

# foundations

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

## Jesus Is Job One *What We 'Do' Isn't Who We Are*

By Vic Williams

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*It was a blow to my self-worth, my ego and my lifelong commitment to being a good breadwinner.*

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I can't decide if I'm angry or thankful, trapped or emancipated, challenged or simply and unceremoniously chucked to a curb crowded with middle-aged losers.

It's been less than a month since I received the email from my employer's human resources manager.

"Would you have time for a call ... today?"

Uh-oh.

"Yes, I'm available," I replied.

A half hour later, I was gone.

The following Thursday would be my last day at a job that wasn't really a job to me, because I loved it.

Writing about golf. Traveling to write about golf. Editing several magazines about golf.

I was the "golf guy." That was my work identity for nearly a quarter-century, but in an instant, it was coming to an end, at least as a full-time job proposition.

To be honest, it wasn't a complete blind-side. The magazine had lost money for two years, and the other publications in the company's portfolio that had been propping it up were on the same revenue slide that has pushed much of the magazine industry into oblivion for two decades.

Still, it was a blow to my self-worth, my ego and my lifelong commitment to being a good breadwinner, which, of course, is what we guys are put on the planet for, or so says western culture.

So now what? Reinvention into a new bucks-grabbing superhero, or creeping professional irrelevance? Creative rebirth or regression into a state of

*Jesus is Job One, continued on page 3*





## From the Executive Director

### ‘Here I Am!’

**T**hese past few months I have repeatedly found myself reflecting on three of the final five words of Isaiah 6:8: “Here am I.”

It all started when, during my morning devotionals, Isaiah 6:7-9 was the text of the day. At the time it was your usual devotion on the text, focusing on answering God’s call. Over time I found myself dwelling on two sides or aspects of the phrase itself – “Here I am”!

In hindsight, I believe it began when, during a conversation with an older gentleman about how to engage young men in his church, he said to me, “Every night I pray that God will show me how to connect to the young men of our church. I cry, ‘here I am Lord!’ And I still don’t know what he wants me to do.”

We talked about the importance of simply being there for the young people of his church — in a world full of instability and uncertainty, what it can mean to simply be consistent and constant in someone’s life. Going further, how the simple act of committing to a young person by basically saying, “here I am, and I chose to walk along side of you for a year,” can leave a lasting impact. The simple act of being present and listening can transform hearts and lives in unimaginable ways. I speak from experience. Sometimes that greatest thing we can do for someone is to show up and listen.

It begins with the simple prayer: “Here I am!” Those three words can lead to being used by God in so many wonderful ways. If I am being honest, I have historically thought of the phrase as most people do: “Here I am now, God, do as you will and use me as you choose.” Yet once again God has challenged my premise and expectations. What if we look at the other side of the coin? That voice in someone’s head screaming out, “Here I am! See me, love me, help me!” How does that change this simple prayer?

Looking forward into 2020, I find myself thinking about this side of the question. There are so many people around us who are crying out for help, yet they are never heard. It doesn’t matter if it is a senior suffering from dementia or a teenager trying to make sense of life and their place in it, the prayer is the same: “Here I am!” Your neighbor who suffers from anxiety, depression or any other ailment that effects mental health. The individual who is silently being physically, verbally or mentally abused. The survivor who mourns what they’ve lost yet puts on a brave façade. There are so many people in our world who are silently crying out, “Here I am!”

How can I, how can we, answer a cry we many never hear? You go back to the beginning by getting on your knees and praying: God, “Here I am! Send me.”

If you are saying “Here I am!” I encourage you to go to the Lutheran Men in Mission website and look at the I-Go Model. This model is a simple three-step process for building relationships. It is based on the three “I”s of relationship building (identifying, inviting and investing) and upon the conviction that, “I will go” and do this. Following the I-Go Model, you don’t have to wait to get going. You just have to go and do it.

So, keep praying, no matter which side of the coin you are on right now. Keep God at the center of your life. Keep listening for His voice. Keeping looking for our prayers to be answered. Keep faithful. God is listening and His love for you knows no bounds. So be in each moment of life, ever watchful for the Divine to enter in and bring change and new life.

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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**Jesus is Job One**, *continued from page 1*

acquisitive struggle that should have peaked in my mid-40s?

These are pressing and all-too-common questions for dudes like me, facing down 60, too young to retire and too old to start all over.

Even in what supposedly “the strongest economy in American history” according to certain rampant Tweeters, my predicament plays out in myriad ways, for millions of 50-and-over men, across America.

Many of them have simply dropped out of the workforce, and therefore aren’t counted in the unemployment stats. That’s particularly true of blue-collar workers who don’t have a college diploma.

As a white, educated man with a wealth of experience and more financial and familial blessings than I can count, I have options moving forward. Finding another job – or committing in full to a freelance existence (I guess it’s called “gigging” these days) – isn’t a pressing need. I’m taking some time to reassess what I want to “do”

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***My career is not, nor has it ever been, who I am.***

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for the next several years, but more importantly, what I want to “be.”

And that takes recognizing and embracing the immutable truth that my career is not, nor has it ever been, who I am.

It’s harder than it looks. As a Lutheran I deeply believe that God knew my name before I was born. I also take comfort in His declaration to Israel, and therefore to all humanity, in Jeremiah 29:11 that “I have plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” But it’s still a stretch for a modern American male to separate God’s living promise from what he does for a living.

So I struggle, and second-guess myself, and beat myself up.

It’s getting better day by day. My daily routine hasn’t changed all that much, because I’ve worked at home for 11 years – though not having specific things to do, for a paycheck, is disorienting and daunting. Yoga classes and dog walks relax me. Chores keep me busy. Having daughters and grandsons close by, and seeing them often, keeps me grounded. My wife loves and supports me (in more ways than one). My buddies check in on me, and were quick to come to my emotional rescue within hours of

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***But it’s still a stretch for a modern American male to separate God’s living promise from what he does for a living.***

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my “forced semi-retirement.” And my church sustains me, even as that certainly jobless void nags at my gut and threatens to turn me away from the spiritual sustenance that Jesus delivers to me, where I am.

Which reminds me of His invitation to the original disciples, in Luke 5, to drop their nets – to literally leave their jobs after they’d just hauled in the biggest catch of their lives, follow Him and “catch men” instead. In Matthew 4, James and John even leave their father, and what amounts to their family inheritance, in the boat.

It’s a big ask, but they went for it, without fear.

That’s what I, and many men, face when they lose their livelihoods, but not their lives. We’ve got to keep on keeping on, find a way to follow Jesus by catching each other at our most vulnerable moments – and giving ourselves a break.

We’ve got work to do.





## *The Rebuilding Continues*

# LMM A Big Part of U.S. Virgin Islands—St. Croix and St. Thomas Effort

By Lon Buss

**L**utheran Men in Mission (LMM) continues to partner with organizations to help the 2017 hurricane victims in St. Croix and St. Thomas in the US Virgin Islands.

Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) is managing the effort in St. Croix. The St. Thomas Recovery Team is managing the effort there. In 2019, the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) and FEMA were also part of this effort.

In a 12-month period from February 2019 through January 2020, 29 volunteers (men and women) from nine states traveled to USVI as a result of LMM's recruiting efforts. Five have made multiple trips. Their efforts over eight trips totaled over 3,000 work hours.

More importantly, LDR's helped bring hope and God's love to approximately 70 families by helping restore their homes in some way. Demolition, repairing or rebuilding roofs was the primary focus. Replacing doors and windows, clearing yards and building ramps were also part of the efforts. Through this the volunteers were also "Blessed to be an Extension of God's Hands."

We are grateful for the hard work and dedication of the staff of St. Croix's Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) and the St. Thomas Recovery Team. Their responsibilities and skills are diverse. These range from helping identify families who need the help the most, to managing construction projects, to managing volunteers' registration, securing



volunteer's housing facilities, sometimes even leading island tours and ALWAYS serving as guardian angels. Their passion truly rubbed off on the volunteers.

Time and again, after a two-week experience, many volunteers feel they are part of a new family and carry on their new friendships after leaving the islands. Deep, personal bonds formed from working shoulder-to-shoulder with volunteers from all over the United States — truly an unexpected blessing to carry forward. Many return home with a new passion for disaster recovery efforts, and a desire to invite their friends and families to return to USVI or explore other similar volunteer opportunities in the future. One LMM volunteer mentioned some mission trips are "feel good" trips, but THIS one was a "do good" trip. Another stated that for him, it was a "life-changing experience."

We pray the volunteers were blessed with peace, strength, health, and fellowship in their service. Also, that those who they helped feel the love of Christ through their service, fellowship and conversation.

The need and work continues in 2020. There are still 60 St. Croix homes in LDR's queue, with 32 requiring major work, and of those 11 are of the highest urgency. A team of LMM volunteers from Washington are traveling to St. Croix in March. Teams for the 2020 effort are forming, with leaders identified through May. Volunteers can join existing teams as individuals, couples and small groups for one or two weeks depending on capacity.

More information and links to Frequently Asked Questions documents can be found at the Disaster Recovery Effort page at [www.lutheranmeninmission.org](http://www.lutheranmeninmission.org).





*"Some mission trips are 'feel good' trips, but this one was a 'do good' trip."*



**It takes many hands to help get Caribbean hurricane victims back on their feet. There are 60 more homes in line for LMM Disaster Relief efforts in 2020.** Page 4: LMM/UMVIM crew in St. Croix. Page 5, clockwise: Roof repair in St. Croix; LMM team from Texas in St. Thomas, July 2019; LMM team in St. Croix, January 2020; LMM/UMVIM team hiking in St. Croix, December 2019; replacing a window in St. Croix, January 2020.





# Being Thankful Reflects Who We Are

**G**iving thanks for all of our blessings is an essential part of being a true disciple of Jesus Christ. As we reflect on the past year, all of us on the board and staff at Lutheran Men in Mission give our heartfelt thanks for the generous financial, prayerful, time and talent support that so many of you have given to help further our ministry for men, their families and their congregations. This issue of the Foundations Newsletter is our annual recognition for each of you who has so generously provided this support.

We have undertaken new ministries and employed a new Executive Director so that we can continue to grow and reach out to more men across the country. We want all men to believe in and to follow Jesus. We have reached out to our Hispanic brothers throughout all ELCA congregations in the U.S., involved younger and more diverse men through our Project Twelve ministry, and continue to fully support our brothers who sit in the pews on Sunday. Without the financial support you have donated for our LMM ministries, this could not have been possible.

Being thankful for your support keeps us humble and gives us the knowledge that we walk together in working to fulfill our shared vision and mission. We have much more ahead to keep our mission moving forward.

Our next live-streaming Bold Gathering will be telecast from Lutheran Theological Seminary in Columbia, SC, on Saturday, May 23 with presentations given by both Bishop Herman Yoos of South Carolina and Bishop Tim Smith of North Carolina. Please join us in person or online for this exciting live event.

We will hold a national, in-person Bold Gathering on September 18-20 at Camp Carol Joy Holling in Ashland, NE. This promises to be an inspirational and service-filled weekend. Much more information and our speaker lineup for this weekend event will be sent to you in the near future. So, reserve these dates and make plans to be with your LMM brothers from across the U.S. at this Bolder Gathering in Nebraska.

Again, all of these events, activities and ministries could not happen without your financial support, and for that we are very grateful. We ask that you keep LMM and the ministries and events we develop, promote and foster in your hearts and prayers and continue with your financial support.

Your Brother in Christ,

**Hal Derrick**, President, Lutheran Men in Mission  
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*Being thankful  
for your support  
keeps us humble  
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our shared vision  
and mission.*

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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)

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[projecttwelve.net](http://projecttwelve.net)

SAVE THE DATES!



## BOLD GATHERING 2020

### Columbia, SC Bold Gathering

**Saturday, May 23, 2020**

Noon-3:00pm ET (11:00am-2:00pm CT)  
Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary  
at Lenoir Rhyne University, Columbia, SC

*\*This event will be live-streamed.*

### National Bold Gathering (In Person)

**September 18-20, 2020**

Friday Night-Sunday Morning  
Carol Joy Holling Retreat and Conference Center,  
Ashland, NE

*\*This event will not be live-streamed.*

Watch for information updates  
at [www.boldgathering.com](http://www.boldgathering.com)

*Please plan to attend and participate in our upcoming*

## LMM Annual Meeting

**Saturday, June 6, 2020**

- We will be **electing** officers and **voting** on changes to our bylaws.
- Specific information from our Nominating Committee and the LMM Secretary will be sent to all eligible voting delegates at least 30 days prior to the June 6 meeting.
- As in the past 2 years, our Annual Meeting will be conducted as a **live-streaming event** and all present will have the ability to vote and ask questions during the event.