

# foundations

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

## A Pastor Reveals The Power of OYTL

### How The Retreat Strengthened His Family – And Created A New One

Interview by Vic Williams

*“Even when they faced a huge crowd, these guys didn’t give up. They were determined to bring their friend to Jesus. So they went up to the roof and dug a hole through the roof and lowered their friend down right in front of Jesus.”*

*That is what we do in LMM, we carry each other to Jesus.”*

Pastor Ken Langsdorf and his family have lived in North Carolina for 26 years; for the past 12 he has been one of the pastors at Grace Lutheran in Hendersonville, not far from Asheville, and he loves living and preaching there. But his roots still run deep in his native Wisconsin, where his parents still reside — and where the spiritual core of the following interview took shape, thanks to a One Year To Live Retreat that changed the trajectory of his relationships with other men, with Jesus and with his church as a whole.

“When I think of men’s ministry,” Pastor Langsdorf wrote in advance of our chat, “I think of the story in Mark’s Gospel (Mark 2:1-12) where four guys



Ken Langsdorf (left) with his brother Brian (right) and father John (center).

carry their paralyzed friend to Jesus. Even when they faced a huge crowd, these guys didn’t give up. They were determined to bring their friend to Jesus. So

they went up to the roof and dug a hole through the roof and lowered their friend down right in front of Jesus. And there, Jesus healed their friend.

That is what we do in LMM, we carry each other to Jesus.”

### You’re originally from Wisconsin. What brought you to North Carolina?

Right after ordination we came here, and have been here ever since. A quick story: I grew up in Wisconsin, met my wife in college, went to seminary in Chicago. My father-in-law is from North Carolina, he and my mother-in-law came back here when he retired. For the year of my internship in the seminary, we wanted to try something different; we came to North Carolina, really enjoyed it here, especially in winter — one more winter in Chicago, and we came back. For the last 12 years we’ve

### Voice of the Father - John Langsdorf

Not long ago, John Langsdorf went to North Carolina to visit his son, Pastor Ken Langsdorf, and took part in one of his men’s group Bible study/check-in meetings at a local barbecue joint. On that night he acted as a father figure to several men in need of spiritual sustenance. Though his son described him as an “insider-outsider,” the experience was fulfilling and deeply moving for all involved.

John was also the guy who invited Ken back to his home state of Wisconsin to take part in a One Year To Live retreat. His other son, Brian, who has since passed away, also took part.

John’s reflections on both experiences, and on his faith walk in general, appear alongside this article in the green boxes.

Langsdorf, continued on page 3



## From the Executive Director

### Remembering you

*"When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ. I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you..." Philemon 1:4-7*

I am sitting in my office this morning listening to the waves of Lake Michigan beat against the shore; the birds are singing, and the promise of the new day still gleams brightly. Yet my thoughts are focused on those of you I have met as I have been working my way across the country. I have sat and broken bread with many men, listened to their stories and heard their dreams. Each time I have been overwhelmed by that great things God is doing in and through the lives of those men, their churches and the multitude of ministries they are involved in.

As my journey with LMM has begun, I have been constantly reminded of the New Testament church and how the Spirit of the Lord burned brightly in them as they sought to intentionally disciple others into bold, daring followers of Jesus Christ.

My first major trip began in North Carolina to experience the transformational weekend better known as One Year To Live before meeting with key leaders in LMM there. Then I was on to South Carolina where I was blessed to see the Spirit at work as I joined the Committee of 100 down by the Sycamore tree for their annual celebration of what God is doing in their midst. Most recently I was in the heartland visiting Nebraska, witnessing the amazing ministry of Carol Joy Holling Camp, where LMM will be holding a unique Bold Gathering in September of 2020. I heard about the amazing men's ministry that is happening in the greater Omaha area, particularly reaching out to those men who are incarcerated and bringing them the life-saving good news of Jesus Christ.

Each step of my journey I have seen men whose hearts are on fire for Christ. Men who are boldly sharing what Christ has meant and done in their lives. Men who are daring to find new and creative ways be the hands and feet of Christ to their communities. Men who are intentionally discipling others by personally modeling the character of Jesus. Living lives helping others, moving from living a life focused on one's self to one of naturally loving and serving their neighbors.

God is doing great and amazing things through LMM and men's ministries across our country. It is an exciting time to be part of Lutheran Men in Mission. I can't wait to see what God has in store for us tomorrow. I'm in! Are you?

In the Power of the Spirit, God Bless!

**John Sundquist**, Executive Director, Lutheran Men in Mission  
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#### 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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been in the mountains of western North Carolina, not far from Asheville.

### **Are you from a family of pastors?**

No, I'm not. In fact I'm the only one I'm aware of, but my family has been Lutheran for generations on both sides.

### **How did you first hear about the One Year To Live retreat?**

I heard about it from my dad. He is an active member of the men's group at his church, and has been a supporter of his Bible study group, which has been an inspiration for his faith and life. Several years ago he told me he was going to a retreat, and that my brother was thinking about going along with him. I thought it was an opportunity we just can't pass up. So my dad, my brother and I all went to One Year To Live.

### **In Wisconsin?**

Yes — and we all went together.

**I've done three of them out here in the West, and every time the experience is a little different. The path you take is the same as far as the programming goes, but it's all about the guys there, how the Holy Spirit weaves in and out through them. What was your first takeaway from going through that — the special experience of going through it with your dad and brother?**

At the retreat it was great to be there with the guys, out in the woods. It was a very "manly" retreat, but very powerful as well. One of the expe-

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***That was a sight I never thought I would see. [My brother] found belonging in that group; they supported him and cared for him, and he was proud to be part of something doing good work in the church.***

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periences that has really stuck with me: My dad, brother and I were in different small groups, but at one point, I looked out of the corner of my eye at my brother's group, and they all surrounded him, put their hands on him and prayed for him. That was really moving for me. My brother hadn't really connected with the church for a while and had moved home with my mom and dad. So this was, for him, a powerful way for him to feel connected, to belong, and really moving for me to see other men caring for my brother.

A few years later my brother died unexpectedly. My dad was the one who found him. My dad made three phone calls — first to EMS, second to my mom, and third to the guys from the men's group. The guys

dropped everything and were there by my dad's side within minutes of his call.

### **Before your brother passed, did you see a change in him? What do you think it did for him in the longer term?**

The summer after the retreat we did our annual visit up to Wisconsin. After supper on a Tuesday night, I looked up and there was my brother with his Bible in his hand, and he said to my father, "Come on, Dad, we're gonna be late for men's group." That was a sight I never thought I would see. He found belonging in that group; they supported him and cared for him, and he was proud to be part of something doing good work in the church.

Langsdorf, continued on page 4

## **Voice of the Father**

### **John Langsdorf on his One Year To Live bonds**

Brian and I had great experiences after One Year To Live, including dinner meetings and discussions and small groups. And there are nine of us on Tuesday night, to sort through the Bible we'd been given [at OYTL].

The first people I turned to after I discovered my son's passing, was one of the guys who I knew was retired and could help me. He picked up another guy, and it was a great comfort to me. They'd been through writing their own obits [at OYTL], presenting them. It was a great help.

I knew where Brian's stuff was, he'd designed his own tombstone, and with a few tweaks we got that done. His service was probably 90 percent what he wrote that weekend. Ken and I had heard it before, but he was with us that way.

His biggest regret with small group was that he wanted a group of his own with fellas that had been through divorce. He never felt as comfortable in the group as I do, but we went as father and son.

Our OYTL group went as pallbearers, and it tightened us again since we all went through OYTL. Several of us have been back to serve as leaders.

I've been a mentor most of my life. Mentoring has always been in our family — keeping in mind the respect others have for your last name. My father demonstrated that very well.



**I know you're heavily involved in putting on retreats in North Carolina. Tell me about the different ways it continues to nourish you.**

The retreat energizes my faith, but also, I really felt a calling to men's ministry — to help guys find their place in life, in the ministry of the church. It also helped me be more intentional about my role as father and husband. In several different areas, it's been inspiring for me.

**As a pastor and as a man, what do you see — not only in what One Year to Live brings to guys, but what are men hungering for spiritually these days?**

My sense is they're hungering for a place where they belong, where they're accepted, and where they can be a part of ministry making a difference in people's lives, and in the ministry of the church.

**Is that something you saw as a young Lutheran in Wisconsin, or was it more, "guys fix the busted radiator," and kept away from the deeper involvements spiritually in the church?**

I think all along men have been doing the "fixing things" at church, but since the retreat and working with men here at Grace, they are going deeper than that. Some great relationships are developed when you're working on projects, but then to also share in Bible study and meaningful conversation, it takes it to another level. Some men are hesitant to go there, but once they do, if there are trusting relationships, it can really lead to some powerful sharing and bonding — where you know you've got guys who've got your back and you can call on for anything.

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*We're growing into being a safe place where we can have some real sharing of life experiences, but also how we're living out our faith in the church, and with our families in our current situations.*

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**It's really about creating a safe environment, isn't it — for guys to come out with true feelings and let down their guard and show love for one another. That's so rare in the rest of lives we lead. And to get to that place with men you've maybe never met, is kind of amazing.**

Yes, to let some of the walls come down and be real with each other.

**So how many retreats have you been a part of?**

We do one a year, and I've been part of the staff for one of them. They just had one in early May at Lutheridge, a camp just 20 minutes down the road from our church. Very convenient for us.

**In the 12-step One Year To Live follow-up, your dad came down and helped out. Tell me about that experience.**

My parents were visiting, and since I'd gone to my dad's men's group, he wanted to go with me to mine. This happened to be one where we went to a barbecue place, and had a separate room where we had our meal and meeting. Part of that included an affirmation from a father figure. Each of the men there went to my dad, and he put his hands on each of their shoulders, looked into their eyes and gave them a silent blessing and then a hug. It was moving to be blessed in this way. My dad was an "outsider-insider" kind of person,

had been to the retreat and part of men's groups, but came in as kind of a father for the men who were there, as well as for me. So I think the guys benefitted from a father figure giving them a blessing.

**Some guys maybe have never heard from their own dads that they were loved, or they weren't tactile, didn't give out hugs. That sort of thing, no matter where you are along that spectrum, is very powerful. Especially for middle-aged guys who have been on their own for quite a while, and there's a new family created.**

Exactly.

Langsdorf, continued on page 5

## Voice of the Father

### John Langsdorf on the North Carolina meeting

I was invited to portray the father image for the men, because all of us have a different experience with our fathers. I wanted to show them fatherly love like our Heavenly Father does. It was a good experience for me and the fellas.

When I went down for Ken's meeting, I had no expectations. But I could demonstrate to the guys that they could do this with other fellas, and their children. That they loved them and blessed them. We're not here to judge, that's our Heavenly Father's job.

Just to be an outsider coming into that group, letting me do that — no one backed away, said that they didn't need a hug — that was very rewarding to me.

**So viewed through the lens of what you've done in One Year To Live, what are your hopes for your church? Has your viewpoint shifted, not only as a husband and father, but also as a pastor?**

There's some real bonding with the men here at the church. In addition to our One Year To Live follow-up sessions, we also have a once-a-month lunch Bible study together, discussing the lessons from the Master Builder's Bible. It's a fun group, a supportive group, but more and more we're growing into being a safe place where we can have some real sharing of life experiences, but also how we're living out our faith in the church, and with our families in our current situations. As we're connecting with more and more men and giving them a place to feel like they belong and find some new inspiration for their faith that a lot of the guys have never had before. That just ripples out into their life and their relationships. A lot of the guys here are young retired guys and want to do something good with their lives. But a surprising blessing is the relationships that are developing.

**Especially for the retired guys, the old "what do you do for a living?" opening line doesn't apply anymore.**

Yeah, so much of our identity is wrapped up in our careers. So retired guys are trying to find themselves again — who are they, and what is their purpose in life?

**It's a blessing for significant others, too, who don't want guys moping around the house — get out there and fulfill yourself!**

Yes, it can be a strain on the relationship to spend too much time together! The church can provide a good place to get the guys out of the house.

**Finally, back to your brother for a moment. You mentioned prior to our interview that you discovered how deeply Lutheran Men In Mission and the OYTL retreat had affected his faith ... and yours.**

Yes. As we were going through my brother's checkbook after he died we saw that he had written a check to Lutheran Men in Mission for \$250. My brother was on disability, and didn't have much money, but Lutheran Men in Mission meant that much to him that he made a \$250 donation to support this ministry that had brought him to Jesus.

## Voice of the Father

### John Langsdorf on being a man in the church

I think that every lifetime experience builds on the same things that OYTL touches on, and a comfort level gets there. Younger people need to see that it's alright to cry. I never saw my grandfather cry. I thought my father did an excellent job of breaking that mold. I sat on an Eagle board of review last night, and I hugged the young candidate. He didn't know how to react, but he didn't back away. It's neat to see these kids grow, see the life purpose written on them. That's what people who go to OYTL or other retreats come away knowing — they can do that and still be accepted.

My generation, the generation before me and generation after me, have given up their place in the church. We have to step up and say, this is a man's world as well. We have a responsibility every time we have a baptism; we need to provide a place for them. They need our guidance and wisdom.

From the OYTL retreat I was assured of God's mercy and love for me. I saw more clearly my purpose for life. And I knew I had other men who cared about me and would be there for me in any situation.



## UPCOMING LMM EVENTS & programs

### Upcoming One Year To Live Retreats in 2019

- Sept. 27-29 John Knox Camp, Knoxville, TN
- Sept. 13-15 Mackenzie, WI
- Sept. 27-29 Nebraska (not Camp Carol Joy Holling)
- Oct. 11-13 Camp Shaw, Mateno, IL

Visit [www.lutheranmeninmission.org/events/one-year-to-live/](http://www.lutheranmeninmission.org/events/one-year-to-live/) for information



## Exciting News about Our Ministry

**Y**our board recently completed the second Annual Meeting of Lutheran Men in Mission using a Zoom video conference. The entire meeting is now available for everyone to view on our LMM Facebook page and it will soon be on our YouTube channel and the LMM website. We were very pleased that 39 individuals and groups viewed the meeting while it was being live streamed on June 1. Everyone now has the opportunity to hear directly from the members of our board as well as meet and hear from our staff members, John Sundquist, Kevin Burke and Kyle Pedersen.

Each of our ministry directors told about the exciting events and activities being accomplished in their respective areas beginning with Tim Crout's **national map of the new discipleship huddles** across the country. Many of the men identified have completed the entire 52-week program and have begun new discipleship groups in their areas.

Our **One Year to Live retreats** continue to be the highlight of our discipleship ministry with five retreats already completed this year and seven more currently scheduled. By year's end, we anticipate that over 1,700 men will have completed this life-enriching men's retreat.

The news of our LMM efforts to support **disaster recovery in the U.S. Virgin Islands** was presented by Lon Buss. Lon's report highlighted what has already been accomplished and he told us that a new LMM team is being prepared to provide aid in St. Thomas this fall. This ministry provides the opportunity and logistical support for men and women to furnish their "hands-on" effort to help those in real need in those areas devastated by the 2017 hurricanes.

Our **Bold Gathering events** have been scheduled for 2019. Hope Lutheran Church in Des Moines, Iowa, will host one on August 24 and Zion Lutheran Church in San Antonio, Texas, follows on November 9. More details on the speakers and the theme for each of those gatherings will be sent via our Constant Contact messaging service as soon as these details are finalized.

Events Director Bernie Bresson will continue to be involved in these events; however, he has resigned his position with our board after more than 22 years of faithful service to LMM and our ministries.

New and emerging ministries were highlighted by Jason Adams. He told everyone about our focus to expand the **Project Twelve** ministry. This is an exciting challenge that we initiated and continue to provide the primary financial support. We believe it will reach more men across generational lines.

Also, our new LMM Ambassador Gram was highlighted as part of our networking and communications ministry. We believe that this new tool will help us to spread the news of LMM activities and events more effectively in local areas across the country.

Finally, as an independent nonprofit organization, LMM remains financially sound as noted in Treasurer Jeff Mason's presentation; the primary focus for our 2020 spending plan remains expanding on all of our ministry areas. Development Director Jeff Kuchenbecker made a special note to give thanks for all of the generous donors who have made and continue to make our ministry possible. Without your support and participation, our ministry would not exist to help men become bold, daring followers of Jesus Christ.

Your Brother in Christ,

**Hal Derrick**, President, Lutheran Men in Mission  
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*The primary focus for our 2020 spending plan remains expanding on all of our ministry areas.*

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**Lutheran Men in Mission Online** You can find us online at our website [lutheranmeninmission.org](http://lutheranmeninmission.org), or on:



and the **Reaching Men blog** at [reachingmen.blogspot.com](http://reachingmen.blogspot.com)



# Faith Means Moving Forward

By Kyle Pedersen

**D**iscipling men is more than sitting in circles and talking about an abstract faith. It means connecting our lives with the powerful momentum of Jesus, and launching ourselves into the communities in which we live to be a part of God's story!

Throughout their letters, the authors of the New Testament challenged their readers to keep moving forward. Paul particularly challenges his readers to "run in such a way as to get the prize" (1 Cor 9:24) and to "press on towards the goal" (Phil 3:14). The author of Hebrews reminds us to "run the race set before us, while keeping our eyes on Jesus" (Heb 12:1-2).

As part of our mission to "make bold and daring followers of Jesus," LMM invites you to consider how you can step forward with your faith in your local community. Weekly worship should be a priority, as should connecting with a group of men and ask the tough questions of each other. Then what's next?

God wants to use you as a servant leader to impact your community! Consider what you already love to do — cycling, running, hunting, school board, sports referee or coach, 4H leader — and be intentional about living out your faith as you do it. Your community will notice. Be involved! When people ask why you do it, share about the hope that is within you (1 Peter 3:15).

During the last week of July, a group of men and women who share a passion for cycling will be representing LMM and stepping forward to ride 427 miles across Iowa on the annual RAGBRAI cycling tour. Team LMM will join approximately 30,000 other cyclists traveling from the Missouri River to the Mississippi River, staying with host churches each night. As these riders pedal down the roads of rural Iowa, they will be wearing LMM jerseys and will engage with the riders around them asking about their story and why they ride.

**Be bold, friends!** May your faith move you forward each day in new ways. If you have a multi-day cycling tour near you, please let LMM know as we plan for 2020.

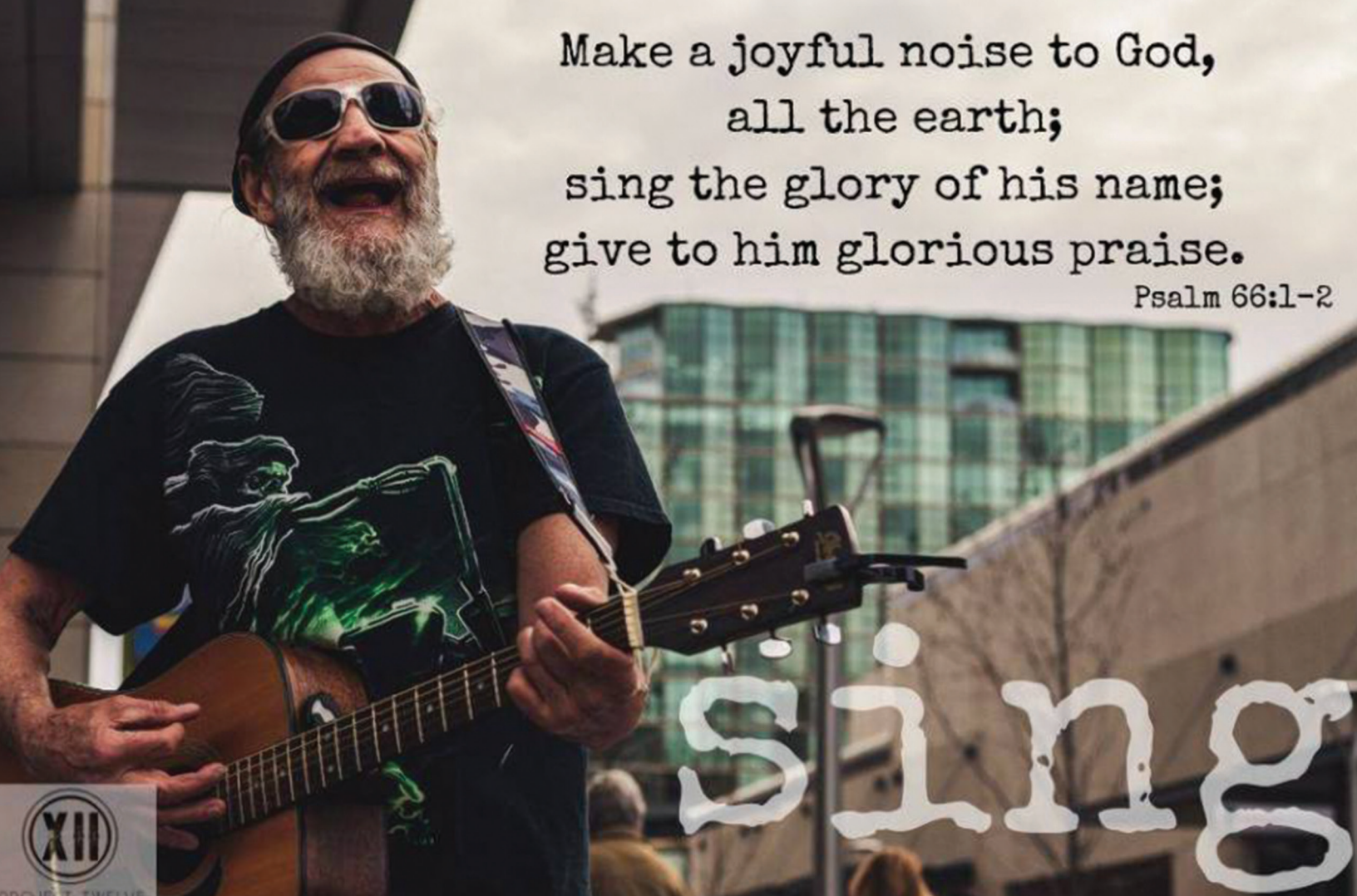
*Consider what you  
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**For more information about RAGBRAI, visit**  
[www.Ragbrai.com](http://www.Ragbrai.com)

**To follow Team LMM on RAGBRAI, visit**  
<https://ReachingMen.Blogspot.com>

**To support Team LMM and help offset the RAGBRAI expenses,** please visit our [website](#), and follow the links to online giving, where there is a RAGBRAI option for support.



Make a joyful noise to God,  
all the earth;  
sing the glory of his name;  
give to him glorious praise.

Psalm 66:1-2



PROJECT TWELVE

**Project Twelve encourages guys to be better men. Visit [www.projecttwelve.net](http://www.projecttwelve.net) for the resources you need to deepen your faith and your relationships.**

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*Creator of the earth and cosmos,  
let me sing praises to you and your  
glory. I too often focus worship on  
me rather than you. Everything  
should start and end with you.  
May everything I do from singing  
to living out my faith every day  
praise you.  
Amen*

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*foundations*

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