

ABLAZE



**CHENANIAH
SINGERS**

COMING FULL CIRCLE

**FREEDOM
WORKS**

A MOTHER'S PRAYER FULFILLED

**CATHARINE
ELLINGSEN**

ACU BOARD CHAIR

the PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

ADDRESSING THE CRISIS OF UNBELIEF

FALL 2022



As much as we'd like to pretend otherwise, our nation is in crisis.

This crisis is rooted in our rapid departure from the foundational, biblical principles that have caused us to thrive for nearly two-and-a-half centuries.

Few nations in history have so deliberately attempted to order their societies around the truths of Scripture. We are rooted in covenantal promises to God, bathed in prayer, and governed through documents reflecting a biblical worldview. As a result, the United States -- despite its flaws, mistakes and failures -- has become the most prosperous, the most just, the most generous, and the most powerful nation in history.

Today the influence of God and His Word in our nation has diminished so quickly and so thoroughly that we are seeing rapid and almost bewildering cultural changes. What seemed outlandish and ridiculous even a decade ago is now celebrated. Historic, biblically-grounded perspectives on hot button cultural issues are canceled or outlawed.

As followers of God and believers in the truths contained in Scripture, we are called to be salt and light. We are called to engage a lost world with the hope of the Gospel.

At Arizona Christian University, we are working every day to prepare young men and women of excellence and influence who can engage the world with love and truth -- and have been doing so for more than six decades.

In this issue of Ablaze, we celebrate our Bible College foundations with a look back at the ministry of the Chenaniah Singers, who I remember watching perform at my church in the 1990s, and the current growth of our Chorale program at ACU.

Also in this issue we consider the implications for the church of the low levels of biblical worldview among Christian pastors -- those who are supposed to be equipping the church with wisdom from the Scripture -- based on new research from Dr. George Barna and the Cultural Research Center at ACU.

We look at the lives and callings of a student-athlete and a Freedom Works scholar who were drawn to ACU and whose passion for Christ has been nourished by their time here.

We also recognize and celebrate the professional achievements and the sacrificial commitment made to ACU by our Board of Trustees Chair Catharine Ellingsen, and former Trustee Chair Larry Anderson is recognized for his work on ACU's behalf through a naming opportunity in our Tower Building.

Arizona Christian University is now a community of thousands of followers of Jesus, working together to engage and transform culture with biblical truth.

Our momentum is palpable, our growth in Kingdom influence is exploding, and our future is exciting! Continuing to grow ACU's influence, along with the number of graduates of this unique, biblical, conservative university, are some of the most effective ways we can address the crisis of unbelief in our nation.

Thank you for being part of what God is doing at ACU! To Him be the glory.

Yours in His service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Len Munsil". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Len Munsil, B.S., J.D.

*President
Arizona Christian University*

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ABLAZE

An Arizona Christian University publication

OUR MAGAZINE

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MISSION

Arizona Christian University provides a biblically integrated, liberal arts education equipping graduates to serve the Lord Jesus Christ in all aspects of life, as leaders of influence and excellence.

ON THE COVER

Alyssa Alvarez drives to the basket for ACU women's basketball.

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Over THE YEARS

During the late '70s, '80s, and early '90s, Arizona Christian University (then Southwestern College) was home to one of the best-known choral programs in the southwest. Known as the Chenaniah Singers, these talented and committed student vocalists traveled the country and recorded albums, sharing the Gospel and serving as ambassadors for the college.

An elite group of eight voices, the Chen singers was comprised of four male and four female students. Applicants endured a rigorous application process and were selected to perform for one year. Members of the group received a financial scholarship and were given the chance to tour the country during summer and winter breaks, representing the school and showcasing their talents. And they stayed busy throughout the academic year as well, performing most weekends for local Phoenix-area congregations.

"I was excited to be chosen for the Chenaniah Singers," recalled David Buri, a student leader in the 1980s. "As I look back on it fondly, I was amazed at the excellence that was required to be part of it."

The group's name comes from I Chronicles, where King David moved the ark of the covenant from the house of Obed-edom to Jerusalem. During the procession, "Chenaniah, the head Levite was in charge of the singing; that was his responsibility because he was skillful at it." I Chronicles 15:22.

But the Chenaniah Singers were not just about music and performance. Over the years, the group provided an environment where its traveling members experienced different aspects of the local church and learned lessons about relationship and service.

For Allen Mann, a member of the Chen singers in the early 1990s, his time travelling with the group and meeting new people led to his call to the mission field. He remembered long drives, lizards in the shower at a particular host home, and seeing upper-class members mentor the newer ones through times of praise and devotion.

Likewise, Jim O'Brien, who was part of the Chen Singers in the mid 1980s, highlighted the lifelong friendships he made through the shared experience of "going through the trenches" with his group members.

"Staying in people's homes and visiting so many different churches helped me learn to appreciate the differences in people and cultures," he noted.

Eric Yodis, who sang with the Chen Singers for 3 seasons reflected, "I am grateful for every single member of the Chenaniah Singers from whom I learned so much through the years."

Eric was known as a prankster during his Chenaniah touring days. He shares openly about his adventures, some of which taught him lessons of grace, and all of which shaped his life for Kingdom service.

One of those lessons stood out to Eric. "After I graduated, I served as a youth pastor for a church in San Jose," he recalled. "We ran a day camp for 8 weeks each summer. It grew so much I had to recruit staff from Southwestern and the local community."

"There was one man I recruited and hoped would join us, but he didn't submit an application," Eric continued. When asked why he didn't apply, the young man looked down and shuffled his feet. He said, "I didn't think you'd want me." "Why would you think that?" Eric questioned. The young man responded, "I didn't think you'd want me because I'm a screw-up." Eric's heart broke for that young man. He quickly responded, "of all of the people in this room, I am the screw-up." He continued, "God uses screw-ups like you and me to do his purposes." Eric hired and mentored the young man, who went



on to become one of the camp's best counselors ever.

Eric learned through his experiences with the Chen Singers that God uses "screw-ups" for His purposes when they give their life to Him. Eric and his wife Beth have been in full-time Christian service for the last 27 years, helping Ukrainians plant local churches in their communities. Today, Eric is serving near Kiev, continuing to minister to the Ukrainian people amidst the extreme danger posed by Russia's military invasion and resulting war.

While being a part of the Chenaniah Singers had a transformational influence on virtually all students who participated, the group went dormant in the early 1990s. Many of the members from those early years stayed in touch, and most gather every five years for a reunion on ACU's campus.

In 2012, the Chen Singers reunited for the first time in more than 20 years when four of its legacy members came together to perform at the 2012 Daniel Award Gala hosted by Arizona Christian University. Jim Baugh, Steve Paglia, David Cook and Dave Schaeffer reunited for one special night, and were part of a very memorable evening honoring Franklin Graham of Samaritan's Purse for his lifetime of courageous public faith.

Being a member of the Chen singers was transformative for Jim Baugh and helped prepare him for a career in vocational ministry, both in the pulpit and on the mission field. Today Dr.

Baugh serves with Global Training Network, teaching theological truth to pastors in 82 developing countries. He is also a member of the Arizona Christian University Board of Trustees.

When asked why so many Chenaniah alumni are serving in full-time ministry, Jim stated, "we were exposed to what God can do – through traveling, connecting with people on a theological and relational basis - we saw God transform lives."

The brief Chen Singers reunion in 2012 planted a seed of revival, thought it would be a few years before that seed would grow and mature. Seven years later, after almost three decades without an active choral group on campus, Southwestern College's storied tradition of vocal performance sprang back to life in December 2019, when now Arizona Christian University's nascent choral group came together to perform onstage with world-renowned tenor Andrea Bocelli for his Christmas Concert in downtown Phoenix.

Today, under the leadership of Choral Director Dr. Juliana Balinski, ACU Chorale is a 40-voice performance ensemble that performs both classical and contemporary music inspired by gospel, worship, hip-hop and selections from contemporary musical theater.

"Juliana is doing a phenomenal job . . . she's changing the face of our choral program," stated Gerald Fercho, Chair of ACU's Music Department. "The

Chorale has become the premier performance ensemble of ACU's music department . . . the best we've had for a generation."

Juliana responded, "I am just a steppingstone for what God is doing through choral music at ACU. The LORD is doing it!"

She continued, "we are performing new classics and also introducing our students to timeless music, and they love it. Some music is so well-written, it stands the test of time."

When asked what makes today's choral program special, Juliana quickly responds, "We've set a culture of prayer." This year's theme verse is James 5:13, which says, "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise."

Juliana continued, "Together, our singers ask the Lord to lead them through the tough times in their lives."

Earlier this year, Juliana launched a new eight-voice group performance ensemble that hasn't yet announced its name. She believes this new group will travel and potentially even compete at a national level.

Sound familiar?

The legacy of the Chenaniah Singers is alive and well at Arizona Christian University.

From a MOTHER'S PRAYER

No one could have imagined young Richard would be where he is today.

Richard was a baby when his mother survived the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. Together, they escaped the carnage that took the life of his father and the rest of his family.

During his childhood and adolescence, Richard and his mother lived in several African refugee camps -- with no path for a future.

But God had planted a promise --- and a seed of faith in Richard's mother.

"My Mom wanted me to have a better life, and God gave her a vision," shared Richard. "She believed God had a plan for my life . . . that He would equip me to heal broken people."

That seemed impossible . . . until God began opening one door after another.

During Richard's teen years, an international agency was willing to bring Richard and his mother to America as political refugees.

They had no family connections and no money . . . they had nothing.

But they found a good church and a strong faith community. To get by, both Richard and his mother worked two jobs. And as hard as it was, she made sure Richard attended school, where he excelled academically.

Richard's mother encouraged him to apply for university and take advantage of the opportunity God had given him when He delivered them from the refugee camps. Richard applied to 20 universities, and due to his academic promise, was accepted by most of them.

But he and his mother had no money for tuition.

With no financial aid on the horizon, Richard remembers praying, "I am going to give up, I have tried all I could, and nothing is working."

That's when Richard made the decision to turn every aspect of his life and future over to the Lord. He prayed a prayer of surrender, asking God to reveal His plan for Richard's life.

Later that same day, Richard received a telephone call informing him he had been selected to become a Freedom Works scholar, making it possible for him to attend Arizona Christian University.

Against all odds, God's promise to Richard's mother was being fulfilled. ACU's Freedom Works program opened a door for Richard that neither he nor his mother could have imagined. Richard calls it a "breakthrough miracle."

Entering its second year, the Freedom Works program is transforming the lives of students who otherwise would never be able to attend a private university like ACU. At its core, Freedom Works is an elite scholarship and discipleship program for high achieving prospective ACU students who have demonstrated outstanding academic achievement, spiritual maturity, and significant financial need.

Throughout Scripture, God frequently raised up leaders from challenging circumstances and equipped them for leadership and cultural change. Likewise, through Freedom Works, ACU is identifying and training students for lives of Kingdom influence -- candidates who have high spiritual and academic potential but no financial options to pay for a biblically grounded private university education.

This unique scholarship initiative invites qualified students with a high GPA and a high degree of financial

need to apply for the program and asks them to partner with ACU to help fund their education through both federal student aid (Pell Grants) and on-campus work-study employment of 20 hours per week for the duration of their time at ACU. But these two funding sources do not cover 100% of the cost of their tuition.

Additional gap funding (an average of about \$25,000 per student) is required to cover the cost of their educational expenses each year and is generously provided through donations from university financial partners.

Richard is a member of the inaugural class of Freedom Works scholars. And while they come from different backgrounds, from across America and the world, they have several things in common.

Each has overcome obstacles that most students will never face. Most are the first of their family to attend university. And while they all have tremendous drive and promise, without Freedom Works they would not have the financial ability to pay for a university degree.

Richard's first year at ACU has helped him to grow spiritually and academically, while also giving him a pathway for the future. He plans to complete his degree at ACU and then attend medical school to become a neurosurgeon, where he hopes to see God work through him to heal and serve people in need.

Richard's story is a miracle.

Every Freedom Works scholar is a miracle.

No one could have imagined young Richard would be where he is today. Nobody that is, except a mother in a refugee camp -- a mother with God's promise and a seed of faith.

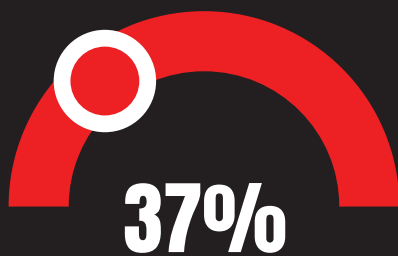
Richard Irakiza



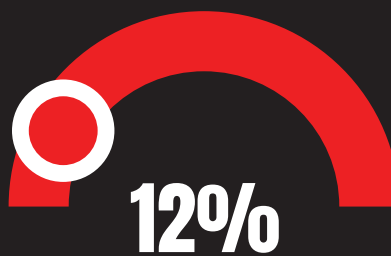
Restoring The **BIBLICAL**WORLDVIEW

WORLDVIEW CRISIS IN THE CHURCH

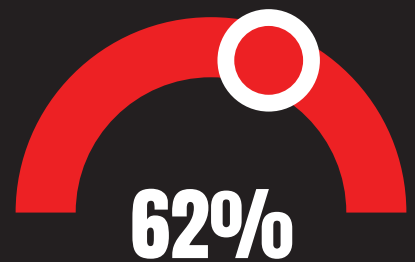
We're facing an unprecedented worldview crisis among American pastors...



**of U.S. pastors
have a biblical
worldview**



**of U.S.
Children's and
Youth Pastors
have a biblical
worldview**



**of U.S.
pastors possess
a worldview
known as
'Syncretism'**

Source: George Barna *American Worldview Inventory 2022* A national worldview survey of parents and pastors
Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University

The evidence of the worldview crisis in the American church is all around us. Biblical worldview levels have fallen for the past two decades, and today only 6% of American adults have a biblical worldview.

But that worldview deficit isn't only in the pews, it's also in the pulpits.

In fact, the latest research from George Barna and the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University shows that shockingly few American pastors—only 37%—have a biblical worldview.

Even among pastors in Evangelical churches, which by definition believe that the Bible is God's true and reliable words to humanity, barely half—just 51%—possess a biblical worldview, according to the CRC research.

Findings from the *American Worldview Inventory 2022: A National Worldview Survey of Parents*

and *Pastors* paint a bleak picture of the theological and spiritual health of the American church.

Some of those statistics are highlighted on the right, and Dr. Barna's reports on the biblical beliefs and behaviors of American pastors can be found on the CRC website www.culturalresearchcenter.com (QR Code on page 10).

How can we understand—and ultimately begin to fix—the state of biblical worldview in the American church?

Professor Kyle DiRoberts, who chairs the ACU Biblical and Theological Studies Department, believes addressing this crisis starts with understanding the larger cultural context. And from there, learning to communicate God's truth effectively in a rapidly shifting landscape.

According to DiRoberts, America is experiencing a fundamental transition in how it sees and

understands the world.

"We are no longer exclusively modern in our thinking," he explained. "Yet we haven't fully moved into the 'postmodern era.'"

Like much of society and culture around us, the church is dramatically shifting from what is commonly viewed as the modern era to a postmodern era. This first occurred in academia in the 1960s, then began permeating American culture, and now is shifting the church from traditional teachings and the biblical worldview.

And nowhere is this more evident than between older generations who reflect modern views, and younger generations, who embrace postmodern views of the world. Multiple generations are sharing this same cultural moment and often sit in the same pews—but they think very differently.

According to DiRoberts, "The current

% Evangelical pastors w/ a biblical worldview

51%

39%

% of all pastors who believe there is no absolute moral truth, that each individual determines their own truth

% of all pastors who maintain that human life is sacred

38%

30%

% Evangelical pastors who do not believe that their salvation is based on having confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their savior

cultural language is a mix of modern and postmodern.”

Those who think in modern terms tend to focus on absolute truth, seeing things as black and white. The modern mind prefers certainty, science, facts and data, and linear thinking. They are suspicious of things supernatural. Modern minds hate being wrong. And they tend to answer questions on their own, through books, Scripture, or reason.

Those who think in postmodern terms, on the other hand, challenge the assumptions of those who’ve gone before. They reject the idea of absolute truth. The world appears not in black and white, but in comfortable, hazy shades of gray. The postmodern mind listens, observes, and loves the supernatural. Postmoderns are willing to be wrong. They are far more likely to process and think in community, working out questions by gathering experiences from others. For them, feelings and experiences are key to understanding the world around them.

On top of this generational disconnect, DiRoberts identifies

another important factor to keep in mind. As someone who teaches Bible classes to college undergraduate students, to seminary graduate students, and also to newly minted pastors, he says he sees a stunning level of biblical illiteracy among Christian adults of all ages.

“Instead of individuals holding the biblical worldview,” DiRoberts explained, “there are multiple biblical worldviews evolving within the church context, but only one is true.”

So, what can pastors do?

According to DiRoberts, “The first thing pastors must do is focus on the objective truth of Scripture”—no matter the cultural drift or pressures.

And they need to understand their audience, that it contains both moderns (the older generations) and postmoderns (the younger generations). Biblical truth must be presented in a way that resonates with both.

“Pastors have to be savvy enough within their worldview and theology to be able to adjust to a modern

congregant and adjust to a postmodern congregant,” DiRoberts explained.

“They have to know their audience,” he said. “It takes rethinking of how to craft a message that is faithful to Scripture, while conveying Truth to the audience in a way that resonates.”

“After a sermon, if I have both moderns and postmoderns writing to complain,” DiRoberts said, “I probably hit the right balance.”

What can the average Christian do?

According to DiRoberts, part of that includes finding a church committed to the biblical worldview. Then, work to understand the best ways to share faith with other generations.

More importantly, “They can take ownership of what they believe,” he said.

“The world is changing fast - and Christians need to be able to navigate the culture around them - guided by their worldview,” DiRoberts explained. “So, they need to be ready.”

CRC’s George Barna talks with ACU students.



Finding Your CHURCHHOME

Finding the right community of faith in which to settle is neither an easy nor quick task - especially in light of recent research. Here are some of the critical elements to examine when visiting and evaluating a potential church home, based on our research:

Biblical Worldview: What is the commitment of church leaders to biblical worldview? Is there discussion of biblical worldview in the programs, materials, or from the pulpit?

Community: How much do congregants love each other? How well do you think you would fit into the relational vibe of the church?

Discipleship: How seriously does the church invest in the spiritual development of its people?

Evaluation: What does the church measure to determine its efficacy?

Evangelism: How much emphasis and energy is devoted to strategically sharing the gospel with non-Christians?

Foundational Beliefs: What does the church believe about the Bible?

Leadership: What is the vision and leadership style of those in charge? How much authority is in the hands of the congregation?

Lifestyle: How well does the lifestyle of the congregation fit biblical principles?

Ministry: How active is the body in serving the community? How easily would you be able to use your gifts?

Stewardship: What do they teach about money, and how do they manage their resources?

Teaching: Is the teaching from the pulpit primarily expository, experiential, topical, evangelistic, or textual?

Worship: How well does the experience glorify God and draw you into His presence?

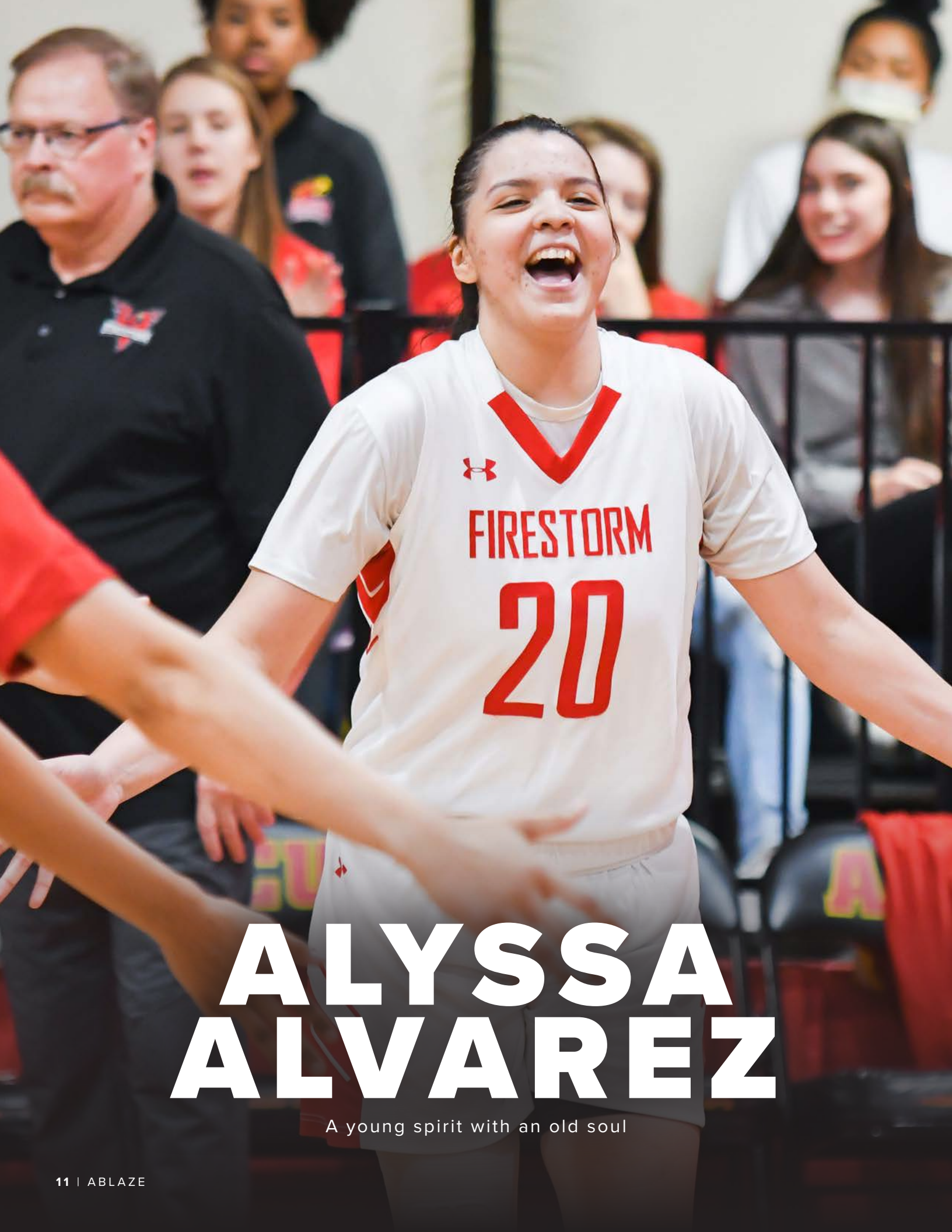
There are other metrics that may be important to you as well, but this list contains many of the factors that are important to examine.

Adapted from:

Finding a Church you can Call Home:

The complete guide to making one of the most significant decisions of your life. By: Dr. George Barna





ALYSSA ALVAREZ

A young spirit with an old soul

Alyssa Alvarez is an “old soul.” The third-year business major has seen a lot in her short 21 years, and her experiences have given her a sense of purpose and deep faith that belie her youth.

The oldest of six children, Alyssa grew up without a mother in the home and took on a lot of extra responsibilities. “I took care of everyone,” she said. In some ways, she still does. That’s a lot to juggle for someone her age, who also happens to be a full-time student and star basketball player for the Firestorm.

Alyssa is a native of Phoenix and attended Horizon High School. She was actually recruited by ACU women’s basketball coach Rusty Rogers out of high school in 2020, but as one of the most highly sought-after athletes in Arizona she ultimately elected to attend a Division 1 college in Southern California.

But it turned out God had a bigger plan in mind. A series of circumstances in her family and personal life during her freshman year in California led Alyssa to decide she needed to be closer to her family, so she moved back to Arizona.

When the news of her return reached Coach Rogers he reached out to his former recruit, inviting her to be a part of the Firestorm family and join his program. That’s when everything changed.

“Because of how everything was in my home growing up, I barely had a relationship with Christ,” Alyssa recalled. “But ACU coaches, players and friends welcomed me with open arms. God gave me a second family here, and they support me.”

After arriving at Arizona Christian University, she renewed her commitment to Christ and asked to be baptized on campus by ACU Transformational Coach Randy Chambers. “All my family and friends were there,” Alyssa remembered. “It was an experience I will never forget.”

To prepare for her first basketball season at ACU, Alyssa “read a lot of the Bible over the summer and drew closer to Christ.” “Her experience at

ACU has completely transformed Alyssa’s life,” stated Coach Rogers. “The support and spiritual environment here have had a tremendously positive impact on her.”

Just as ACU’s spiritual development and climate of relationship and discipleship had a transformational effect on Alyssa, her God-given talents have also helped elevate the Firestorm women’s basketball program to a new level as well.

As a sophomore last season, Alyssa averaged more than 20 points per game and led the Firestorm women to their highest win total in school history. She was also the second leading scorer in the Golden State Athletic Conference and ranked 8th in the entire NAIA in scoring. Her accomplishments led to Alyssa receiving national recognition, including being honored as an NAIA All-American.

“She is the leader of our team. The younger players look up to her,” Coach Rogers said.

Asked about her future, Alyssa is content to wait on the Lord. “I’ll see where God leads me,” she says. Coach Rogers, whose coaching career spans 37 years, six states, and more than 719 wins of his own, believes Alyssa has the potential to continue her basketball career at the next level. When asked about that, Alyssa responds by quoting her favorite scripture, Psalm 28:7. “The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.”

With or without basketball, Alyssa is certain that her life purpose is serving others. “I’ve always had the dream of helping other people,” she said. She talks about starting a business, opening a gym and sharing what she’s learned with children in her neighborhood – kids without a coach and a mentor.

When asked what advice she would give a “young Alyssa” ten years her junior, she stated, “Be patient and experience life as it comes, regardless of the love you may or may not have. God has His perfect timing and His reasons.”

A portrait of Catharine Ellingsen, a woman with blonde hair and blue eyes, smiling. She is wearing a black sleeveless top with gold buttons on the shoulders and large hoop earrings. She is sitting in a black leather office chair. In the background, there is a bookshelf filled with books.

CATHARINE ELLINGSEN

A personal journey into faith and trust in Jesus

You might expect to hear the exhortation, “first pray, and then be courageous” from a pastor on Sunday morning, or a youth leader on a Wednesday night. You might not expect to hear it from one of the most respected senior executives in the Phoenix business community.

But that’s exactly what ACU Trustee Catharine Ellingsen is challenging ACU students to do.

Catharine Ellingsen is Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer of Republic Services, a Fortune 500 company and a North America leader in environmental waste and recycling services. She oversees Legal Services, Board and Corporate Governance, Ethics and Compliance, Enterprise Risk Management, Labor Relations, Corporate Security, Business Continuity, and Real Estate.

Amid those varied and important professional responsibilities, Catharine also serves as the Chair of ACU’s Board of Trustees. During her tenure on the board, she has had a tremendous influence on the ongoing transformation of ACU, from its roots at the campus on Cactus Road to its expansion on the new campus in Glendale—and now its vision for the future.

Catharine’s path to success and significance has been an untraditional one—and she gives God all the glory.

She was raised in a small town in southern Maine, where she attended local public schools and developed a vision for her future at an early age. “I always wanted to be a lawyer and have five kids. A lot of people told me you can’t do both, so I wanted to prove them wrong,” she said. “I wanted to have a career and be a mother, and I knew I would have to figure that out.”

Catharine was raised in a close-knit community. Growing up, her family attended a local Congregational Church. “I had known about Jesus and God . . . but I accepted Jesus as my savior during a Junior High youth group meeting,” she stated. “I was on fire,” she recalls.

“But as I moved through college and started my career, I lost my way a bit . . . I focused on other things and didn’t put Jesus first in my life.”

Catharine studied political science and history at Wheaton College (MA) and after three years working as a paralegal, attended the Washington College of Law, The American University in Washington, D.C and earned her law degree.

After law school, Catharine moved to Arizona to marry her husband Steve and start their family and careers. As a young married couple, they started attending Scottsdale Bible Church, and soon began to grow spiritually. Not long thereafter, Steve and Catharine both chose to be baptized, and their walk with Jesus became intentional and very active.

“FIRST PRAY, AND THEN BE COURAGEOUS”

Catharine began her legal career in private practice focusing on labor and employment law. One of her clients was Allied Waste, a predecessor to Republic Services. “For an entire year, I worked full-time on employment issues for that one client, after which they offered me a job. I fell in love with the business and the people there,” Catharine recalled.

During her time with Republic Services, Catharine had the opportunity to help the company develop its core values. Catharine herself is driven by these same values, and was grateful to be able to use her biblical worldview to help shape the culture of Republic Services.

“The perception of the waste and recycling business has evolved during the years. We’re not like what you may have seen on television. We’re values-driven and committed to environmental services . . . honoring God’s creation. Employees want to work at a company with a higher purpose,” she noted.

When asked about work-life balance as a corporate executive, Catharine

replied, “my life is a blend of my personal life and professional life 24/7. I try to find a way to make it all work. Even when I was the only woman around, if I had to go in to work on Saturday, my kids came with me. I always incorporated my family into my career. She added with a smile, “I didn’t have five kids by the way, I stopped at three.”

When asked whether it is possible to maintain a biblical worldview while achieving high levels of success in the marketplace, Catharine responded, “Absolutely you can, and I feel like I am a living example. Every day I integrate what I believe with what I do.”

As Catharine continued to enjoy professional success, she also sensed a desire to serve in new capacities. She had known about

Arizona Christian University for a while, but then her pastor, Dr. Larry Anderson, introduced her to ACU President Len Munsil.

“The more I learned about ACU . . . and the vision . . . I realized God had an amazing future for this university,” she stated.

“I thought that maybe God can take my time, talent and treasure and allow me to serve in some small way,” she added.

And that’s how she joined the Board of Trustees and was eventually asked to step into an even greater leadership role as Board Chair.

Catharine takes great joy in ACU’s students, and her charge to them reflects her approach to living out her biblical worldview in the marketplace.

Her message is strong and clear: “First pray, and then be courageous. It’s a tough world out there and we need young people willing to stand up for what they believe. Be your authentic self and be courageous. God will help you find a way. God has a plan for you. Be part of His plan.”

She reminds students of a favorite verse, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13).

Miracle PRAYER TOWER

In 2019, Arizona Christian University relocated from its original home in North Phoenix to its new campus in Glendale, Arizona. As told in the Fall 2021 issue of Ablaze, the story of God's provision, through the trade of ACU's 20-acre campus for the historic 68-acre campus that was formerly ASU's Thunderbird School of Global Management - is nothing short of a miracle.

ACU's new campus offers three times the classroom space, larger residence halls, the Commons dining hall, a 35,000-square-foot library, an Events Center, and other facilities that are finally commensurate with ACU's nationally recognized academic and spiritual reputation.

Over the last 36 months, ACU has made significant progress in further enhancing the campus facilities to meet the needs of its growing student population. In that time, ACU has completed the installation of three turf athletic fields used by its football, softball, soccer, lacrosse, and intramural programs, as well as a state-of-the-art science laboratory. ACU has also added the Firestorm Recreation Center (formerly the Glendale/Peoria YMCA) and its 7 additional acres of amenities to our campus.

In addition to the facility upgrades, ACU has also repurposed and rededicated several high-profile locations on campus to reflect and honor its own history and mission, including the Don and Mary King Performing Arts Auditorium, Floyd G. Brown Global Missions Monument, First Baptist Church of Cave Creek Classrooms, and Doerksen Business Office.



At the same time, if you were to walk ACU's miracle campus today you would still see buildings that bear the name of benefactors who supported the Thunderbird School. And while ACU honors and respects the 80 years of history embedded in this campus, it has entered a new phase of development, and is in the midst of a campaign to continue to truly make the campus its own.

Through the Campus Transformation Initiative, ACU has invited friends of the University to be a part of the work God is doing by taking advantage of various naming opportunities available all over campus. Several families have already stepped up with generous gifts to help ACU continue to transform the campus, and have allowed the University to honor their generosity by replacing the current names associated with the Thunderbird School with those of ACU's faithful contributors and champions.

In recent months, one such University partner has stepped up in a significant way, identifying a few

meaningful locations on campus and making generous gifts to secure naming opportunities associated with those places. One of those locations in particular has tremendous significance, not only to the donor, but also to the legacy of faithful servants who have helped ACU become what it is today.

Situated in both the figurative and literal center of campus, the historic Tower Building was built in 1941 and was designed by the famous architect Millard Sheets. During WWII, this building was known as the Sixth Army Air Forces Flying Training Detachment and served as a control tower for Thunderbird Airfield No. 1.

Today, the Tower serves as ACU's Student Union, housing a restaurant and coffee shop, team shop/bookstore, and student lounges.

The very top level of the Tower Building also includes a small, approximately 10'x10' observation room that boasts a panoramic view of the campus through its iconic, blue-tinted bay windows. This



observation room, once used by Army Air Corps personnel to guide and direct pilots safely through their training flights, has been transformed by ACU students into one of the most revered locations on campus.

Back in the earliest days of ACU's operations on our miracle Glendale campus, several students - completely on their own initiative - took it upon themselves to begin regular prayer meetings in the top floor of the Tower. They handwrote scripture on post-it notes, stuck them to those bay windows and placed a "prayer request" box on a small table in the room.

Today, it's common for students to gather in small groups or by themselves for times of prayer and Bible study in the Tower Prayer Room, and the space has become a special, worshipful place.

Cognizant of both the historical and contemporary significance of the Tower Prayer Room, the faithful University partner couple made the decision to obtain its naming rights by

making a generous gift to the Campus Transformation Initiative campaign. But rather than name the space after themselves or a family member, this couple had something even more meaningful in mind.

"We wanted to find a way to acknowledge the eternal impact that several faithful ministry leaders have had on the success of Arizona Christian University," the donor remarked. "These heroes of the faith have demonstrated incredible Kingdom influence and helped the University become what it is today, and we wanted to recognize them by naming this unique space in their honor." And so, the donor and his wife have requested that ACU collaborate with them to identify a new ministry leader each year. The Tower Prayer Room will be named after that person, rotating on an annual basis.

The inaugural honoree will be longtime ACU trustee and treasured local pastor Dr. Larry Anderson. Dr. Anderson recently retired as the senior pastor at North Bible Church

in Scottsdale in September of 2019. In addition to his decades of faithful service to ministries like Young Life and Scottsdale Bible Church, Larry has served as a Trustee at Arizona Christian University for more than 10 years, and played an integral role in the land swap transaction as Chair of the Board during that time.

The Prayer Tower Room is just one of dozens of naming opportunities on campus that are part of the Campus Transformation Initiative. If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about the various buildings and locations on campus that are part of the Initiative, please contact advancement@arizonachristian.edu. In addition, the catalog of available locations and accompanying photographs is available online through the QR code below.



FIRESTORMFAMILY

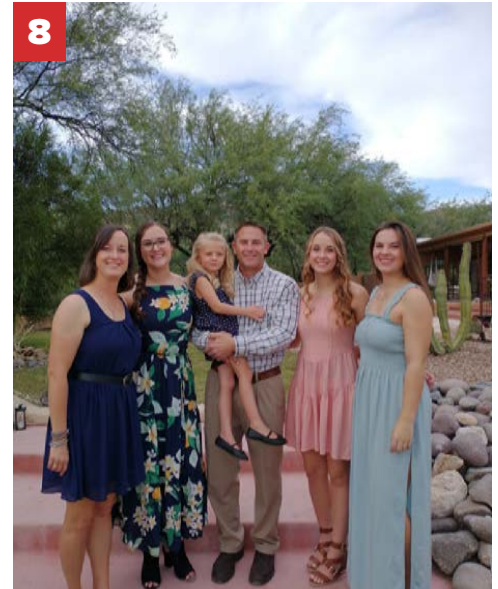


1. **SARENNA (SELZER) RODRIGUEZ ('19)** married Daniel in August of 2021. She was recently promoted to Senior Accountant at UHaul, and also started her master's program in accounting and finance at DeVry University. She hopes to pursue management and executive level leadership in her field.

2. **AUTUMN (WELLS) DEFFNER ('17)** and her husband, Griffin, are expecting their third child in October. Autumn received her master's degree in theology from Gateway International Bible Institute. She and Griffin serve at Rivers Church in Phoenix where Autumn is the church admin and Griffin is the worship pastor.

3. **CHELSEA (FREWIN) DUBOVOY ('17)** and her husband Jonathan welcomed their baby boy, Ezekiel "Zeke" James to the world on May 30, 2022.

4. **JESSE AND MINDY (KLEPPE) GERKEY ('15)** met at ACU in August of 2012. This year they will celebrate six years of marriage. The Gerkeys have two boys, Amos and Joel. They attend San Diego Reformed Church in La Mesa, CA. Jesse is a middle school math teacher and Mindy is a stay-at-home mom.



5. ELENOR (BOLANOS) KERR ('12) and her husband, Andrew, added their third child to their family in December 2021. They recently moved back to Arizona from Kentucky, and during the move they spent over 30 hours in the car with a 3-month old, a 2-year old, and a 4-year old and made it home alive! God is good!

6. SAMUEL AND TARYN (WYKE) BURBA ('11) were married in 2010 by Pastor Tim Reed and now have 4 children. Samuel went on to Phoenix Seminary and graduated with his Master of Arts in Ministry in 2016. In 2020 he was given the opportunity to work in full-time ministry and now serves as Executive Pastor at Shiloh Community Church. Taryn has been a faithful home schooling mom for four years and loves being home with their babies. The Burbas say what a wild ride it has been and how thankful they are to have been used by the Lord since graduating from ACU.

7. JOSHUA EWALD ('07) and his wife, Cassandra, opened their franchise of Bricks & Minifigs in Peoria, AZ in June. You can find them on Facebook, Instagram, and Tiktok: BAMPeoriaArizona.

8. JEREMY ('00) AND CORA (THOWSON) MURRAY ('98) have been happily married for 22 years. Jeremy has recently had the opportunity to lead a study through the book of John and Cora leads a book study with a friend that focuses on the biblical role of wives. God has also blessed Jeremy and Cora with the opportunity to serve in the youth and women's ministries at their church.

9. MELISSA (PETERSON) HUBLER ('97) and her husband, Steve, founded Legacy Family Ministries in 2017. Currently, the Hublers have a weekly radio broadcast on FaithTalk 1360, weekly podcasts, summer family camps, and a growing resource library. New to their staff is ACU alum Amy Sun (1995), and they partner with another ACU grad, Robby Lashua (2006).

CLASSNOTES

'20s

- ▼ **MERCY JUNKERMANN ('21)** is a Campus Innovation Project Manager for Cru in Orlando, Leading teams in human-centered research and innovating tools to train missionaries on high school and college campuses. She spends much of her free time traveling with Filter of Hope to bring clean water to people internationally. She also leads a Bible study for girls at a local high school. Mercy said that ACU prepared her to do each of these things and she is so grateful for the impact ACU had on her life!



ANDREW SANDRY ('20) is the Worship Director at Mission Grove Church in Phoenix. He and his wife, Morgan (Dichsen, 2019), married in 2020.

'10s

- ▼ **MELODY (TOSO) REIMCHE ('19)** and her husband, Braden, are settling into their new home. After almost seven years as an employee of ACU (starting as a student worker in Admissions), Melody celebrated her last day at ACU on September 2, 2022. She is excited to consider the opportunities available next while she continues to learn to care for her household alongside her husband. She requests prayer for her family and her mother, Mary Jo, who is battling cancer. Melody is deeply grateful for the professors, advisors, coworkers, and supervisors who have taught her so much through her time as a student and employee at ACU. The Reimches are pictured here on Braden's family farm in North Dakota.



BAYLOR GIANNINI ('19) recently graduated with his Master of Business Administration in Leadership and is the head baseball coach at the American Leadership Academy. He is grateful for all God has done since he graduated from ACU.

CHUCK FITZGERALD ('19) is a Sergeant at Arms in the Arizona House of Representatives, where he just completed his 5th legislative session. His responsibilities include oversight of facilities, security, customer service, and he also serves as the House curator. Most importantly, he is responsible for civility and decorum in the House. Chuck says the fun part of his job is announcing the arrival of the Arizona Governor each year during the joint legislative session for the State of the State address. He is also the host of the Pursuing Peace Conference (Psalm 34:14) each year, which is all about "creating space to explore peace" in our communities.



- ▲ **REV. BRIAN WRIGHT ('18)** is the Senior Pastor at Citadel of Praise Christian Church in Peoria. The church is doing well and recently started its second location in Buckeye.

DEB (WHITE) PETERSON ('18) is a teacher and coach for North Canyon High School. She and her husband, Kory, live in Glendale.

DAVID AND EMILY (DEVORE) FOURT ('18) have moved to Fresno, California! Emily was matched to the University of California San Francisco/Fresno residency program as a Doctor of Internal Medicine and they moved shortly after her graduation from Midwestern University. David has been able to stay with his current team as a Broker and Senior Specialist at Charles Schwab working remotely. They are currently trying to get plugged into a local church and have been so blessed by the Christian Medical and Dental Association.

JUSTIN BARNES ('17) is working toward becoming a firefighter. His wife, Arionna, is a dentist. Their son, Greyson, started kindergarten and is learning Mandarin. Along with Greyson, their other two children, Areye and Sauce, are a job and blessing.

MARISSA STEVENS ('17) is a physician assistant-certified (PA-C) at Desert Orthopedic Center.

▼ **STACIA (CAMERON) MOORE ('17)** married Tyler and they recently celebrated their 5th wedding anniversary. They bought a house and added a dog to their family. Stacia entered her 6th year of teaching this fall and will be teaching first grade. She is the curriculum expert for her school's new ELA adoption.



JAMES AND CAROLINE (HENDRICKS) RIESING ('17) welcomed their first child, Jordy, in October 2021. James will graduate in spring 2023 from Arizona College of Osteopathic Medicine.



▲ **MELISSA RIVERA ('15)** was faced with a potential cancer diagnosis. After undergoing surgery and receiving the good news that her tumor was benign, she was almost immediately offered a coordinator job at Avance Care, an integrative health corporation. She was quickly promoted into the management role just six months later, and is now able to help a team of more than 50 therapists serve the community both in person and virtually. She is passionately pursuing everything ACU prepared her for. Melissa remarked that it is sweet to see the underlying theme of Behavioral Health in her academic, personal and professional life. In the middle of her health scare last year, she also completed her Health Coach certification with the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. On top of that, she started her own podcast called, "Hey, it's Mel" on Spotify and a Gluten Free cookie business called ECOS!

CHELLE ORR ('15) started as an academy recruit with the Mesa Fire Department in August 2022. The same day she received the news that she was hired by the Mesa FD she also became an aunt to her niece, Catalina Mar.

ANDEE MURPHY ('14) serves as the Director of Human Development and Family Studies at ACU. She said God has been so good in bringing her back to ACU as a faculty member to pour into students the way her professors poured into her. The ACU faculty made a huge difference in her life while she was a student, and not surprisingly she said the same is true for her today. There's a full circle moment as she looks back at the ways God took her faith and relationships to new levels through this institution and continues to do so.

COLLEEN (LACY) SCOTT ('14) is a Deputy Probation Officer with Gila County.



▲ **ANDREW (AJ) AND MELODY (FOURT) KOCH ('14)** recently added a second son to their family. Brooks is 3 and Simon will be 1 in November.

JOSEPH AND BRITTANY (BOURDEAU) DODDS ('13) are celebrating nine years of marriage. Joseph is also celebrating 12 years of being in ministry. He serves as the Kids Pastor at Christ's Church of the Valley. Brittany is a stay-at-home mom to their three boys, JD (7), Logan (5), and Tanner (1) who keep them busy with sports, jiu jitsu, and homeschooling. The Dodds have fond memories of ACU and the kindness shown to them as they navigated the beginnings of their careers. They are so thankful for people like Pastor Tim Reed who believed in them and fought for them to succeed.

EMILY TALARICO ('13) began her 10th year of teaching this fall and currently serves as a 2nd-grade teacher at Desert Mirage Elementary School.



▲ **COURTNEY ROSE ('11)** stepped out in faith and obtained a license from Christian Family Care to be a foster parent, despite being a single woman. She never imagined her very first placement would end up being her forever child. After fostering Georgia since she was just 10 days old, they became an "official" family on March 25, 2022. While Courtney said motherhood hasn't looked anything like she expected, it is still one of the best "yesses" she has ever said to God and she is so grateful for the gift of Georgia! Courtney works at Food For the Hungry.

LANDON AND LINDSAY (MANCUSO) FLOWERS ('11) recently moved from Scottsdale to Peoria and are loving the area. Landon started a business, Flowers Psychology Services, PLLC, and is providing contracted school psychology services to the Deer Valley Unified School District. Lindsay is able to stay home with their 4-year old son, Lincoln, and they are expecting another baby boy.

▲ **GRACE LUGINBUHL ('12)** works as a Site Based Program Specialist for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Arizona and is a volunteer mentor in the program. She also volunteers at her church as a high school youth leader and loves that she gets to be involved in the discipleship of the next generation.

JENNIFER SMITH ('11) is a mom of four, runs a boutique, and is in grad school. She and her husband, Nate, worked in children's ministry at Oasis Community Church for 10 years and now serve with young adults.

JARED ZIMMERMAN ('11) serves students in public education as a social science teacher in a continuation high school in the Jurupa Unified School District, after serving at two churches as a youth pastor. Instead of trying to get the students to come to church, he gets to bring the light of Christ to them at their school.

'00s

CHARLOTTE BARKLEY ('07) is the Director for Bush Telegraph Mission, an organization that plants and builds churches, homes, orphanages, and clinics for the underprivileged. This year they are serving in five countries, and meet practical needs by sending containers of Bibles, goods, educational materials, clothes, toys, blankets and other supplies to refugee camps and remote villages. Charlotte spends 1-4 months in the field each year working with directors in Africa to minister and meet needs.

ADAM RAY ('07) married Divine Grace last year after a season of separation due to the pandemic. Currently, they are working among the least reached in southwest Asia, and are exploring where God might be calling them to serve abandoned children and separated families in the Philippines.

▼ Pastor Tim Reed dropped by Northwest Christian School and met with three ACU grads who are shaping the next generation. With more than 15 years of teaching, coaching, and mentoring experience between them, pictured are **Brandon Southall (2006)**, **Chris Gardiner (2002)**, and **Tyler Collins (2000)**.



NOELLE (HANES) CLARK ('05) is making good use of her degree in business administration by helping her husband, Dave, run Clark Heating & Cooling. Dave started the business from scratch in 2011 and Noelle joined in 2013 as the Business/Operations Manager. The Clarks have twin girls and attend CityView Church.



▲ **ALAN GEDDE ('03)** and his wife, Tamra, have raised three of their children to adulthood and have three more that are in school in Roswell, New Mexico. Their oldest two, Harmony and Maryruth, spent much of their childhood at the old Southwestern College campus as Alan went to school. The Geddes celebrated 30 years of marriage this year and Alan published a book, "Unless the Lord." They also have one grandson, Bowen.

JOE MASON ('03) is the Training and Development Coordinator for Awake Window & Door Co., a second chance employer that is dedicated to building an employment base from those who have been incarcerated. His wife, Cassie (2005), is the Assistant Headmaster and 504 Coordinator at Archway Arete Classical Academy, a Great Hearts Academy.

'90s

MARCI (MARTIN) LOVE ('92) is in expansion sales for Truckstop.com.

STEVE AND LAURA NEWKIRK ('92) have served with WorldVenture in Senegal for 24 years as missionaries. They are working with Senegalese nationals to plant an indigenous church in the city of Dakar to reach the 95% Muslim majority population with the Gospel. They recently finished a five-story church building in a busy neighborhood of Dakar thanks to many generous donors, many prayers, and lots of patience. Being an oral culture, Senegalese people learn best by listening so Steve has the pleasure of being part of a team recording the entire Bible in the Wolof language and seeing it distributed in various media forms. The Newkirks also host a beach camp used by the entire evangelical neighborhood and hold a Kids Club in their backyard most summers.

'80s

▼ **ERIC AND BETH (FRANKS) YODIS ('86)** have served with WorldVenture as missionary church planters in Ukraine since 1995. They have temporarily relocated to Colorado until they can move back to the Ukraine full time. At present, Eric has traveled back to Ukraine, working with church planters in humanitarian aid, PTSD counseling, encouragement, and even starting new churches. The Yodis' only daughter is married and has given them two granddaughters. In their spare time, Eric and Beth organize the "Southwestern College Quinquennial Reunions" along with several other active alumni in the area. Their next scheduled reunion is in 2025 and you can contact Beth on Facebook to be added to their list.



DAN AND LOUISE (MUNGLE)

HERRIAGE ('86) both recently retired from teaching. Dan taught science for 45 years (13 years in Gwam) and Louise served as an elementary school principal. Both served in Christian schools throughout their careers.

'70s



▲ **LARRY AND VONNIE (EARL) PRATT ('78)** have been ministering for many years through puppets and music. In 2018, they "retired and re-fired", becoming full-time missionaries with InFaith. They love to see how God can use puppets to speak His Truth into children and adults, alike. Most recently, Vonnice had a book published entitled "From This Shepherd's Heart", which is a devotional book based on lessons learned as shepherds of a small flock of sheep in rural western Washington. It is available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and in bookstores in 70+ countries. The Pratts are loving this time in their lives!

'60s

AL WILCOXSON ('66) lives in Pearce, Arizona and served on the elementary school board there for more than 10 years. His loving wife, Ruth, passed away in March. They had been married 55 years. Al recently visited the ACU campus in Glendale for the first time, and said it was amazing to see what he and those early SWC graduates started in the 1960s had blossomed into a beautiful flower in the desert. He said he never would have believed Southwestern would become what it is today, and expressed gratitude to the Lord for the work He has done in this place!



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