



Lutheran Men in Mission  
*Building Men for Christ*

Spring 2025

# LMM foundations

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

## What's Your (Father's Day) Story?

by Vic Williams

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**We want to be the best fathers we can, and the most loyal or achieving sons. ... And when we fall short (every day), when darkness shades our ambitions, we try to make amends without trying to make excuses.**

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Come to think of it, every day is Father's Day, isn't it? Sure, we could say the same for Mother's Day, but I'm trying to stay focused for a change. Coming up fast is June 15, the third Sunday of the month, the last week of spring, and the 24-hour period when the "old man" gets his place in the sun—or on the patio, behind the barbecue, on the golf course, in the baseball stands, whatever.

It's dad's day, either way ... whether you're a dad, a granddad, son, grandson, or all of the above. We're all at least one of them, with all the blessings, challenges, surprises, successes, failures, joys, disappointments, and epiphanies that come with the God-given title. Just as we can't separate ourselves from God, we can't separate our identities from wherever we are on the father/son continuum. And here I am, on Good Friday of all days, ruminating

on the power of fatherhood, and how faith adds a mysterious and beautiful resonance to the word.

In Biblical terms, "father" is the word ascribed to God, Yahweh, the great I Am, who is and shall always be nameless, all-powerful and all-loving, quick to anger in the Old Testament, but just as quick to forgive, too. He tests, He cajoles, He questions, He challenges, He punishes, He lifts up, He knocks down, He worries, and, in the end and the beginning, in the person of His son, he demands and offers nothing but unconditional love. Sounds a lot like the dads we know and are, doesn't it? No wonder the book molds him into a character we can grasp and understand.

We use the word "father" in prayer almost by rote, ascribing the male gender per ancient paternalistic tradition—God's word passed down orally by men through the centuries, then written down by male scribes and monks—though God is most certainly beyond that or any other human limitation or label. He is All.

We dads and sons sometimes try to be All, don't we? We want to be the best fathers we can, and the most loyal or achieving sons. We want to shine bright like a friendly and wise sun in each other's eyes. And when we fall short (every day), when darkness shades our ambitions, we try to make amends without trying to make excuses. Dads might invoke "executive privilege" on occasion while sons push away with



**Fathers' Day**, continued on page 3



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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# This Is the Time to Invite Men to Church!

*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.—Acts 4:13*

**H**ave you ever heard something that shocks you so profoundly that you can't stop dwelling on it? I have to confess that it has happened to me several times throughout my life. Most recently it was hearing three statistics and what they mean for the church today and for tomorrow. What statistics could have that kind an impact, you may wonder? What could you have possibly heard that you are unable to stop thinking about it? I must warn you when I tell you they may stick in your head as well.

### The three statistics are that in America:

- Only 26% of men will attend church this year for any reason
- 90 million men are not involved in any discipleship.  
(That is just about 80% of the male population.)
- 65% of men self-identify as being lonely (2 out of 3 are lonely)

This realization has driven me and the LMM board to try to address them over the next three years. The result is seen in the 2025–2027 strategic plan simply called; *LMM iS...* This ambitious plan is focused on four simple cornerstones that will position LMM to meet this challenge which is not only impacting men but congregations across the country.

### The four cornerstones are:

- **Lead:** by December 2027, LMM will be leaders in the future of men's ministry. Equipping men for tomorrow and the challenges it brings
- **Model:** by December 2027, LMM will model tomorrow's leaders today. We will model disciples by launching a tested and vetted Discipleship Specialist Training, model effective and proven methods for studies and discussions as well as how to effectively partner with men regardless of faith tradition or background
- **Multiply:** by December 2027, LMM will expand its impact—Actively working with existing and new partners, expanding our current retreats and offering, and multi-platform media impact
- **Sustain:** by December 2027, stability for today and investment for tomorrow—Increase funding sources and participation to ensure financial sustainability

In doing so, LMM will be laying the foundation needed to address the exodus of men from the church and turn the tide so that men will find friendship and more importantly the solace and healing that comes only by becoming a bold, daring follower of Jesus Christ. For in Christ men find not only salvation but meaning and purpose for their lives. Through brotherhood and service comes belonging and calling, resulting in transformation—which shines from the inside out.

I hope you will join me in meeting these challenges. Your prayers and support enable LMM to disciple more men, inviting them not only to follow Jesus Christ but to join other believers in congregations across the country. Thanks to you men are, even now, being saved from the isolation and despair of loneliness as they are welcomed as Children of God and into the family of faith.

In the power of the spirit, God bless,

**John Sundquist**  
Executive Director, Lutheran Men in Mission  
[john@lutheranmeninmission.org](mailto:john@lutheranmeninmission.org)

**LMM will be laying the foundation needed to address the exodus of men from the church and turn the tide.**

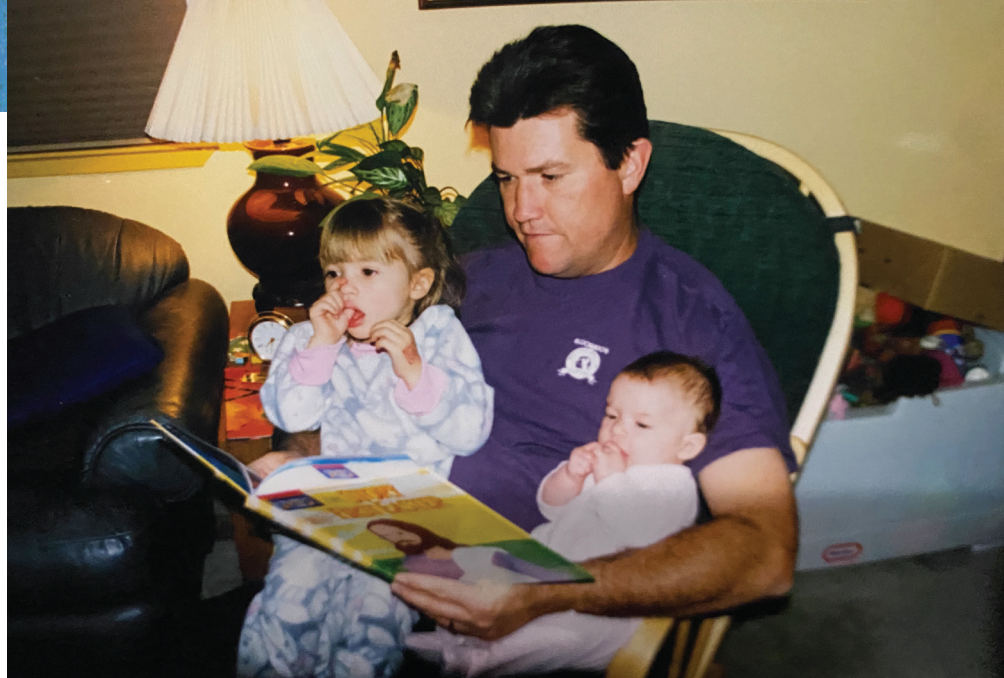


"my own man" brio, but remembering that God is indeed All, the source of our loving earthly bond and our heavenly salvation through grace we eventually back off from those fool's errands.

And we keep moving forward.

Like many stations in life, fatherhood in all its forms—biological, legal, mentor-and-acolyte relational—constantly forces us (perhaps "allows" or "spurs" are better terms) to stop and take stock of our emotions. I have a son and three daughters, and each of them has managed to coax everything from fear to pride to anger to weeping joy out of me, sometimes in the span of 24 hours. I remember that weird mix of prideful terror upon the birth of my son, the oldest; I wondered if I was up to the responsibility while relishing the opportunity. As our daughters came along, the twinge of terror morphed into a "well, here we go again, what can I do to be more 'present' for this kid and her mom?" deal.

That said, the twin aches of fear and doubt follow us through the years. When my son, freshly armed with a college degree, enlisted in the Army as a buck private during the depths of Afghanistan military "exercise" rather than taking the officer's path immediately available to him, I feared I may (would?) never see him again, or if I'd had enough of an "impression" on his worldview to help keep him somehow safe (turns out his workmanlike approach to his duty, coupled with a brand of almost cocky confidence he maintains to this day, made much more of an impression on me). When each of my daughters dated this or that person, I sometimes let my Freudian slip show—I was being kicked out of my job as protector



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**I remember that weird mix of prideful terror upon the birth of my son, the oldest; I wondered if I was up to the responsibility while relishing the opportunity.**

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while worrying, without any basis, whether she could take care of herself. Unfounded? Yes. Common among us paternal types, whether such stirrings arise vis-à-vis an actual child or a longtime friend? Of course.

So here I am, at age 65, stumbling along the fatherhood road with no off-ramps except the dead end itself, which we believers acknowledge isn't the end at all. I keep showing up in my kids' lives, eliciting the occasional eyeroll that was commonplace during their adolescence but, far more often, simply being there for them in simple conversation or with wordless support. And I'm even finding myself thrown into new arenas of parent-like interaction and trust born of discipleship. Just this spring, for instance, a new member of my home church—a middle-aged long-distance runner whom I invited to our monthly men's Bible breakfast last fall—asked (me?) to sponsor his baptism

(which, I suppose with a smile, makes me a godfather of sorts). There's that grace thing again. I'm a willing and grateful carrier on God's behalf and a beneficiary, as well—as we all are, even if we won't admit it.

God is with us. With him. With our kids, and their kids. Always.

OK, enough rambling. Let me put my dad hat in hand with a humble request: I'd love to hear from you about a time in your life, as a father or son or mentor, when your faith came into play by influencing a decision you made, a challenge you overcame or an epiphany you had. And vice-versa, how fatherhood—in whatever form—played a part in your faith journey. I'm not looking for deep and involved stories, just a remembrance that both crystallized Our Father's love for you in the moment and perhaps led you someplace unexpected.

I do have an agenda behind this ask: I'm giving the Father's Day sermon on June 15, and I'm hoping to juice it up with a story or two from y'all, my LMM brothers in Christ. You can email me at [vic.williams@lutheranmeninmission.org](mailto:vic.williams@lutheranmeninmission.org).

In the meantime, Happy Father's Day, every day. Amen.



# LMM Gets 'Bold' in South Carolina

**A**s the makings of a bold springtime thunderstorm developed outside the walls of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Columbia, S.C., five men and one woman told their stories of faith in action to an indoor gathering of around 50 Christian believers. Some four hours later they'd learned how to lean on Jesus to cope with the death of a loved one by suicide; how deep caring for kids brought to life two different but equally powerful youth camps; why a new foundation is making a deep difference for families in a far-flung land; and even how to take communion while doing a dance of joy.

Another Lutheran Men in Mission **Bold Gathering** was in the books.

Emceeding the May 3 event was longtime LMM Ministry Consultant Kevin Burke, who was ordained in Word and Service the very next day in the sanctuary at Redeemer where his wife, Amanda, serves as Associate Pastor. Kevin brought together in impressive and inspiring group of speakers hailing from South Carolina and beyond.

## BOLD GATHERING

May 3, 2025

Redeemer Lutheran Church, Columbia, SC

to underprivileged people in that war-torn African nation. She also invited anyone moved by the spirit to join her and fellow Bold Gathering speaker Bill Newmeyer on their next mission excursion to Ethiopia in July.



Newmeyer, who's also a Redeemer member, told of his work for **Camp HUGG**, a South Carolina-based youth camp where he and a dedicate crew of counselors minister to special needs kids in fun, loving, and music-filled ways every summer.

In that same vein, former LMM board member, author, and businessman Larry Moeller later anchored the Bold Gathering lineup with a stirring tale of discussion, discovery, and diligence that led to the creation of a non-profit organization called **Come to the Water—Sending Kids to Camp**, whose stated purpose is to "connect nominated youth of east Tennessee and nurture their development, anchored in Christian

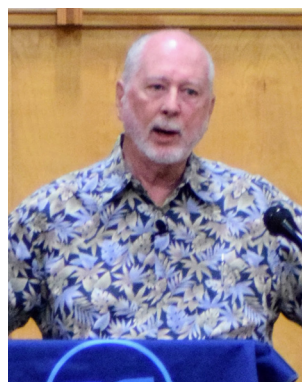
**How can men's groups in our churches have a greater impact beyond just men's ministry—indeed, beyond the congregation?**

faith and tradition."

The idea emerged from a 2009 conversation in Chicago among the LMM board of directors: How can men's groups in our churches have a greater impact beyond just men's ministry—indeed, beyond the congregation? "How about guys sponsoring local fundraisers to help their favorite church camp get through this recession? Most camps

are near water. Water means baptism. Baptism means new life. Something like, Come to the Water!" Men in Mission of St. Paul Lutheran in Maryville launched the first event in 2013. Funds were raised to benefit Lutheridge in Asheville, NC, in 2014 and 2015. In 2017, seven kids were sent to camp, with 14 more in 2018.

Fast forward to 2024 when 69 youth experienced new life at a week of summer camp. The 2025 goal is 100 campers; all are nominated by counselors at middle schools across East Tennessee.



Amanda Burke introduced the attendees to **(W)hole In The Roof**, a charitable organization through which she and Kevin partner with Fares Medium Clinic in Addis

Ababa, Ethiopia, to bring medical care, school supplies, and more



## Getting ‘Bold’ in South Carolina, *continued*

Another speaker, Pastor Brad Bellah of Shepherd of the Sea, near Myrtle Beach, relayed how he has taken his joy “in equipping the saints for the work of ministry” and carried it into every corner of his faith practice, including how he presides over worship. Letting fly with what he calls “Holy imagination,” not only did he write clever and moving “lyrics” for the Words of Institution, he sings them to the tune of Leonard Cohen’s “Hallelujah,” which got a joyous response from the Bold Gatherers—and got them in the mood for a blessed eucharist administered among dance moves and verses of “Jesus Loves Me” and “Amazing Grace.” Quite a way to head into the lunch break.



gut” to ask loved ones and friends in crisis if they’re having suicidal thoughts. “I’d rather you embarrass yourself than getting a phone call from a wife saying, ‘We need another pallbearer.’ Come on. We’ve got this.” That led to his key phrase: “A shared joy is a double joy; a shared sorrow is half a sorrow.”

But perhaps the most emotionally charged moments came when Chief Parr of the Pee Dee tribe took the stage to sing praises to South

**Ask loved ones and friends in crisis if they’re having suicidal thoughts. “I’d rather you embarrass yourself than getting a phone call from a wife saying, ‘We need another pallbearer.’”**

Carolina Lutheran Men in Mission for their generosity and unwavering spirit. The group—which had a large Bold Gathering contingent on hand—donated money, time, talent, and equipment to help his people take a 160 acres of undeveloped



The morning session began with New Jersey native Dennis Gillan, who lost two brothers to suicide 11 years apart, sending him into a spiral

of depression and addiction. In a presentation he called “It’s a Tough Subject,” Gillan charismatically told an incredible story: Of diving boldly into his faith to get sober, get therapy, and come out the other side fired up to help others deal with mental illness through his **Half A Sorrow foundation**. He gave point-by-point tips on how to stay mentally healthy by getting enough sleep, seeking support from mental health professionals and each other, and “going with your



**“These men are proof that Jesus walks among us today,” the Chief declared through tears. “He is alive.”**

land and turn it into a community center, moving trees, rocks, and tons of earth along the way. “These men are proof that Jesus walks among us today,” the Chief declared through tears. “He is alive.”

Keep tuned to [www.boldgathering.com](http://www.boldgathering.com) as each speaker’s presentation goes live on LMM’s [YouTube](#) channel over the next several weeks.



# Ordination Congratulations to Kevin Burke!

**O**n Sunday, May 4, at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Columbia, South Carolina, Lutheran Men In Mission Ministry Consultant Kevin Burke was ordained as a deacon in word and service in the ELCA. Family, friends, and the entire LMM Board were on hand for the blessed event. Executive Director John Sundquist presented Kevin for ordination, while Vice President Jason Adams (ELCA pastor from Good Samaritan Lutheran at the Lakes in Las Vegas) offered a stirring message and Director of Development Rich White read Micah 6:6-8. Officiant was Bishop Virginia S. Aebischer; Assistant Minister was Rev. Gary Loadholt.

Kevin, his wife Amanda—who is Assistant Minister at Redeemer Lutheran—and their children will continue to work and worship in nearby Irmo, SC.

**Please join us in hearty congratulations to Kevin and the Burke family for this milestone. Thanks be to God!**



**Pastors from across the Carolinas were on hand to welcome Kevin Burke into ordination as a deacon in word and service.**



**Left to right: Kyle Pedersen, Kevin Burke, Doug Haugen**



**Jason Adams preached.**



**Above: John Sundquist and Kevin Burke. Left: Kevin takes the vows of ordination.**



## Five Truly Inspiring Days

If you want to pump up your men's ministry muscles, plan a few days in South Carolina.

I'd visited the state a few times over the years, mostly to play and report on the wealth of great golf there, or for meetings. Hilton Head is one of my favorite places to get in some fun and sun, Lowlands style. But this time I headed inland to the capital city of Columbia, and the reason for my visit was Jesus—the center and soul of LMM, both nationally and regionally, whose men serve Our Savior with deep commitment, boundless faith, and great gratitude.

For all or a part of five days April 30-May 4, nearly 20 members of our full Board, Executive Committee, and Fund Development Team flew or drove in from California, Florida, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia for meetings at Redeemer Lutheran Church (where LMM Ministry Consultant Kevin Burke and his wife, Amanda, and their families worship) that ran the gamut of plans, ideas, reports, rejoicing, and celebration, all held together with healthy helpings of prayer, conversation, food, drink, and, most importantly of all, ministering to one another.

### Some highlights:

- The FDT team rejoiced in a very strong 2024 fundraising result, which took us as close to meeting budget as we've gotten in years. We also sent out thank you notes to givers like you, who are truly the heart and soul of LMM's ministry. I simply can't thank you enough for your continued loyal stewardship and, on behalf of the entire board, I thank you for your trust in our leadership and belief in our mission.
- The Executive Committee spent a day dreaming big in terms of increasing our reach to men across the nation of all ages and faith cultures, while coming up with concrete plans to put every resource we have into good action through our various "brands"—Project XII, Bold Gathering, One Year To Live, etc.—both short and long term.
- The full board gathered to assess how far we've come over the past three years on several fronts—outreach, communication, ministry, finances—as our first-ever three-year strategic plan wrapped up; took a deep and hard look at the elements of our next three-year plan, "LMM iS," which Executive Director John Sundquist describes elsewhere in this newsletter; reviewed our soon-to-be-revealed website overhaul, digging into navigation details to make it as user-friendly as possible; explored the ways we can expand our Discipleship program to be more accessible and life-changing than ever (stay tuned!); and went through the litany of big plans in place to take OYTL to new areas of the nation and keep making Bold Gathering the best it can be.

Speaking of Bold Gathering, we all attended what I think might be the best one to date, right there at Our Savior, which you will also read about in this issue.

Finally, the weekend concluded with a very special event indeed: Kevin's ordination in Word and Service, with the South Carolina synod bishop presiding and several LMM Board members taking part. It was truly an inspiring and uplifting way to finish up an incredible week among the Carolina pines, and in God's care. I'm thrilled and humbled to tell you the story right here—the good news of LMM's light in the world.

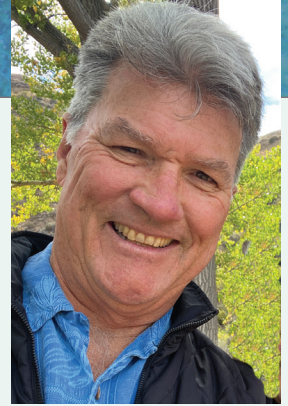
Speaking of stories, the invitation remains open and ongoing for you, dear reader and brother in Christ, to bring forth your own good news, how Christ has changed your life. Please reach out to me at [vic.williams@lutheranmeninmission.org](mailto:vic.williams@lutheranmeninmission.org) with your own story, and we'll run it in a future issue, with designs on it becoming a regular feature.

Blessings,

**Vic Williams**

Board President, Lutheran Men in Mission

[vic.williams@lutheranmeninmission.org](mailto:vic.williams@lutheranmeninmission.org)



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**I simply can't thank you enough for your continued loyal stewardship and, on behalf of the entire board, I thank you for your trust in our leadership and belief in our mission.**

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# Stories of faith

## My “One Year to Live” Retreat Story

**T**his is my story of the Lutheran Men In Mission (LMM) ‘One Year to Live Retreat’ and its impact on my life. I know it had an impact that put changes in motion for my faith life and the man that I am today, but it may be hard to explain to others.

Let me reflect on how I got to the retreat. In 2006 I was participating in some monthly building fix it projects at the church, and Gus Brockman started a short bible study at the beginning using the LMM study bible. This was my first bible study since my youth, and it started me in learning how to participate in faith fellowship with men. In January 2007 Gus Brockmann invited men to attend a new retreat being created by Lutheran Men in Mission called One Year to Live (*Gus was on the LMM Board of Directors at that time.*) I had never attended any type of retreat or men ministry events outside of fellowship activity at church. My faith was

**I had never attended any type of retreat or men ministry events outside of fellowship activity at church.**

based on my youth studies, shared faith with family and friends, and attend-

ing worship services at church.

If you asked me how my faith life was when I attended the retreat back in 2007, I would have said that I thought it was good. I was involved with the men ministry group at First Lutheran, and was starting my 2nd year on the congre-

gation council. So I was active in the church but not really in sharing my faith or feeling a spiritual relationship with God. The retreat would be a 44-hour commitment with travel time, and I could have easily come up with several excuses to not attend, especially when Gus could not give us many specific details about what to expect. Only that it would be different than other men’s gatherings we had heard about. This did not get me excited, but that unexpected gave it a sense of adventure too. I committed with two other men from First Lutheran to experience this retreat in March of 2007.

During the retreat we were able to share stories of the good, bad, and ugly of our lives if we wanted to. It made me realize some of my mistakes put shame in my life, and actually held me back from being a strong spiritual man. I was able to understand this guilt kept me from allowing myself to be a good spiritual leader with others. The retreat experience helped me truly realize that I was forgiven for all mistakes and sins that kept occasionally creeping back into my mind and made me deal with the guilt again. I felt the Holy Spirit truly help me realize that God’s love through Jesus cleansed my soul of these sins

**The retreat experience helped me truly realize that I was forgiven for all mistakes and sins that kept occasionally creeping back into my mind.**



**I never really felt the forgiveness and ability to move beyond some of these in my mind until the retreat. It was like a burden had been lifted from my life.**

for salvation, and that God wanted me to be spiritually strong. I knew of God’s grace and forgiveness for these mistakes in my life before the retreat, but I never really felt the forgiveness and ability to move beyond some of these in my mind until the retreat. It was like a burden had been lifted from my life.

I left the retreat with a focus to be a spiritual leader and stronger husband, father, son, brother, grandfather, friend, and a disciple for the Lord. I had a mission to be a better man of God, and since that retreat I have worked to keep that commitment with myself. I was able to continue affirmation and renewal through this retreat when I was



## Now I look at these opportunities as part of my discipleship for the Lord and I ask the Holy Spirit to use me for the glory of the Lord.

called to help staff an OYTL retreat 18 months later. As a member of the staff I called on the Holy Spirit to help me lead men through their stories and their faith relationship with God. Being a staff leader for several OYTL retreats has been an opportunity for me to fulfill my mission to be a disciple for Christ. Before the retreat I looked at participating at church or ministry as service to the church that made me feel good. Now I look at these opportunities as part of my discipleship for the Lord and I ask the Holy Spirit to use me for the glory of the Lord.

I'm thankful that I did not use an excuse and miss the call to attend that retreat in 2007. I wish the retreat experience happened earlier in my life so I would have been stronger spiritually as the man of our family and the impact it could have had on my children's faith. I know the Holy Spirit is with me as a man of faith, giving me strength to live my faith life with family, ministry, and those whom God puts into my life today.

**Herb Hergott, LMM Ambassador**

**I wish the retreat experience happened earlier in my life.**

## Have a faith story to tell?

Of course you do! Stories are how we present ourselves to the world, to friends, even to strangers. In each issue of Foundations, we'd like to offer stories from Lutheran Men In Mission brothers from around the country—how God is working in your life, what the Holy Spirit is leading you to do in service to men's ministry, and how you hope to live into your faith.

To tell your story, contact Vic Williams at [vic.williams@lutheranmeninmission.org](mailto:vic.williams@lutheranmeninmission.org)

UPCOMING  
LMM

# ONE YEAR TO LIVE retreats 2025



**September 12-14, 2025**  
**Black Lake Bible Camp**  
**Olympia, WA**  
[Registration Information](#)  
[Online Registration](#)

**September 12-14, 2025**  
**Black Lake Bible Camp**  
**Olympia, WA**  
[Registration Information](#)  
[Online Registration](#)

**September 19-21, 2025**  
**Sugar Creek Bible Camp**  
**Ferryville, WI**  
[Registration Information](#)  
[Online Registration](#)

**September 26-28, 2024**  
**Tracy's Camp**  
**Pinewood, SC**  
[Online Registration](#)  
[Registration Information](#)

**November 7-9, 2025**  
**Camp EWALU**  
**Strawberry Point, IA**  
[Registration Information](#)  
[Online Registration](#)

## Coming Soon!

**September 12-14, 2025**  
**Camp Carol Joy Holling**  
**Ashland, NE**

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

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and the **Reaching Men** blog  
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# Sustain our Mission



BOLD GATHERING



PROJECT TWELVE



**As you count  
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more men will have  
the opportunity to  
become bold, daring  
disciples of Jesus Christ.**

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