

Autumn 2022

LIGHT YEARS



SEEING (MORE) STARS AND PAUSING

Anna Scheck, Junior, RC Earth and Environmental Sciences

As a former camp counselor, it is an understatement to say that I was psyched for our retreat in early September to Living Water Ministries in New Era, MI. A chance to get outside, leave Ann Arbor, worship, and have a campfire? Count me in. On Friday, four students and Pastor Elizabeth piled into a U of M minivan and were on our way. Traffic necessitated a dinner at Culvers, finally getting us to camp well after sunset. The cabin we stayed in was newly renovated, a real respite for us weary travelers. A little later that night, Pastor Ben and two Wayne State students from All.together Community arrived. It was such a wonderful time staying up late talking with them and watching (and not really being all that helpful) as Pastor Ben prepped the sourdough bread that we baked the next day.

There's something special about waking up and sharing breakfast with friends (we had lemon pancakes that were out of this world). After breakfast, we all took time to relax and spend however we felt.

(continued on p. 3)



"...For all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

- Galatians 3:28b

LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

Pastor Elizabeth Friedman



I was walking around campus posting flyers at the beginning of fall term when, right above where I was sticking my masking tape, I noticed something on the ubiquitous, shiny poster for Cru: A sticker that said, “Great if you’re straight”.

I thought - wow. Someone was out here doing the Lord’s work before me.

And then I thought: But is it? Are these fundamentalist, complementarian parachurch organizations actually great if you’re straight? My pastoral experience would say no, given the number of folks I know who have been wounded by them.

At church, we’ve been reading Kristin Kobes Du Mez’s book, “Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation,” and discussing it on Sunday nights following church and dinner. It’s been an eye-

opening history of fundamentalist, specifically white, evangelicalism over the past century or so, and how a certain branch of evangelicalism coalesced around the idea that men are “warriors with a battle to fight and a beauty to save.” At the same time, I’ve been listening to a podcast called, “The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill,” which follows the story of a Seattle megachurch that crumpled overnight when its leader was ousted for abuses of power. It’s a story that has repeated itself so many times - a charismatic but abusive leader forms a church in his own image, and leaves the congregation and its people in ruins.

Fundamentalism shuts down deeper conversations, relying on simplistic, binary views of scripture and refusing to engage with the kinds of questions that can help a person to wrestle with their faith. And when a person is wrestling, they are often told they must choose between binaries - between science and faith, or their identity and their faith, or even between their family and their faith.

Life is complex. So is faith. We want so desperately for things to be simple, though, that we like to draw bright lines where nuance is needed. A mature faith recognizes that the ancient Jewish practice of midrash, of wrestling with our holy texts, allows us greater opportunities to find the myriad ways God is speaking to us through those texts today, which may be different from yesterday or tomorrow.

One of the reasons campus ministry is so important is because it gives young adults an opportunity to grow in and claim a mature faith at a particularly formative time in their lives. It’s an opportunity to grow in a faith that can hold paradoxes in tension and see the nuances of difficult situations, a faith that can recognize the presence of God in the midst of tragedy, a faith that trusts in a God who loves us and provides a framework for navigating our most trying moments.

At Lord of Light and LCM, we strive to be the kind of place that’s great if you’re straight - or a woman, or in the LGBTQIA+ community, or a scientist, or a philosopher, or... a child of God.

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The opportunity to do whatever we wanted - no structure, no real plans - was quite intimidating at first. I headed down to crochet by the lake, later joining the others in a wonderful hammock forest. I felt, and others shared that, it is hard to take real moments of pause in our day to day lives. Pausing as we did on the retreat gave us an idea of how we might take the little bits of the peacefulness we found back to our demanding lives. We had a beautiful worship service in the evening, our sourdough serving as communion bread. It was small and lovely, with the soundtrack of nature, the birds, wind, and water, interplaying with our songs and scripture readings. In my humble opinion, camp would arguably not be camp without a campfire, so we ended our day with s'mores around the fire. We got very creative with the campfire songs we sang, resulting in some pretty fabulous renditions of Defying Gravity and Wagon Wheel.



Soon enough, though, it was time for bed, and in the morning it was time to head home. The weekend of the retreat was simultaneously incredibly slow-paced and so fast. It was a great way to start the semester, with a bit of connection with God through nature in a place so perfectly different from campus. There is something comforting about being around so few people, but so many stars. I guess the stars are always there, but you can't see them here, so it doesn't quite feel like it. For me, camp always makes God seem closer than God seems otherwise. However, I think God is more like the stars - there whether we see them or not.



LCM RAISES OVER \$4,000 FOR CAMP BY RUNNING... A LOT

Hunter Ganee, Senior, Mechanical Engineering

In late September, Pastor Elizabeth and I participated in the 2022 Michigan Road Ragnar in support of Living Water Ministries. The Ragnar is a giant relay race that is about 200 miles long and takes roughly 36 hours to complete. We had two teams of 12 and each ran 3 legs each totaling between 14-19 miles per person. Each team member had a goal of raising \$2000 through sponsorships and personal donations. Proceeds from the race will be going towards scholarships so that kids can attend camp at Living Water Ministries in summer 2023. This is a super important cause to me as I believe it's invaluable to provide a safe and fun environment for kids to learn, grow, and be cared for. I am so proud to have been able to be a part of the 2022 Ragnar in support of LWM, and I'm so grateful for everyone who gave to support this important cause.

The race was awesome, too! Who would've thought running 17 miles, including 7.5 at 3 am, and 6 the next morning in a total downpour, would be so much fun! The setting was perfect, too, as we were running from Muskegon to Traverse City just as the leaves had started to change. I would absolutely recommend signing up for the 2023 Ragnar, to anyone who may be considering. I know I'll be running and I hope to see you there!



JESUS & JOHN WAYNE

Jessie Williams, First-Year Law Student

Kristin Kobes Du Mez's book, "Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation," traces the development of the relationship between white evangelical masculinity and militarism – the idea of the “warrior Jesus,” and the inextricability of faith depicted as a battlefield and an obsession with protectionism. Du Mez describes that, within this culture, having an “other” to be seen as an opponent has been a constant – from military enemies during the world wars to attacks on marginalized people of other genders, religions, races, and sexual orientations in the so-called culture wars of today. As people of faith, we must work to define our faith in ways that show the Gospel to others in ways that are based on love, not fear or protectionism – and to demonstrate that Jesus’ love and affirmation extends to all, regardless of identity.

Jesus and John Wayne is a must-read for anyone, whether religious or not, to understand where we

are now in our political landscape. It is also impactful to see how what we may have experienced in past exclusionary religious experiences is rooted in decades-long ideals about gender roles and social norms. However, for us as an inclusive church community, a solid understanding of the background of militaristic Christian principles affirms that our Jesus is one who welcomes all, not relying on attacks on others who are different to do His work in the world. I’m grateful for this community at Lord of Light, and I’m grateful for the opportunity for us to learn together through the study of this book, and our commitment to be the light in the world – by showing an inclusive and continually loving form of Christianity that works to be reflective of Jesus’ Gospel message.

I’ve been leading a discussion group on this excellent book, and we had the opportunity to hear Dr. Du Mez speak about her work and these topics– a more intimate discussion on Wednesday, November 9th, at 4:30 PM at Campus Chapel in a public conversation with Pastor Elizabeth, and 7:30 PM at Rackham Auditorium. On Sunday the 13th, following service, we held our final discussion on the book and debriefed Dr. Du Mez’s talk.



ARCHITECTURE WORKSHOP #2

Hunter Gandee, Senior, Mechanical Engineering

On October 22, we held our second of three Architecture Workshops in preparation for our plans to build a new building. Many members of our community came together to share what was important about our building to them, and what would be valuable in a new building. We had lots of helpful conversations and got to see how many of our ideas actually fit together.

We did an exercise building models with blocks to help express our creativity and better communicate ideas to each other. We also received some potential ideas for options of what the building could possibly look like, and printed versions were displayed as large posters to spark discussion. The blocks and posters are still downstairs in Vida, so feel free to stop by and build your own model, or take a marker and write some thoughts and ideas up on the posters.

Our third workshop will happen this winter. This is a very exciting and important project and we truly want everyone's voice to be heard.





REFORMING THE CHURCH & RESTORING CREATION

Kitty Oppliger, Second-Year Master's Student in Public Health

Music has always been an important part of my life. Every year from elementary school through undergrad, I participated in choir and sang in my church choirs. COVID changed all that. Singing en masse was a high-risk activity, which meant this beautiful expression of faith and creativity was put on hold. This fall, I finally had the chance to sing in a group at the Reformation celebration with Elm Ensemble. Mert Spencer, Pastor Elizabeth and I traveled to Livonia for an all-day rehearsal and concert on Saturday, Oct 29. The experience was amazing, and I was thrilled to be surrounded by talented musicians and make beautiful music to celebrate our Lutheran faith and musical heritage. Additionally, this event took a free-will offering to benefit LoL/LCM. The following Sunday, a small group from Elm Ensemble joined us for church and dinner to treat the congregation to special music. (Watch the concert online here! <https://youtu.be/MMVk88bSX1Y>)

This semester I have also been pursuing another passion of mine. I am completing the Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith administered by Lutherans Restoring Creation. This program has allowed me to engage and communicate directly with a diverse group of scholars from around the globe to discuss the urgent need to address climate change. Hearing the stories of individuals from Nicaragua, Ghana and Hawaii about frontline experiences with climate disaster inspires me to take more effective action towards global solutions. My tuition for this certificate was generously provided by both a scholarship from LRC and University of Michigan's Association of Religious Counselors.



MORNING PRAYER: COMMUNION, CALM, CONTENTMENT

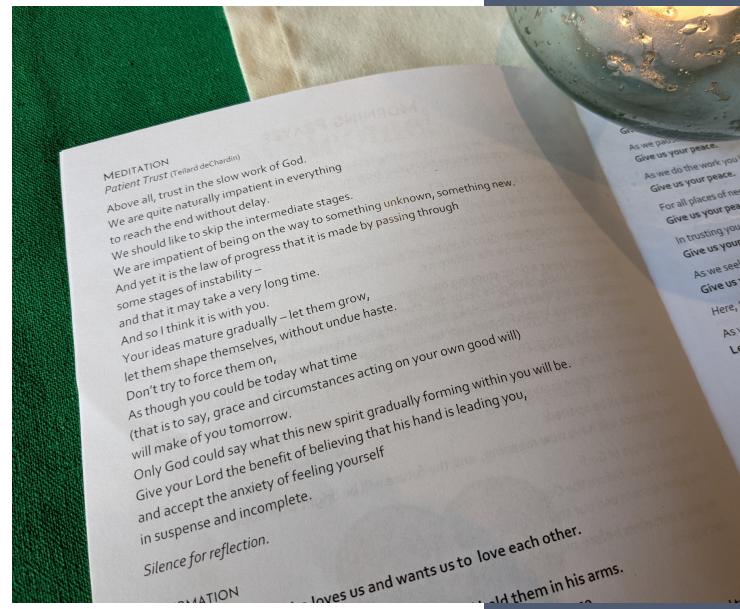
Anna Scheck, Junior, RC Earth & Environmental Sciences

My first memory of a morning prayer service is from a trip to Trinity Lutheran Seminary when I was probably around 13 (my dad's a pastor - can you tell?). I have often thought back on that morning prayer with fondness. Music and word were shared between a handful of people, and I regarded this ritual as something that was only practical in a seminary or monastery. You know, the places of the world that seem almost impractically focused on God/religion/the spiritual in a way that us "normal" folks can't manage. So when I heard that we were going to have morning prayer on Tuesdays I was simultaneously excited to experience the centering service that I remembered and doubtful that anyone would show up for it.

In the way that life so often goes, the first week we definitely had the largest turnout so far. It was delightful to have a

variety of people - many of whom may not be able to attend our later evening programs like Faith & or our regular Sunday service. Attending a regular morning service helped me realize what I had enjoyed about it so many years ago. Beginning my day - before I've even eaten breakfast - with prayer and scripture and Communion - shifts the focus of my whole day. Most mornings the only things on my mind are brushing my teeth, getting dressed, and grabbing breakfast before my 9 a.m. class. How much longer can I snooze my alarm and still make it on time? What's on my to-do list today? This is functional, but not peaceful or energizing. Morning prayer gives me a moment to focus and remember that God is with us in the everyday moments. The purpose I find throughout the day from this 15 minutes of meditation is much more motivating than my average motivation: making it to class on time.

As a student, I spend an incredible amount of mental energy thinking about how I can optimize my academic productivity (with the end goal being evolving to SuperAnna: a version of me who aces every exam and is never tired and actually does her readings for every class). Seeing myself as a productivity-based learning machine feels counterintuitive to the unconditional love that God gives to us, so starting my day off with a good dose of prayer and such helps me navigate my day with a more gracious view of myself. Morning prayer service is something that I don't always feel like getting out of bed for, but I'm always thankful that I have when I do.



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