

foundations

Our vision is for all men to become bold and daring followers of Jesus Christ.

Boldly Gathered, Boldly Reformed *As Disciples, We Have God's Breath At Our Backs*

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free'?"

Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."

— John 8:31-36

By Vic Williams | Photos by Amanda Burke



BOLD GATHERING

Who'd have thought that a Lutheran retreat center in eastern Nebraska could be such fertile ground for miracles large and small, where God's plan for Lutheran Men in Mission, and indeed for all men, was made so clear under bright autumn sunshine, among brothers from far and wide?

If you weren't one of the 65 or so guys at Carol Joy Holling Retreat Center Oct. 7-9 for the first live Bold Gathering since 2017, you've probably heard about it. But not *all* about it.

The Bold Gathering was billed as a "Rough and Rugged" event. We can be rough around the edges and get rugged on occasion. But the words that come to mind as I look back on that weekend go beyond rough and rugged to "inspired" and "transformative."

We had a slate of speakers who turned their own faith stories into pointed, generous and loving prescriptions for all of us to head home armed with new insights on how to be giving and open disciples of Christ. We had enough "free" time to discuss what we'd just heard with friends old and new or walk the gorgeous Great Plains landscape in solitary and quiet contemplation. We had lots of laughs and told stories over meals, sang campfire hymns, worked together in several "serving" capacities on and off property. We heard Scripture and wrapped it all up with a brief but deep Sunday morning service before venturing back out into the world as newly revived Bold and Daring Followers of Jesus Christ, cups filled and hearts on fire.

The flame kindled before the Gathering itself kicked off on Friday afternoon. The LMM Board and Executive Board arrived early and met over a fruitful day and a half. Staff and team leaders

Bold Gathering, *continued on page 3*





LUTHERAN MEN IN MISSION

The *foundations* newsletter is sent to all who contribute to the ministry of Lutheran Men in Mission. Your contribution ensures that *foundations* will continue to be sent to you.

Our vision for *foundations* is that it be a source of personal spiritual growth, as well as a source of information for those involved in congregational men's ministries. Please contact us to share your stories of men's ministry that we can use in future issues, or to let us know what topics and issues you're interested in seeing featured in *foundations*.

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What God has done through your prayers and support

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever.

—Psalm 136:1

Every year in the days between Thanksgiving and Epiphany it has been my tradition to give thanks for all that God has, is and will do. For me it is a time of reflection. As I look to the year gone by and dream about what is to come, I find my heart full of gratitude. For even in the valleys and darkest days, God is there and as the Psalmist wrote, "His love endures forever."

For all the good and bad that is experienced, at the end of the day I cannot help but be grateful that God loves us all still.

This year, as I look to all that God has done through your prayers and support through the ministry of Lutheran Men in Mission, I am once again grateful for His enduring love. As 2022 began, LMM had just embarked on a three-year plan to sharpen our focus on our mission, vision, and values. We identified four specific goals to focus on so that LMM could grow and intentionally disciple men for the future. As the year is now drawing to a close, we should be thankful for all those who have helped make this dream a reality.

When a group of faithful, dedicated men gather together for fellowship, service and worship, no dream is too large.

Over the past year each of the four goals have seen significant growth and movement. I could write a novel simply thanking those who have stepped up and made a real and lasting difference in our ministry, highlighting both the small and large steps taken. This day I want to thank each and every one who has supported LMM by prayer, service, and support. **You** make the difference. In becoming bold, daring followers of Jesus Christ, you have inspired me each and every day. At the National Bold Gathering held in October, you reminded all of us that when a group of faithful, dedicated men gather together for fellowship, service and worship, no dream is too large. Remember, that is how Jesus Christ started this whole thing out—with twelve faithful, dedicated men.

So, this year give thanks that together we have not only come out of the challenging years of the pandemic but have come out ready to face the future. To move the work forward, we have faithfully been engaged in the next level—intentionally disciplining men to be the bold, daring followers Christ has called each of us to be. Today, let us give thanks and praise to God for bringing us together. Personally, I am looking forward to seeing what God has in store for not only LMM, but for each of us in 2023. Remember the words of Jeremiah 29:11; "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." That future is coming! Join me as together LMM seeks to disciple men of all ages, traditions, and ethnicities into the hands and feet of Christ, today and in the future.

In the Power of the Spirit,
God bless!

John Sundquist
Executive Director, Lutheran Men in Mission
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As I look to all that God has done through your prayers and support through the ministry of Lutheran Men in Mission, I am once again grateful for His enduring love.



Bold Gathering, *continued from page 1*

reported on past and current God-filled initiatives in outreach, discipleship, stewardship, retreats, and communications. We reviewed LMM's three-year strategic plan across our many "spheres of influence," from Project XII and its popular, ongoing Lifelines series, to future One Year to Live Retreats and Bold Gatherings, to resource gathering and how best to use the financial and time and talent gifts at our mutual disposal. Ultimately, we came up with a way forward that's exciting and challenging and full of promise for LMM's continued health and growth. We also prayed together, chowed down on some local barbecue, and even watched a little football — standard, fun, fulfilling fall bro-bonding stuff.

Then the Bold Gathering kicked into gear with several generations of men ready for feast of fellowship and spiritual nourishment.

Each session started with an inspiring, challenging testimonial from a fellow follower of Christ.

One guy got up and talked about how his sedentary and stressful work life had brought on Type 2 Diabetes, and how he beat it with lots of faith-fueled exercise.

Another related how his calling to go to seminary after settling in with

We all could see Jesus standing next to every one of them, one hand softly on a shoulder.

a family was scary, but worth it in the end.

Another, also a pastor, went deep on his struggle with anxiety so severe that before many a sermon he'd sweat in panic, often freeze up, and even throw up.

Another got up and witnessed that, as a broke soon-to-be college student, he opted to enlist in the army instead, which led to him meeting the love of his life when he eventually did go back to school.

Another talked in hushed tones of holding his prematurely born child for the first time, tearing up as he related how close he came to not only losing his daughter, but her mother as well.

Yet another told how a young girl got pregnant at 15 in the 1950s, how she and her boyfriend despaired of what to do, how she went to her pastor and her parents for guidance, and how the young couple decided to get married, have the child and a few more. The man standing before us was that oldest child, and now he was heading to Iowa to celebrate his parents 70th anniversary.

We all could see Jesus standing next to every one of them, one hand softly on a shoulder.

That's the "freedom" Jesus speaks of in John 8. In my humble opinion, it's one of the New Testament's most powerful passages, and was the text for Reformation Sunday on October 30. I preached that day, three weeks after the Bold Gathering, and decided to keep the core of that sermon intact here as I recount empowered men sharing their stories with emotion, honesty, and vulnerability, filled with the Holy Spirit.

Didn't matter if we were in small group breakouts or one-on-one, whether we were strangers or longtime friends, whether we'd been around the block once or many times. We talked and listened. Jesus was present and the Holy Spirit breathed its blessed grace on every word.

It happens at every men's retreat, with One Year to Live still — for lack of a better phrase — the gut-wrenching, soul-stretching gold standard.

And it happened here. After each day of stories and workshops and just hanging out together in safe space, going a little deeper in conversation was as natural as putting one foot in front of the other.

After each day of stories and workshops and just hanging out together in safe space, going a little deeper in conversation was as natural as putting one foot in front of the other.

Bold Gathering, *continued on page 4*

Even the most casual conversations carried extra weight. One time, I heard this quick exchange between two gents who were on the north side of 70:

“Why do you think God even created human beings?” one asked.

“Because he needed someone to love,” said the other.

Simple. Profound. And what I think Jesus is getting at in this passage from John.

Sin is always there, built into us from the Beginning. But Jesus says it doesn't have to be permanent for

There's no long-term lease for sin in God's house

believers. There's no long-term lease for sin in God's house — a house that is constantly, by the day and moment, being Reformed right

there with us. There's always room for God's love and we are always free to welcome it, and share it, through His grace.

So, what do we do to gain that freedom?



Jesus makes it clear: just maintain our undying faith, keep believing in Jesus' presence and the work of the great I Am in the world. There's no greater gift, and the gift doesn't need fixing. No muss, no fuss. No "acts" or works required.

But there's a hitch: A gift not celebrated or shared will wither. That's where Jesus' challenge to his "followers," and his heaven-sent brand of freedom, comes in.

It occurs to me that this idea of freedom was at the center of our Bold Gathering's main speaker, Jim Troe. Jim is a marketing guru-turned-

writer from Albert Lea, Minnesota. In his first session he talked about "The Day" — that upcoming test we all face at some point, whether it's a job interview or review, a competition, a test of some sort ... or, yes, the ultimate Day. Judgment Day.

"When getting ready for day like that," Jim offered, "We're always doing two things — looking forward, and working backward." What I think he meant by that is that while we look toward that big day with excitement and trepidation, what gives us a jolt of fear is the baggage we drag along with us

Bold Gathering, continued on page 5

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all the time. That's the "sin" Jesus speaks of. Original sin. The stuff we just can't leave by the side of the road but has no lasting power over us if we are constantly "reforming" in Christ.

Or is it the truly original sin of shame that holds us back? You know, that nagging, ugly voice that tells us we're just not worthy of His and each other's love — the chains us to thoughts and actions (or inactions) we'd like to get rid of but can't, or won't. You know, those chains we keep chewing on with false hope that our cracked teeth and weak and weary jaws will do the job.

But God's jaws never get weary. I'm feeling that truth quite a lot these days. A couple months down the road from Nebraska "mountaintop" time together, I'm still feeling the chains fall away.

So once we've shed those chains, who deserves our discipleship?

Everyone.

From those we love and who know us best, to our "talk about the weather buddies" to complete strangers. We are free to witness for and with Jesus, through his death and resurrection and redeeming grace.

And that means sharing our gifts, too. At the Bold Gathering, Jim Troe referred to the "Body of Christ" gifts described in Romans 12 — the gifts of prophecy, serving, teaching, encouragement, giving, leadership, and mercy — and wrote brief descriptions for each that connects them to modern life both within and without the church. Then he asked each of us to "choose the gift that most closely describes you," and underline a sentence in its description that "best captures your genius."

It's harder than it sounds, but hey, somebody called me a genius!
Works for me!

Works for you, too, and all of us. We're all geniuses in God's eyes, and in the Gospel, Jesus frees us to



share that genius openly and boldly. Another modern theologian calls it "the joyful burden of active devotion."

So, as we await Jesus' coming during Advent and follow Him into another year let's rejoice in the freedom of God's grace, which brought several dozen of us together in Nebraska to open our hearts to Him and each other, empowered to invite new guys to future gatherings — and, in the meantime, welcome them into a deeper place among their LMM brothers.

We're all geniuses in God's eyes.... Jesus frees us to share that genius openly and boldly.



Meet Joshua Forde

LMM Director Of Discipleship

By Vic Williams

Growing up in South Florida, Joshua Forde is a Miami Dolphins and Heat fan who earned a 2021 Master's in Business Administration from Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. Currently an Account Manager for SV Microwave in West Palm Beach, he's also a Lutheran pastor's son and a passionate Christian young man with an important charge in his new position as LMM's Director of Discipleship: To lead the organization's effort in welcoming and bringing more men into the fold as Bold, Daring Followers of Jesus Christ. His dad, Sean T. Forde, served for several years as LMM's Networking and Communications Director, so the way was clear for Joshua to get more deeply involved.

Heading up Discipleship is a big job, but with his clear gifts of listening to every seeking and spirit-fired guy who comes his way and discerning new ways to bring the Gospel to greater life, Forde is up to it, as he makes clear in this Bold Gathering back-and-forth with Foundations Editor and fellow LMM Board member Vic Williams.

Talk a bit about your past in the church — where your path of faith began.

I grew up Lutheran. My mother went to Lutheran schools growing up in Florida. My dad didn't become a Lutheran pastor until he was in his 30s. We grew up Lutheran, went to Lutheran elementary, middle and high school.

When my dad was in seminary in Minnesota, I was a kid and didn't really know what he was doing

when he'd leave on weekends for LMM board meetings and things I didn't understand. As I got older he'd explain a little bit what he was doing with LMM, but I didn't really know a lot other than I knew he was involved. Later he asked me if I'd like to get involved in some of the ministries — not on some grand level, but more like, 'Hey, do you want to go to One Year To Live?' Stuff like that.

How did OYTL change your orientation to your faith as a man?

It helped me to grow personally in the faith, and let me know there's more to it. If you know what I mean by that, you *know* what I mean by that. There's more space to grow, to be more vulnerable, more open to others. It helped me become more motivated to helping the church, especially the Lutheran church, and get to know guys, know people more on that level. I always did, growing up, because of the way I was brought up, but didn't *know* I was doing it. But now it's with more intention. That's what One Year To Live helped me with — a lot.

OYTL: There's more space to grow, to be more vulnerable, more open to others. It helped me become more motivated to helping the church, especially the Lutheran church.



Did you attend with your dad?

No, but I went with my brother, in Tennessee in April 2021. We were in different small groups. It was a good experience. Then we did one in Del Ray Beach in September 2021, the first one in Florida. For South Florida, it was a "camp" setting. That helped me see the other side of One Year To Live, in terms of being one of the helpers. That helped me meet guys like Kevin Burke and Jim Monkman, which helped me get more involved with LMM.

You learn so much more the next time you're on leadership— dimensions of things that happen within groups and within yourself. Does that help you formulate how you would like to see discipleship in LMM?

One hundred percent. There's a quote — "the more you know, the more you realize what you don't know." And I like that, because it applies not just to an organization like LMM, but to life, to our spiritual well-being, and to discipleship. At certain times in my life I've seen discipleship in action without realizing it. I've seen people growing, getting actively involved in other people's lives, through

Joshua Forde, *continued on page 6*

God, through community service. That's where I like to portray my faith — through servant leadership. The more I've seen guys do it, that exposure allows me to have a better understanding, and follow those ways.

You don't know what God's doing until it happens. In ways you didn't imagine would happen.

Yes. Trust the process.

How is the Bold Gathering experience working for you?

I think it's even more inspirational to be here in person, to see it. The Bold Gathering is exactly that. People are coming and giving their testimony. That's bold proclamation, bold living. To come and touch a lot of people who are already of the Christian faith, in the same community, and still have that big an impact — that's what I'm looking for. I'm just as susceptible to that inspiration as anyone walking on the street. Except it's tailored to Lutheran men, or men of the Christian faith.

In your position as LMM's Director of Discipleship, what are some of your goals?

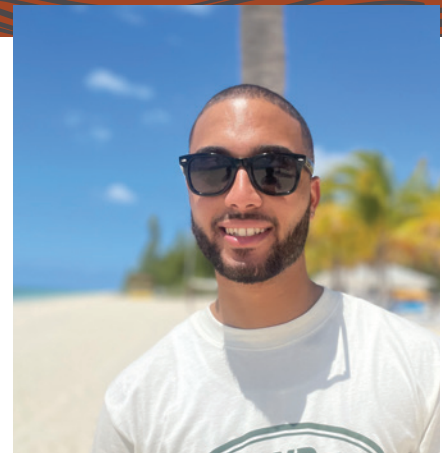
People are coming and giving their testimony.... To come and touch a lot of people who are already of the Christian faith, in the same community, and still have that big an impact — that's what I'm looking for.

The whole point of being a disciple is getting them closer to God — and teaching them how to be disciples themselves.

I would like to see how far we can reach, because there's a general term of "reaching wide." I'm someone who will talk to anyone, find out who they are. Everybody has something in common. So I like to find out what that is, connect with them and whatever that thing may be. The whole point of being a disciple is getting them closer to God — and teaching them how to be disciples themselves. Disciple men, teaching them how to be disciples, and then they go on and give the Good News. That's what it's all about. Getting one person closer — that turns to two people, then three people. Then tenfold. It multiplies. It's for the greater good, not just LMM, but for God's family. That's what I love about LMM. It's a means to getting to the bigger picture, and they do a great job of it.

Covid reoriented people where there are in life and where they'd like to go, where they perceive God as leading them, that they may not have seen before.

There were positives to come out of Covid in some respects. It gave some of us a chance to sit back and have time to reflect as well on who we are and the things we are doing. And now we are able to move forward in ways we feel we should, instead of being "in the mix" all the time. We have to be comfortable being uncomfortable. That's something I've been learning do be more often. But with intention.



We'd like to reconnect with other Lutheran ministries including the National Youth Gathering. How can we reach wide in that area?

Anything you hope to focus on in this ministry in the short term?

We'd like to reconnect with other Lutheran ministries including the National Youth Gathering. How can we reach wide in that area? And perhaps develop new teaching and training materials, or redesign what we have. How can we connect with youth and men across different churches, other denominations, in the nation? We're getting things going, recruiting and equipping leaders across the nation so they can grow as disciples, reach out. Young men of diverse backgrounds, with potential in the church. I want to connect with them.

Ministries are ever-changing. People are ever-changing. We need to adapt.

Interested in learning more about LMM's discipleship efforts? Reach out to Joshua at joshua.forde@lutheranmeninmission.org

When Jesus Became FULLY Human

BOOK REVIEW

By Vic Williams

A Fateful Flaw: The 40-Day Wilderness Journey of Jesus

By Larry Moeller

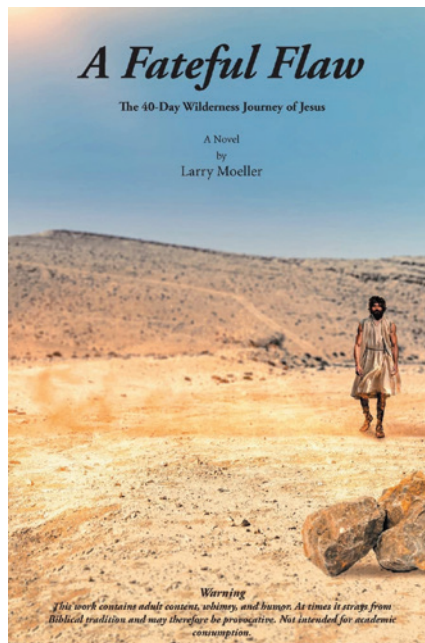
978-1638145875

\$17.95 paperback on Amazon

OK, Christian men, get ready to know Jesus up close and personal during those pivotal almost-three-fortnights wrestling with the Satan, with the limitations of humanity — and, critically, with himself as fully human.

For any believer who's longed to have all those Biblical blanks filled in, "A Fateful Flaw" is a must-read. As I wrote on Amazon as under the pseudonym hackreno, "It isn't just another "Christian" book. It's a true spiritual tour de force, engaging like a mainstream novel but delivered with a whimsical yet reverent sense of fun though the story is, on its surface, familiar to Christians and many others. The author keeps the tone light while diving into Scripture and getting to the heart of Jesus', and our, holy story — even though I knew how it ended! (Wink, wink.) Now I have an imaginative roadmap of the 40 days to augment my own."

Since Advent and Lent are two sides of the same coin of faithful anticipation and enduring mystery, this is the perfect time to join Larry Moeller on a risky but beautifully rendered fictional journey he



began in 2016, when he got the idea (divine inspiration?) to take on those fabled 40 nights in novel form. He affirms that writing each draft was slow going, but over the next several years he found ways to flesh out every moment of Jesus' earthly coming-of-age experience in the desert with flair. He writes in a fun and conversational tone and tenders the occasional challenging and even eye-popping literary assertion such as, *just how close did he get to Delilah, anyway?*

Underlying it all is a studied, solid foundation of Biblical scholarship, but Moeller doesn't leave the unchurched, the marginal believers, the Biblically uneducated on the sidelines; he includes an Appendix of every Biblical passage employed to solidify the backbone of the book's plot and populate the book with Old Testament characters from Moses to King David to the prophet Elijah — with Michael the Archan-

Since Advent and Lent are two sides of the same coin of faithful anticipation and enduring mystery, this is the perfect time to join Larry Moeller on a risky but beautifully rendered fictional journey.

gel stepping onstage here and there as Jesus' stalwart friend and counter to the Satan's tricks and tests.

And what is that plot? Ostensibly, to get this guy from one end of his wilderness walkabout to the other as a fully formed, fully *informed* human being. To arm him for his inevitable journey to the Cross with first-hand knowledge of what we fallen souls go through every day of our term-limited lives — the constant temptation, the distractions, the turnings away from the great I Am, the repentance, rinse and repeat. To die for us, Jesus must become us, live through us, understand us. Which, as He reaches his climactic showdown with Satan, manifests in his realization that the "fateful flaw" itself isn't fatal. It's the key to God-given life itself.



Being Thankful for God's Gifts for Us

This is the season when we celebrate the birth of our Lord and give thanks for our many blessings. I want to share just a small blessing that often goes unnoticed — that is the opportunity to lift a small child up to help them place an angel on the Christmas tree. God has given us so much that we sometimes take these little blessings for granted. I am a grandfather and the time spent with our children growing up every day is a past memory. Most parents are both working today, just as I was when my children were young. A lot of opportunities for sharing with our loved ones was missed because of work. The opportunity to share time with our granddaughters is a blessing that God has given to Ruthie and me. This is especially true for us since both of our fathers died when we were young. Let's celebrate this Christmas season when families from all over the country can gather together and be thankful for that blessing.

Our LMM ministry has been blessed by you with your participation in our programs, retreats and gatherings.

Our LMM ministry has been blessed by you with your participation in our programs, retreats and gatherings. Every week we can share the blessing to be with our Christian brothers in book and Bible studies via zoom regardless of your location throughout the country. A dedicated group of men from many Christian faiths have written and share insightful Bible studies and life lessons through the Lifelines series freely available on our Project Twelve website. We are also blessed by the many donors,

both large and small, that have so graciously supported our ministry through their financial contributions to our Reach Beyond 2022 campaign. Finally, we are blessed by the work and dedication of our LMM Board members and the many volunteers who have stepped up to help us achieve our strategic plan and vision.

So as we all prepare for the coming of our Lord this season, let's take the time to thank God for the many blessings that we have received. Being thankful to God for all the blessings, both large and small, is just part of who we are as bold, daring followers of Jesus. Even when times seem harsh and we are faced with sickness or death, God is always with us and His peace and comfort surround us. This season has been tough as LMM has recently lost two of our former Board members, Fred Bohls and Jeff Mason, but we are thankful for their friendship and long-term support for LMM. We were blessed with their service and know that they rest securely in the arms of our Lord.

I look forward to being a full partner with you as our ministry continues to grow and as we Reach Beyond in 2023 to go wherever God leads. We will always ask for your prayers, your participation and your financial support in reaching more men, their families and congregations.

Your Brother in Christ,

Hal Derrick

President, Lutheran Men in Mission

hal.derrick@lutheranmeninmission.org



LMM UPCOMING EVENTS & programs

2023 One Year To Live Retreats

March 24-26, 2023

Tracy's Camp
Pinewood, SC

April 21-23, 2023

Camp Santa Maria
Grant, CO

October 6-8, 2023

Camp Cherokee
Blacksburg, SC

November 3-5, 2023

Camp EWALU
Strawberry Point, IA

Visit www.lutheranmeninmission.org/events/one-year-to-live/ for information.

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and the Reaching Men blog at reachingmen.blogspot.com

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your blessings
this year**

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**With your support
more men will have
the opportunity to
become bold, daring
disciples of Jesus Christ.**

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