets in a local community center and has grown to an average of 20 people every Sunday—with a midweek young adult Bible study averaging 12 people each week.

The River

Red Deer, AB, Canada



Last spring, Pastor Harold Rust and a group of Christians took more than forty Muslim friends, who have immigrated to Canada from the Middle East and Somalia, camping in the Canadian Rockies. The Lord blessed the group with conversation about God's love through Jesus Christ. The River is now looking for a young ministry couple to join their team—who will pour their heart and soul into serving the Lord in Red Deer.

Lincoln Church & Community Center

Lincoln, ND, U.S.



Carl Juhl has accepted a call to serve as church-planting pastor in Lincoln, ND. Lincoln Church and Community Center is the vision of Grace Lutheran Brethren Church in Bismarck, ND. Grace has been hosting a Kids Club ministry in Lincoln since 2016 in anticipation of this day. North American Mission will oversee the Lincoln church plant and is assembling a leadership team to provide support, training, and resources for Carl and his wife Emily.





Pastor Nick Olson chatting before Launch Sunday worship service



Kids enjoying donuts and beach balls on Launch Sunday

ISN'T IT INCREDIBLE HOW GOD WORKS?

Nick Olson

Hey, you want to buy a church?" That is the question, half-joking (half-not), that I asked my wife, Brittany. It was the day after Thanksgiving 2020, and we had loaded up the kids to eat some cheeseburgers and drive around to look at Christmas lights. As we were driving, we came across a church building with a "For Sale" sign posted in the front yard and my mind lit up with what could be. I called my pastor, Jason Lang, and asked him the very same question, "So, you want to buy a church?" And he emphatically and seriously replied, "Yes. I absolutely do!"

You know, it's funny, when you think you have an original idea, and the more and more you tell people about it, you discover that maybe it's not so original! In our case, as we planned to launch a second campus of Word of Life Church, so often we would get the response, "I have been praying about something like that for a long time." Woah! You see, from my perspective, our launching of a campus was born sitting in my Volkswagen eating a Big Mac and dreaming about what could be with my wife. In reality, people in my church had been praying about what God would lead us to for years and years. We were speaking about our idea to launch another church

campus with one of our former pastors who had served in the mid-90s, and his response was, "God is so good! We were praying and dreaming about that in 1995!" Isn't it incredible how God works? Planting seeds and opening doors for the gospel to be proclaimed to people who desperately need to hear that they are loved, valued, and forgiven because of what Jesus has done for them!

I don't want to give off the vibe that this has been an easy journey. Far from it, actually. I tell you what, though, when people and leaders come together in unity on a mission to share the gospel, incredible things can happen! One of our top priorities throughout this whole process of opening the new church campus has been spending time in prayer together as a launch team and as a church. Colossians 4:3 says, "And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ..." We have been praying and seeking the Lord for opportunities to make connections, make friends, and make the goodness of God's love known in our community.

As I write this, Word of Life Church—New Prague Campus is seven weeks old! It has been an incredible journey to even get to this point and we give

all the glory to God! There are a few ways that you can support us. First, please pray for us. Pray for us in your own personal prayers, ask your youth pastor to pray for us in youth group or small groups. Our desire is to keep meeting people and to provide a community for believers to be equipped to share the gospel or for not-yet believers to receive the salvation Jesus offers them. Second, consider joining us on mission for Jesus! New Prague is located 34 miles south of Minneapolis and would be a great place for you to plug in and worship and serve if you are going to college in the Twin Cities. This would be a great place to live. Word of Life Church is committed to equipping and sending young leaders into our community, country, and world on mission to share Jesus! Third, consider supporting us financially. The first few years of a young church are hard, period. If you or your family are interested in donating and helping us get on our feet, please visit: wordoflifemn.com.

AUTHOR

NICK OLSON serves as campus pastor of Word of Life's New Prague campus.



Ukrainian refugees (Liviuz Pazargic / Lightstock)

HOPE IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD

Dr. Gaylan Mathiesen

Has the entire world gone insane? It's tempting to ask, isn't it? Political polarities—battling it out over issues like climate change, the global pandemic, or the challenges of our racialized society—have divided families and our churches. Those boring school board meetings suddenly became shouting matches. Throw in the riot at our nation's Capitol, and a range of violence from the Oscars' overly-analyzed "slap heard round the world" to Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine—it can leave us disheartened and disoriented. On top of that, pile a COVID school year and the heightened anxiety arising from social media... How are followers of Jesus to think about truth, hope, or peace in such a crazed and divided world? How did things get like this? How do we manage? Where do we start?

A good place to start is always with ourselves—taking personal inventory. Back in the '60s, people joked about

young adults saying, "I gotta go find myself." (Where do we find our identity?) Another oft-heard phrase was, "What's it all for?" (Where do we find our purpose?) These were years of great instability, and a measure of fear. It was the era of the Cold War, civil rights, the Vietnam war and ensuing protests, the assassinations of President Kennedy, his brother Robert, and Martin Luther King, Jr., along with "drugs, sex, and rock and roll." It was a turbulent period, leaving many with a rather grim and/or cynical outlook on the future. But it was also a time of spiritual revival, evidenced in part by the Charismatic Renewal and the "Jesus Movement." God is always at work, even in the bleakest times.

So, how does a disciple of Jesus Christ navigate the challenges of our day while fending off the damaging effects of a fallen world? Let's return to our earlier questions: where do we find our identity and purpose in life? Discovering who we are and why we

are here goes a long way in guiding our steps. Obviously, our best example of this is Jesus Christ. His crystal clarity on these points positioned him to wonderfully accomplish his mission and achieve total victory over the sin and death that shrouds our world in darkness. As Jesus said in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." He declared his mission in Luke 19:10: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." Through our identity in Christ we find sure hope; his Word lights our path (Psalm 119:105). When our lives are shaped by his life, rather than by the world around us, we need never shrink back from what lies ahead.

One example of this is Pastor Sergey Nakul, of Grace Reformed Church in Kyiv, Ukraine, who continued ministering there, rather than flee from the Russian invasion of his country. When asked what he



Both photos: Ukrainian refugees (Laurentiu Iordache / Lightstock)

has learned in these days of war, he answered, "I would express this, only by one powerful and precious word: Immanuel! God is with us! Jesus is Immanuel! God is with me, here and now. And please, listen carefully to the following, that is just flowing from my heart... If he died for us, can he leave us right now? If he suffered for us, can he leave us in our suffering? If he prayed for us, with real human tears, can't he cry now with us, with real human tears? And this is so precious... so supernaturally important for me and for millions of Christians here in Ukraine: Jesus is with me here and now, and forever. And this is a supernatural presence in my life, here and now." (See link to full video)

What is real now for Pastor Nakul in Ukraine is just as real for you and me with our everyday challenges. The Bible directs us, "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its

shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). God's people are not to fix our hope on political systems, or celebrities, or cultural leaders; instead, our hope is anchored in the One who never changes, who is always with us. And so, we pray: "Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long" (Psalm 25:4-5).

Watch Full video of Pastor Sergey Nakul
vimeo.com/687703935



AUTHOR

DR. GAYLAN MATHIESEN is Professor Emeritus of Mission & Evangelism at Lutheran Brethren Seminary.



gohillcrest.com

Preschool - 12th Grade



BUILD FAITH | DEVELOP INTELLECT | STRENGTHEN CHARACTER

 **THE MISSION OF HILLCREST LUTHERAN ACADEMY IS TO EQUIP STUDENTS IN A CHRIST-CENTERED, BIBLE-BASED ENVIRONMENT FOR A LIFE OF ETERNAL SIGNIFICANCE.**

 **Come and Experience the Classical Difference at Hillcrest Lutheran Academy!**

 **Apply to Hillcrest Online: gohillcrest.com/admissions**

 COGNIA

 MNSAA

 ACSI

 MINNESOTA
INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL FORUM



The city of Taichung (Sara Hosch)



The Hosch Family

REACHING COLLEGE STUDENTS IN TAIWAN

Sara Hosch

We were beginning to feel comfortable. We had recently celebrated our third anniversary of living in Hsinchu, Taiwan. It was the city where we'd spent our first night when we got off the plane from rural Minnesota. It was where we'd brought our fourth and fifth newborn babies home from the hospital. The kids were finally settling into their school and our church, and we considered ourselves seasoned explorers of the city. But as we prayed about our future ministry options, it was apparent that God was leading us to Taichung. In early December we looked at an apartment and contacted a school in Taichung City, and less than three weeks later we had packed our kids, cat, and small belongings into our van, with a moving truck following us the next day.

This seems to be the theme of our life following Jesus as a married couple. God asks if we have the faith to follow his plan, and then we see him showing up in big, unconventional ways. Sometimes it can be hard to trust with so many unknowns, and downright stressful. However, God continues to remind us who is Lord, and asks that we trust his plan for us.

Back in high school, if you had asked if my future husband and I would be missionaries to a foreign country, my response would have been a fast "no." But God was preparing Ben and me for ministry in Asia even before we were aware. He started preparing our hearts

early on, building our love for the people of Asia through cultural experiences and ministry opportunities during our college years with Chinese students at the University of Minnesota. As a young married couple with small kids, we later served at Hillcrest Lutheran Academy in the Resident Life staff, and this further prepared our hearts and minds towards working with teens and young adults, including Asian students.

As we settle into life in Taichung, we are trying to discern what God is preparing us for next. We know the gifts God has given us, and we desire to use them for his glory, but we aren't really sure what that will look like yet. The church we are attending is located within walking distance from Fengjia University and Fengjia night market, one of the best-known night markets in Taiwan. Our apartment is located in another bustling area of the city. Part of doing ministry is getting to know our neighbors and being out in the community often.

Recently, while out with our youngest three children, I met a woman at the small park in our neighborhood. Within ten minutes of meeting her, she had asked for my Line (think messenger app, but with added gadgets). The day had been a long one, and I wasn't really in the mood to socialize with anyone. I desired a day off from ministry, a day to play with my kids and not have everyone stare at us and ask me questions. She was persistent, and I begrudgingly shared

my information and told her she could contact me. And contact me she did. In fact, she messaged me multiple times a day for a week. The majority of her messages expressed how sad and lonely she was. She shared her desire for a friend.

In these messages, God convicted me of my poor attitude, showing me that he would use me to minister to his people even when I lacked the desire and energy. He had called me to Taiwan, and this woman and I had met that day at the park for a reason. We continue to be in contact, and I am praying about how God will use this new relationship for his glory.

Maybe you have a coworker, classmate, or someone else God has been placing on your heart. Perhaps you have been, like me, less than excited to respond to God's nudge. What is God's calling to you in this season? Is he asking you to step out of your comfort zone? Just as God was working through the years to prepare our hearts for Asia, he has a plan for you and your life. The unknowns can be scary, but he reminds us that he loves us and has called us for this specific time and place.

AUTHOR

SARA HOSCH serves along with her husband Ben as missionaries to Taiwan. They have five children.

PARTNERSHIP IN CHAD

DID YOU KNOW? Lutheran Brethren International Mission is working in partnership with our Taiwanese and Chadian Churches to support local pastors and international missionaries in their work to reach the world with the gospel. Today, a team of North American, Taiwanese, and Chadian missionaries are working together to reach the Muslims of Chad with the gospel!

Daniel Wen and Nancy Wu are a Taiwanese couple who were sent by the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Taiwan in 2021 to serve as missionaries in Chad. This marks a beautiful and historic partnership between the CLB of North America and Taiwan.



Daniel Wen and Nancy Wu and their children, Dan Jr., Joy, and Chi

In October 2017, our congregation (Chupei Lutheran Brethren Church) hosted a mission week. Dan Venberg had come to Taiwan to visit LBIM missionaries, and to teach and preach for the conference. That same week, I was sent to the hospital because of pre-term pregnancy complications. It was disappointing, but all we could do was get treatment and wait.

Our desire to work cross-culturally has been clarified through our life in ministry together. We wanted to join a sending agency that would foster a strong connection with our church, while also engaging the Lutheran Brethren churches of Taiwan. The call to serve the

unreached intensified in our hearts as we learned more about what LBIM has been doing. Through the prayers of the whole congregation and our senior pastor, we made the decision to move forward.

In 2019, our family started a yearlong missionary training course in Taiwan. With help from experienced missionaries there, we felt better equipped and prepared for the transition ahead. Due to the pandemic, we stayed in Taiwan, learning French, and then moved directly to Chad in March of 2021. There have definitely been ups and downs, but we have seen God's providence in all of it.

Being a "third-cultured" team

member here comes with its challenges. We struggle navigating at least four languages: French with Chadian partners, English with our American colleagues, Arabic with our neighbors, and Mandarin among our family. Our brains are straining every day just to appropriately greet people. We are still learning to lean into Jesus, to find rest in him every day, so that "he must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30).

Nancy Wu and her husband Daniel Wen serve the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Taiwan as missionaries in Chad, Africa.

GUESS WHAT?! Lutheran Brethren International Mission is really excited to announce that we have another Taiwanese couple that has committed to serving in Chad! Please pray for **David and Janice** as they prepare to move to Chad to join the other missionaries and create new partnerships in our mission to reach the unreached with the gospel.

WHAT DOES "REACHING THE UNREACHED" MEAN?

Over 2 billion people are unreached with the gospel, meaning they have no Christian friends who can tell them about Jesus, no church down the road that will share God's Word with them in their own language, and no Bible they can read. Most will live their whole lives and never hear the gospel... unless someone from the outside enters their world, learns their language, and shares the message of Jesus Christ with them.

THIS IS WHAT MAKES THE CLB UNIQUE!

Did you know that **only 10%** of the world's missionaries are bringing the gospel to these hardest to reach places in our world? LBIM is intentional about going to these people and places.





His name is Abdel. He is a subsistence farmer. He is part of the 47% of Chad that live below the international poverty line, earning an income of less than \$1.75 per day. Chad is the fourth-least developed country in the world. Thanks to LBIM's micro-finance ministry, Abdel and a cooperative group of farmers are benefiting from a peanut shelling machine that is increasing productivity. Your gifts to LBIM are helping people like Abdel feed and clothe their children.

WHO'S NEXT?

www.LBIM.org

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"

Romans 10:14-15



The Church of the Lutheran Brethren has identified three people groups in south central Chad: the Bagirmi, the Bilala, and the Fulbe. These people groups do not have a church planted among them and are 99% Muslim. We are looking for missionaries to join those already called to this crucial task. Who's Next?

Contact LBIM at: LBIM@CLBA.org

CHAD



- 16 Million People
- 37% Literacy
- 142 People Groups
- 72 Unreached People Groups
Unreached People: an ethnic group without an indigenous, self-propagating Christian church movement.



Discipleship
INSTITUTE

Preparing for Living and Serving



**FREE
Courses**

LBDI Courses

- Proclaiming Jesus
- Freedom in Christ: Galatians
- Understanding the Bible
- Elder Training
- New Testament Survey
- Worship Leading

www.lbdiscipleshipinstitute.org



identity

A PUBLICATION OF THE
CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN BRETHREN

Church of the Lutheran Brethren
1020 W. Alcott Ave.
Fergus Falls, MN 56537

NON-PROFIT
US POSTAGE
PAID
FERGUS FALLS, MN
PERMIT #289



COME & *Discover*

The difference Hillcrest
makes in the heart, mind,
and soul of students



Hillcrest Lutheran Academy serves
Preschool-12th grade students through
classical Christian education. Classical
Christian education reframes student
learning to see what is **good**, what is
beautiful, and what is **true**.

Hillcrest continues to equip students to
live out their faith and be able to defend
their beliefs through logic and rhetoric.

Find out more about Hillcrest at:
gohillcrest.com