

foundations

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

Still Checking Out ... Or Checking In? As Fall Approaches, Let's Take Our Faith Temperature

By Vic Williams

The other day, during my morning dog walk, I caught what the old Pink Floyd song called “a fleeting glimpse/out of the corner of my eye” — not of something I couldn't quite put my finger on, but of a magnificent bald eagle, lighting on a high branch of a riverside cottonwood. It was a rare sight indeed, just a couple miles from downtown Reno.



Is there any other creature of God, in the American lexicon or elsewhere, that more deeply stirs our feelings of freedom than an eagle?

Not even close. The eagle adorns our currency, shows up on many a gilded flagpole and statue, and stands in for our most seminal hunting and protecting instincts. As a legally protected animal and once-endangered

species, this most regal of birds most likely comes to mind when we think of just taking flight and leaving it all behind — what some of us might think of as the essence of freedom.

As another old rocker, Steve Miller, once crooned, “I want to fly like an eagle/To the sea/Fly like an eagle/Let my spirit carry me.”

I've certainly harbored similar yearnings over the past year and a half, and particularly since early July, when the first huge forest fires kicked off in my beloved Sierra Nevada and filled the skies above Reno with choking, almost

chewable smoke that has hovered here for weeks on end. I caught sight of the eagle on a very rare clear day;

I'd almost forgotten what a heavenly blue tableau looks like, and I have little doubt that just a couple days earlier, I wouldn't have seen that beautiful bird on a high branch — the relentless smoke would have obscured him and held my dreams of freedom at bay for another day.

But there he was. There I was. And here we all are, perhaps arguing what freedom really looks like as the pandemic presses on and our communities are crowded into ideological corners or cleaved altogether. Masked or maskless? Vaccinated or unvaccinated? Home and “safe” or traveling and willing ourselves into some semblance of “feeling”

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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**.

Lutheran Men in Mission

8765 W. Higgins Road
Chicago, IL 60631-4101
lutheranmeninmission.org
projecttwelve.net

John Sundquist

Executive Director
john@lutheranmeninmission.org
773-380-2566

Doug Haugen

Consultant
doug@lutheranmeninmission.org

Kevin Burke

Discipling Consultant
kevin@lutheranmeninmission.org
920-562-1411

Kyle Pedersen

Emerging Ministries Consultant
kyle@lutheranmeninmission.org

Vic Williams

foundations editor/writer

Kathryn Brewer

foundations designer

From the Executive Director

Fall Planning, Potential, and Prayer

It is that time of year — young people across the country are returning to school. I believe that most of us were hoping that this school year would truly mark the return to “normal.” However, we are still very much in the middle of a pandemic and “normal” doesn’t mean what it used to. Yet there are some things that remain the same about this wonderful time of year. Parents are still dragging their children shopping for back-to-school supplies. Depending on the age, they are buying crayons and paper, or dorm supplies and printers. Teachers are finalizing lesson plans and syllabi, setting the stage for new learning and growth for their students.

Churches are, in very much the same way, planning and preparing for a new year. Sermons are being planned; calendars are getting filled. Small groups and Bible studies are looking forward to gathering once again in person after what for many was the longest “summer break” ever. Still much like school, church life has a new normal. There are still parts of the country where capacity is limited, communion remains personal servings, and social distancing, face masks and all, remains in place.

Likewise, Lutheran Men in Mission is also planning for the future. Building on the innovative programming and resources that came out of the pandemic and our work with an outside consultant, LMM is committed more than ever to intentionally disciple men to become bold, daring followers of Jesus Christ. The key to our planning is intentionality. We look toward tomorrow while staying rooted in our mission, intentionally seeking to broaden our reach and solidify our future as we prayerfully seek God’s will and direction for our ministry.

With a collective eye on the horizon, we are waiting for the pandemic storm to pass. With unwavering faith, we plan for the new year and new opportunities. We plan because life still is going on. We are adapting to the uncertainty of the world and finding ways to persevere. We keep discovering new and innovative ways to connect and remain community. Refusing to backdown in the face of uncertainty.

Because amid uncertainty, hope remains! Hope remains because with God nothing is impossible. As Jeremiah 29:11 says; “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.” Even as we make plans for the new school year and church season, God already has a plan to give us hope and a future full of promise.

In the power of the Spirit,

God bless!

John Sundquist, Executive Director, Lutheran Men in Mission

john@lutheranmeninmission.org John.Sundquist@elca.org

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Checking In,

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safe, perhaps in defiance of the government, of science, of our own nagging fears?

We thought we'd be done with this stuff by now, didn't we? We thought this fall would look far different from last fall. We hoped we'd have come together as a nation, world and species, especially after shots started going in to arms en masse. We thought that by now we'd have rediscovered at least a measure of what we once knew as freedom.

Oh, how naïve we were. How childlike were our all-too-human hopes. Pink Floyd once more, from the same song: "The child is grown/ the dream is gone."

But change the word "dream" to "faith," and it's still very much here with us, despite the daily onslaught of bad news of rising case counts and hospitalizations, of crumbling faraway governments and messy military pullouts — of one disappointment after another. Faith abides even if we don't want to. And while we're grown physically, there's always room to grow in faith.

We know that. We know God's nameless face shines down upon us, whether we want it or not, whether we feel we merit it, or not.

Which brings me to the thought that now is as good a time as ever to do what One Year To Live retreat alumni call a "check-in" — part spiritual inventory, part honest self-assessment, and an all-in taking of my faith "temperature."



Faith abides even if we don't want to. And while we're grown physically, there's always room to grow in faith.

As a fellow Christian and a regular guy struggling with what "manhood" means these days — or always, really — I invite you to follow along as I ask myself, in five questions, how my faith journey is holding up against what seems like all the smoke and fire and invisible viral menace this earthly plane can muster. Feel "free" to ask yourself the same questions and give yourself an honest grade — not to measure yourself against others, or against your pre-pandemic self, or because God keeps score, because He doesn't — but simply to *take stock*.

How am I doing with isolation — is being alone getting too comfortable?

So-so. As a card-carrying introvert, being alone is my natural state. In the depths of the lockdown, I never felt that I came close to despair; I'd worked at home for 11 years before the pandemic, so I was used to it, and most of the time I felt just fine — safe — with my wife and dog and cat, with the occasional visit from our daughters. I reached out

to my buddies via text or phone, especially in the lockdown's early stages; that practice faded, and I lost touch with some guys. Sometimes I'd let the "snake talk" set in, risking a deeper depression than what I deal with pharmaceutically. But now it's closer to the old days. I see or talk with friends in person — on the golf course, over lunch or a beer, in masked-up moments at church, whatever — but I still fight holding my thoughts and needs and fears within, behind the masculine smokescreen. Grade: C+.

How am I ministering to other guys?

Hit and miss. Indirectly pretty well — via the Project Twelve Bible study writing I took part in last spring, for instance, though the written word is itself a barrier. Face to face I've had a few opportunities to just listen and offer simple support or clumsy counsel, particularly with one younger man who faces his own mental demons almost constantly, so, yeah, Jesus shows up when I least expect, freeing me to just be there, without judgment. Grade: B.

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How am I ministering to myself?

Beating myself up is my *other* natural state. I am master at “couliding” and “shoulding,” especially when I look back at the dark days of early 2020 and castigate myself for what I didn’t write, what home projects I didn’t do, how I wasn’t supportive enough of struggling friends and family members. Now I recognize that it wasn’t then, or isn’t now, what you are I did or didn’t do, but that the gift of love and all it entails — the gratitude of having a roof, a table, a loving family and friends, and the luxury of laying low — sustained and carried me. I guess that realization is a form of self-ministering. Thanks, God. Grade: A-.

How am I honoring God?

As the pandemic set in and worship was all virtual, I helped produce our church’s recorded services — doing videos for sharing the peace, scriptures, music and other elements — until we moved to live but remote services via YouTube. It was a truly joyous experience for me. Now that we are back worshipping in person, even with the return of masks, I find a newly nurturing and somehow deeper connection to God, one that breaks through the scar tissue of fear and separation. I find myself craving new connections with the men of my church and the larger church, and world, as well. I’m working at gathering guys for new Bible study sessions built around the new Project Twelve lessons rolling out online through this November. The Delta variant has thrown up some roadblocks, but I’m determined to get there. Always a work in progress. Grade: Incomplete.

How am I accepting His grace and holding it up in my daily life?

Grace is the gift that keeps on giving, whether we allow ourselves to accept it as freely as it is bestowed upon us, or not. I suppose that through the last difficult, sometimes defiant, sometimes crushingly disappointing 18 months — the family disagreements, the fears founded and foolish, the grudging acceptance, the fleeting frustrations and surprising joys — grace has led me through it all, showing me that the struggle truly is real, and universal. We’ve all fallen short in His eyes. We always do. But He keeps coming back for more and, through faith, we somehow don’t fall away. I’ve learned that accepting those I love as they are, without exception, is how He best works through me. Even the most magnificent eagle can’t match that kind of freedom.

So, no grade needed on this one. Just gratitude.

ManTalk® Cards

Poker, Cribbage, Bridge... and ManTalk? Add a new dimension to game night with this deck of cards. Each card features questions written by men—for men—that help move the conversation beyond the latest sports scores.

Card topics include: “Manships” (Relationships), “Man-O-Man” (Sports/Leisure), “Manmories” (Lessons/Reflections), “Wild Man” (Spiritual/Cosmic/Ethics), and “Wild Card” (Bad Men). They’re just \$7.95 a deck.

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Order your ManTalk® Cards at: lutheranmeninmission.org, or by calling 1-800-638-3522, ex. 2580.



The “Face” of Lutheran Men in Mission

By Lon Buss and Dave Newman

How do we communicate with men across the country what LMM is all about? How do we promote our LMM ministries? How do we receive feedback? In short, how do we make our presence known? More and more, it is through our LMM Website, www.lutheran-meninmission.org.

In 2020, LMM’s leadership decided to dedicate time and energy to upgrade its website. A LMM Website 2.0 Project Team was formed. Their mission was to:

- critically review the current site,
- update and improve current content where necessary, and
- add new content where missing

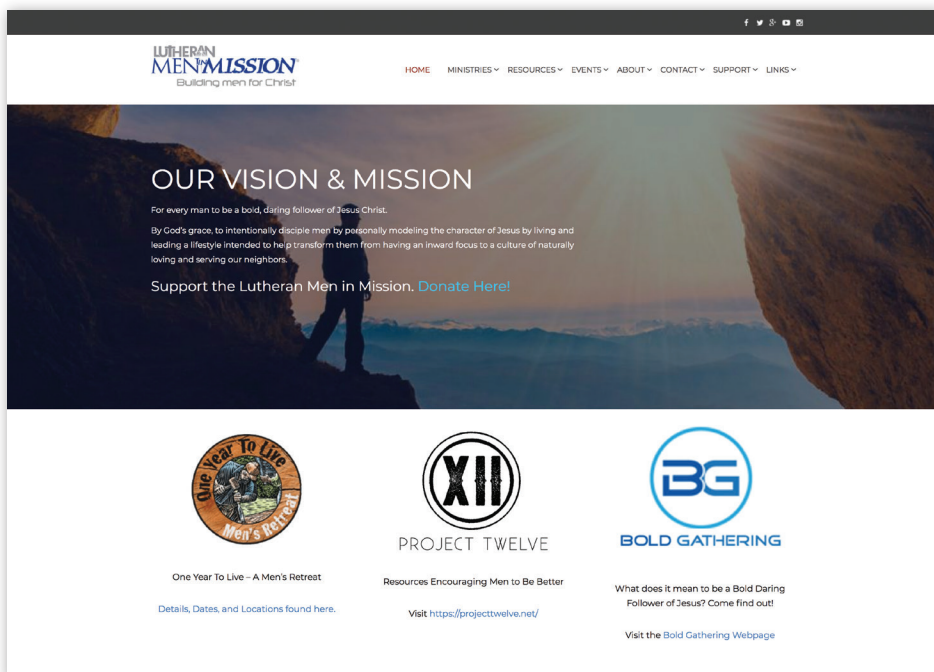
— all within the realm of the current website’s existing technology.

Below are some highlights of changes and updates thus far:

Home Page was modified and simplified to prominently display our three primary outreach ministries logos: One Year to Live, Project XII and Bold Gathering, with links to their respective websites or webpages. It also features description and quick links to the English and Spanish Men’s Ministry Leadership Guides as well as access to the LMM Foundations newsletter.

Events Page now has an added recording of the June 2021 LMM Annual Meeting and a new video testimony on the One Year to Live page. Upcoming OYTL retreats continue to be updated, including their flyers and online registration options.

Contacts Dropdown List now has Job Descriptions included for the Staff, Board and Synod Leaders/Ambassador webpages. Within Contacts, the Synod Leaders/Ambassadors page now has more than 30 LMM Ambassadors and their contact information. Archived quarterly Ambassador-Grams are also available. These help Ambassadors and Synod Staff members share this information in communication to individuals, congregations, and synods.



Support Dropdown List now has three opportunities for people to submit feedback to LMM with “What’s Happening Near You,” “Share a Ministry Need” and “Share a God Story” tabs.

So, keep checking the LMM Website! Just as importantly, share the link with others. Ongoing efforts will strive to create and organize content effectively — sharing information about LMM’s events and resources. The LMM Website will continue as a useful tool in discipling men to **become bold, daring followers of Christ**.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU to Ben Vaughan, LMM’s webmaster, for his continued efforts in keeping the site updated, as well as his work in reorganizing the site and adding new content. Ben’s time and talents (on a volunteer basis, no less) are greatly appreciated.

The LMM Website 2.0 Project Team consists of Dave Newman, LMM Networking/Communications Director; Rich White, LMM Development Council Director; Vic Williams, Foundations newsletter editor; Lon Buss, LMM Vice President; Ben Vaughan, LMM’s Webmaster and John Sundquist, LMM Executive Director.



Taking the Next Steps Together

In my life, it seems that taking the next step has both opportunities and risks. As a one-year-old, my parents were always anxious when I took that first step, but they were there to catch me if I stumbled. When I got that first job, I was unsure if I did the right tasks or if I would mess things up. Holding our first newborn baby, could we take the right steps to keep her safe and healthy?

All along these journeys, our faith in God has led us to take the right steps. This same is true for our ministry at Lutheran Men in Mission. With God's guidance, we have to take the next steps to ensure that we can live out the vision and mission for our ministry today and in the future.

Our mission statement emphasizes that we will intentionally disciple men so that as bold and daring followers of Jesus, we will love and serve our neighbors.

With your prayerful support and the help of an outside consultant, the Focus Group, we are evaluating the strategic direction for our future and clearly defining our core values. As the recently completed Feasibility Study of Lutheran Men in Mission disclosed, we will define the future goals and objectives of our ministry and when they will be accomplished. We believe the guiding principles and values of our Christian faith that have been part of LMM since its beginning over 30 years ago will continue as we take these next steps. Our mission statement emphasizes that we will intentionally disciple men so that as bold and daring followers of Jesus, we will love and serve our neighbors. This mission and vision will always be the heart of all that we do as these next steps are taken.

As 2021 has evolved, we still remain in the grip of this COVID pandemic, but we look forward to reaching more men and reaching a wider diversity in achieving our strategic goals. In doing this, we will reach generously with our time, talents and financial resources in order to accomplish these goals. Our ministry is strong as evidenced by our weekly book studies, weekly Bible study, Bold Gatherings, Lifelines offered through Project Twelve and the resumption of our One Year to Live retreats. But just standing on the status quo is not where God is leading us. We will prayerfully follow his lead and take the next steps to grow our ministry so that our vision can be realized.

I personally look forward to working together with you as a full partner in our ministry as it moves forward and takes the next steps. We will always ask for your prayers, your participation and your financial support in reaching more men, their families and congregations in 2021 and beyond.

Your Brother in Christ,

Hal Derrick

President, Lutheran Men in Mission

hal.derrick@lutheranmeninmission.org

Lutheran Men in Mission Online You can find us online at our website lutheranmeninmission.org, or on:



and the **Reaching Men blog** at reachingmen.blogspot.com

Be A 'Bedrock' Supporter of LMM

The Bedrock Society recognizes those donors who are monthly supporters of LMM. Just like the wise man who built his house upon the rock, their monthly gift helps ensure that our mission to build bold, daring followers of Jesus Christ, has a strong foundation — one that nurtures and sustains our daily ministry and vision for the future.

Currently we have 32 members of the Bedrock Society who give a total of almost \$3,000 per month to support LMM and its ministry.

Why should you join the Bedrock Society?

- To show your solid support for LMM as we find new and culturally relevant ways of reaching men for Christ.
- To provide predictable revenue—your monthly giving provides operating funds to help us minimize the peaks and valleys of one-time donations, so we can focus on the mission and vision.

To become a member, set up a recurring monthly gift of at least \$20 using either a credit card or ACH transfer. Your monthly gift of \$100, \$50, or \$25 impacts every man who is touched by the ministry of Lutheran Men in Mission. Please join us today by committing to give monthly. Your continuing gifts will bring the life-changing message of Jesus Christ to men in need.

John Sundquist

Executive Director, Lutheran Men In Mission

JOIN THE BEDROCK SOCIETY

Join online with a credit card through Network for Good:
<https://bit.ly/LMMbedrock>

Or join online with ACH or credit card through Vanco:
<https://bit.ly/LMMvanco>



UPCOMING LMM EVENTS & programs

2021 One Year To Live Retreats

September 3–5

Delray Beach, Florida

September 10–12

Poynette, Wisconsin

September 10–12

Pinewood, South Carolina

October 8–10

Kings Mountain State Park, South Carolina

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

One Year To Live Retreats Return ... For Real

We are excited to announce that as we look to the fall we currently have four One Year To Live retreats scheduled. With all of these OYTL retreats we will be closely following special safety precautions to address the current Covid climate. The Covid protocols are there to help ensure that the participants and staff can have a meaningful, life-changing experience while remaining as safe as can be given the world we live in.

Please check <https://www.lutheranmeninmission.org/events/one-year-to-live/> for updates regarding registration information, contacts and additional upcoming OYTL Retreats! If you have any questions, feel free to contact staff. Their information can also be found on the One Year To Live webpage.

We hope you will be able to join us for one of these life-changing weekends — and reach out to friends, family members and just fellow followers of Jesus to join you.

foundations

Lutheran Men in Mission

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

8765 West Higgins Road

Chicago, IL 60631

lutheranmeninmission.org

projecttwelve.net



BOLD GATHERING

SAVE THE DATE FOR FALL 2021 LMM BOLD GATHERING!

October 16, 2021

11 a.m.-2 p.m. Central

The BOLD GATHERING is a day for men to come together to learn, to network, and be equipped to BOLDY live out their faith!

Go to www.boldgathering.com for speaker, topics and registration information.