

ARIZONA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE // FALL 2025

ABLAZE



**PLAYING
FREE**

ALUMNI FEATURE

**MAKING
DISCIPLES**

STUDENT WORLDVIEW INVENTORY

**FAITHFUL THEN,
FAITHFUL NOW**

STUDENT FEATURE

the PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

FALL 2025



The morning of Charlie Kirk's funeral in Glendale, Tracy and I rose to the sound of church bells ringing from Trinity Church in downtown Boston, the cradle of liberty, the very foundation of the fusion of biblical principles with civil government and revolutionary fervor that sparked the founding of our nation.

We were there for a meeting of a national conservative organization where I serve in leadership – a group that was mourning the recent loss of several significant members, including Dr. James Dobson ... and Charlie Kirk.

We traveled south by train from Boston on a beautiful sunny September day, the end of summer and the start of fall, through Massachusetts and Rhode Island into Connecticut – seeing the beauty of small communities and churches that were central to the first Great Awakening in America. Down through New York City, the seat of government in the early days of our Republic, and through to Philadelphia and a long-planned visit to the American Revolutionary War Museum on Monday.

All the way, we watched Charlie Kirk's memorial service and prayed and grieved with the nation and continued our prayer for God to renew our nation and to bring the greatest awakening ever through a new generation of Americans. Could this be the spark?

But oh, what a price, for his wife, his children, his parents, his close friends ... and for the millions of young people listening to his defense of the sanctity of life, traditional marriage, family and children, economic freedom and opportunity based on merit – all of it motivated by faith in Jesus Christ and the teachings of Scripture.

I didn't know Charlie Kirk well. I wish I had. Observing from a distance, his maturing Christian faith was obvious. He was gifted as a thinker, strategist and communicator, he had a phenomenal work ethic, and you could observe in real time his intellectual and spiritual growth. He would be the first to admit – as part of his testimony – that he wasn't perfect, and like all of us, needed a Savior. As he became a husband and father, you could see him becoming more winsome, more gracious and more effective. Which sadly, to many people, made him a greater threat.

We met a handful of times at events where we were both speaking in California, New York and Arizona. We shook hands, took a picture. (Above (L-R) ACU Trustee Andrew Unkefer, Charlie Kirk, ACU President Len Munsil.) His team texted me about getting together but the schedule had not lined up yet. He was fairly new to Arizona; I've been here my whole life. He was half my age. I assumed there would be plenty of time to connect.

I was wrong.

I've spent most of my professional life as a public advocate for biblical principles applied to culture and policy, which often

includes explaining and defending the Gospel – “always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, but with gentleness and respect.” 1 Peter 3:15(b). When I was Charlie's age – in my late 20s and early 30s, as a young attorney I frequently did public debates in front of hostile audiences, sometimes on liberal college campuses.

Of course this was pre-worldwide web, pre-internet, pre-smart phone and pre-social media. There were no opportunities to go viral – the only focus was persuading the people in the room. And while the people in the room could hiss and boo, and there were occasional threats, two things were vastly different – without national visibility, people came to hear the debate, not target a speaker they'd never seen before. Second, back then the secular left generally believed in freedom of speech and debates, even if they disliked what you were saying. Cancel culture was decades away.

When I came to Arizona Christian University in 2010, we began refining our mission and vision to make it clear that we wanted ACU graduates to be bold, courageous and winsome leaders who would engage culture with biblical truth.

As you will read in this magazine, we now have proof of concept – actual data from George Barna demonstrating that our students grow each year in their commitment to think and live according to the teachings of Scripture. Growing numbers of ACU graduates committed to transforming culture with truth are building families and advancing into positions of leadership in churches, businesses, education, media and government.

Charlie Kirk wasn't a fan of college, but he said nice things about ACU. He knew ACU is doing the opposite of what happens at most of the colleges he was seeking to reach. He knew we were actively working to build our students' faith in a unique and diverse community united by faith in Jesus Christ and the authority of Scripture.

Losing Charlie Kirk, along with the recent losses of Dr. Dobson, John MacArthur, and Voddie Baucham, removes many of those who were best at communicating biblical truth to a secular culture.

As the Psalmist laments, “Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Who will take a stand for me against evildoers?”

Our prayer is that God will use Arizona Christian University to raise up new, courageous voices for truth and the Gospel at this critical moment in our country and world.

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

*President
Arizona Christian University*

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ABLAZE

An Arizona Christian University publication

OUR MAGAZINE

The ABLAZE magazine is published by the Department of University Advancement, with contributions from ACU staff, faculty, and Stronghold Media, a student-led media club at the university.

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

ACU students in front of the University's historic Tower Student Union.

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FAITH VANDENBERG

Faithful to Her Calling

Faithful then.

STUDENT FEATURE | FAITH VANDENBERG

FAITHFUL NOW

Faith Vandenberg never planned on attending Arizona Christian University, nor did she ever imagine she would pursue a career in the medical field. But God has a way of taking the plans of His children and turning them upside down.

It's widely acknowledged among students that no one ever has a boring ACU origin story. But Faith's story has some particularly providential twists and turns. During her senior year of high school, she decided to tag along with some friends to a college fair. She was only going for fun, having already decided what school she was going to attend. "I had big dreams, and big goals," Faith remembers. "I wanted to do what I wanted, so I was planning to go to a big state school." But that day, at the college fair, the first school she saw when she walked in was ACU. Behind the table was former

Director of Bands Ken Rasner, who right away asked Faith if she played an instrument. When she replied in the affirmative, telling him she played clarinet, Rasner then asked, "Well, are you any good?" Faith in fact was quite good at the clarinet, and told him so. And when Rasner asked if she might like a scholarship to attend ACU, Faith politely told him that she "would think about it," and promptly moved on.

God was already at work, she just did not know it yet. A week later, while Faith sat in her high school class, a school administrator was walking from classroom to classroom with a sticky note that said, "Ken Rasner is looking for a short blonde who plays clarinet." Now, Faith's school

didn't have a band, so first they had to figure out which student in the school played the clarinet. Eventually, they found Faith, and Rasner invited her to audition for the band at ACU. Given her outstanding academic and spiritual background, she was also invited to apply to be a University Scholar, which at the time was known as an Honors Scholar. The application was due that week, so she hurried to complete it and obtain the letters of recommendation required, all the while thinking she had no intention of attending this school.

submit to His plan for my life, which is better and higher and greater."

Originally, Faith wanted to study engineering or math at ACU. However, as she reviewed the majors available, it was actually biology that caught her attention, and she decided on a Bio major. Initially she set her sights on a career as a medical assistant, but then, as she heard from peers and professors, she realized that "God had gifted me for a path and purpose that was greater than I had planned for myself."



One professor in particular, Dr. Joseph Kezele, sat Faith down during her sophomore year and told her she would be wasting the talents God had given her if she "sold herself short." Faith realized she was living in her own sphere of comfort and needed to pursue an even more ambitious calling in medicine —

namely, to become a physician.

A few weeks later, having not heard from some of the other schools she was considering, Faith decided to attend the University Scholars weekend event and interview for one of ACU's prestigious President's Scholarships. Following a rigorous panel interview that included President Len Munsil, Faith was selected to receive a coveted President's Scholarship, earning her a full-tuition scholarship to Arizona Christian University. "I'm eternally grateful to God for using ACU at that college fair, even though, in my heart, I had decided what my path was going to be," Faith says. "Because now He has redeemed me from wanting to be independent and just doing what I want, and instead taught me to

That was when things really clicked for her. Soon after, she began to see how God had been preparing her for her whole life for this calling. Looking back, Faith recalls, "I've seen God's hand on every moment of my life, from elementary school to now, preparing for a career in medicine... I think that's what God does—He puts us in different places where maybe we don't see how He's preparing us in the moment, but then looking back, you can see how God gives you a gift or a skill or an experience that He needs you to have before you put all of your effort into the path He really has for you."

Faith currently serves as an intern with the Creation Research Society, an international organization of scientists who are Christians, devoted to the study of the origins of the universe and its changes over time. CRS is a partner with Arizona Christian University, and its global headquarters are located on ACU's campus, providing Faith with a convenient opportunity to perform high-level research and experiments on important scientific projects with a group of scientists who see science as a means to glorify God. And through her experience at CRS, she recently was invited to speak at a new scholar's conference in Flagstaff, Arizona, alongside another intern, where they presented their work studying the speciation of cacti.

In addition to her time working with like-minded scientists at the Creation Research Society, Faith has also had the opportunity to shadow medical professionals at an OB-GYN clinic near her home. At the clinic, where the prevailing worldview of the staff is secular, Faith has been able to observe how the practitioners' worldview shapes the way they care for patients. Through her time at the clinic, Faith has also learned how the Truth of the scriptures could be applied to how doctors care for patients, and what it might look like to have biblical compassion for mothers facing difficult situations. "Just having that small taste of what my ministry could look like, sitting with people and listening to them and providing them with excellent care, was eye-opening," Faith notes. "But also, I became aware of the fact that the patient's health is far more than just a physical need. It's also about their worldview and the ideas that they're surrounded and trapped by." After working in that environment, Faith has decided to focus her professional goals and ministry on entering the field of obstetrics and gynecology. "You get

to work with such a variety of people, and the ministry is so unique because it's a place where a lot of women feel safe to talk about what's going on in their personal lives, beyond just their healthcare needs," she says.

During her time at ACU, Faith has also become an influential leader on campus. After being invited to speak to prospective students at the University Scholars event last year to share about her experiences and highlight the importance of prayer in the life of an ACU student, Faith was also asked to share her testimony and ACU journey with the University Board of Trustees.

"I WAS ABLE TO SHARE WITH THE BOARD HOW ACU HAS SHAPED ME, BOTH AS A PERSON AND AS A MEANS OF PREPARING ME FOR A FUTURE CAREER..."

I was able to share with the board how ACU has shaped me, both as a person and as a means of preparing me for a future career where I'll actually be able to transform culture with truth—not just because I'm being given the tools to be a good doctor, but because I'm being given the tools to be a good Christian first. I was also able to talk about the kind of person that I've grown into, and that was really special, because as a University Scholar, I know that the only reason that I was able to be here is because of the generous scholarship that I was given. I was so glad to be able to share my gratitude to some of the university supporters who helped make that happen."

As she nears graduation and considers what advice she has for the next generation of ACU students, Faith's message is clear: "Be comfortable with not being the same person at the end of your ACU journey as you were when you started," she states emphatically. "The

Lord is going to change you here, whether or not you want Him to. So lean into the mentorships and the hard conversations and the late-night prayers when you're confused. Because God is working, even when He's silent, even when He seems far away, even when you are confused about what's going on, He's working for you. He will bless you, and He will take you to exactly where you need to be."

One of Faith's personal heroes is Corrie Ten Boom, Holocaust survivor and author of *The Hiding Place*. Corrie's steadfast faith, prayer, and thankfulness, even in the worst of times, has been a source of inspiration and encouragement to Faith. In addition, as Faith both looks back at what the Lord has done and looks ahead to His good plan for her next season of life, it is no surprise her life-song is *Faithful Then, Faithful Now* by Elevation Worship. Singing that song reminds her that God has been faithful to her over the course of her whole life without her initially even realizing it, and how His hand has been on her throughout her time at ACU. "He's changed me and provided for me in ways I never could have expected," Faith reflects, "which gives me hope for the future and what He's preparing me to do and gives me the confidence to step out into a career that's going to be difficult and challenging as a Christian woman."

Faith has recently applied and been accepted to four medical schools and is in the process of interviewing for admission with additional schools. She credits the exceptional mentorship and education she received at ACU for giving her the opportunity to follow God's call on her life and pursue a career as a physician. And she is trusting Him to guide and direct her next steps in this next season. Just as she did four years ago.





ACU Students Experience 'Eye Popping' Worldview Growth

MAKING DISCIPLES

When Arizona Christian University launched the *Student Worldview Inventory* six years ago, the hope was that because the University was so uniquely and comprehensively focused on biblical worldview development, the results of the *Inventory* would show growth.

Even before any data was collected—based largely on anecdotal results—ACU President Len Munsil was confident the data would show that the University's worldview efforts were working.

As the *Inventory* was being administered for the very first time, President Munsil said, "Imagine how amazing it will be to tell prospective students and their parents that, while many students lose their Christian faith in college, at ACU we have research data that proves our students grow in their biblical worldview during their time here!"

But there were no guarantees about what the research would actually reveal.

In fact, expecting any *increase* in biblical worldview during the college years flew in the face of what Dr. George Barna, creator of the *Student Worldview Inventory*, had consistently seen in more than four decades of worldview research.

Dr. Barna's 40 years of research demonstrated that a person's worldview is mostly formed by the age of 13—and rarely changes in any significant way after that, especially during the adult years. On top of that, his studies show the tremendous power entertainment, social media, and other cultural influences have in shaping a young person's worldview before and during college.

Frankly, that trend seemed almost impossible to overcome. In four decades of research, Dr. Barna had never seen anything different.

But now, six years into measuring ACU students' worldview, the University has data showing that the changes among its students are astounding.

In fact, Dr. Barna referred to the numbers as "eye-popping" in a recent

report to President Munsil.

After six years, including two complete longitudinal studies of ACU students' worldviews from before they start at ACU until graduation, some highlights of the findings include the following:

- **With every year students attend ACU, their biblical worldview numbers improve**, meaning that even those who only attend ACU for one year grow in their commitment to thinking and living like Jesus.
- **By the time they graduate, ACU students are three times more likely to have a biblical worldview than theologically-defined adult "born-again Christians" in America**, meaning ACU graduates, despite their youth, are already seeding the church with more mature believers.
- **The percentage of students testing at the highest level of biblical worldview is eight times greater at graduation than when they started at ACU.**

- ACU graduates are 15 times more likely to have a biblical worldview than others in their same age group.
- ACU is one of the few remaining Christian colleges that only admit students who articulate a testimony of faith in Jesus Christ; **the *Student Worldview Inventory* demonstrates that nearly all ACU students have a genuine, born-again faith in Christ.**
- Despite being born again, only a small minority of new students arrive on campus having been catechized by Scripture more than by the culture; but **by graduation the vast majority**

transforming lives for young adults than anything else happening inside or outside the church," he said.

Dr. Barna, who serves as Director of Research for ACU's Cultural Research Center, agrees. "In four decades of worldview research, I have never seen such substantial biblical worldview improvements among a group of people older than 13," Barna said. "What is happening at ACU is truly extraordinary."

Developing students' worldview is a signature part of the ACU vision, but it's not easy.

"Because every student enrolling in college, including ACU, already has

"I've found that piecemeal approaches to replacing one worldview with another rarely work once a person reaches his or her mid-teens. But a multi-year, multi-sensory adventure in which transitioning from the ways of the world to the ways of the Kingdom is intentional, strategic, consistent, appreciated and rewarded bears incredible fruit," he says.

And that immersive experience creates the ACU culture needed to transform and solidify students' worldview.

As Munsil notes, "We've watched so many parents go through the heartbreak of seeing what they thought were their well-grounded Christian kids walk away from their faith during the college years, sometimes even while attending Christian colleges that were not as biblically committed as ACU. And for years, I've said to them what I said to one of my own kids—for the sake of your soul, we need to find a way to get you to Arizona Christian University.

"I believe this data proves that I can continue to say that to parents with confidence," Munsil explained. "Maybe you can save a little money somewhere else, maybe you can get a more specific degree elsewhere, maybe you can claim a supposedly 'prestige' school as your child's alma mater—but at what cost? Is it worth it? Is it worth your child's future spiritual condition to send them somewhere that is dedicated to tearing down the biblical principles you've spent two decades pouring into them? Or should you instead send them to a Christian community that not only has great academics and great degree programs, but also has actual data proving that with every year students attend ACU -- they think, look and live more like Jesus?"

The University launched its groundbreaking *Student Worldview Inventory* in the fall of 2020—making ACU the only university in the world to annually measure the worldview of its entire student body. With the development last year of the Arizona Christian University Worldview



of ACU graduates either have a biblical worldview or are much closer to having one.

As Munsil notes—it's working.

"We are showing that intensive discipleship during four years of college—in a community where every ACU faculty, administrative staff, coach and volunteer understands that their role is to help grow ACU students to think and live like Jesus—is much more effective at

an intact worldview when they arrive on campus," Barna explains, "the first task in effectively discipling students is to disassemble that life philosophy before we can begin to replace it."

"Perhaps the most efficient and high-potential way to do that is to place someone in an immersive environment where they are saturated with intentional worldview activity: conversations, teaching, experiences, resources, and relationships," Barna says.



Assessment, an online version of ACU's student survey (available to the public at www.ACUWorldview.com), other colleges and universities are beginning to implement worldview measurement on their campuses.

When it was first launched, measuring students' worldview was virtually unheard of in higher education—but it was an essential element of President Munsil's vision for education at ACU.

As he explained when the *Inventory* was released, "We want to be the nation's premiere biblical worldview university, and measuring student worldview development is a key part of that. This initiative truly sets ACU apart, creating an exciting new educational distinctive for our University."

The goal of the ambitious campus research initiative was to measure the development of each student's worldview as they experience the university's unique CORE Christian liberal arts curriculum and strategic biblical worldview education during their time at Arizona Christian University.

In fact, worldview development is so important to President Munsil's vision for ACU, he asked the world's leading expert on measuring biblical worldview—best-selling author and researcher Dr. George Barna—to develop the test for ACU students.

**"IN FOUR DECADES OF
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I'VE NEVER SEEN
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- DR. GEORGE BARN

Dr. Barna was intrigued.

Over the years, he had been associated with a number of Christian universities and seminaries, but none had ever expressed any interest in measuring how their students were doing when it comes to growing in their faith and biblical worldview.

The fact that ACU was deeply committed to building biblical worldview—so committed that it actually wanted to measure how it was doing—was a key element in attracting Barna to come to Arizona Christian University and help found the Cultural Research Center at ACU.

As Dr. Barna likes to say, "You get what you measure." And if, as a University, ACU wanted to produce graduates who have a biblical worldview, it would have to measure along the way.

In those early months with the Cultural Research Center, Barna met regularly with members of the ACU community to begin formulating a worldview survey. The questions for the *Student Worldview Inventory* were developed through that collaborative process between Barna, ACU faculty, and the school's administrators. Questions were drawn from key biblical principles found in the University statement of faith, core commitments, and University learning outcomes. Several iterations were developed and tested with ACU's students.

The final result was the *Student Worldview Inventory*, designed to measure both student beliefs and behavior. Although developed in a university setting, it's not just about determining a student's "head knowledge"—but seeing how well students actually apply biblical truth in their daily lives. Having a biblical worldview enables students to be true disciples of Jesus Christ, knowing and living out God's truth in their lives, and leading to flourishing families and careers.

And this remains the goal of the University's worldview measurement six years later.

To make sure ACU's efforts at worldview development are effective, it's critical for the University to know its incoming students' worldview before they ever set foot on campus.

New students complete the *Inventory* before they begin their academic career at ACU, providing a gauge of their basic worldview as they join the ACU community.

But that's just the start. Students are required to complete the survey at the beginning of each successive academic year and one final time just before graduation. The students are measured anonymously, with individual results protected, and University leaders receive overall outcomes and data needed to evaluate worldview efforts.

According to Barna, "We are breaking new ground by evaluating the worldview of our students and adjusting our teaching and discipling processes to further the biblical literacy and application of ACU students. Integrating the biblical worldview into every course, major, and campus activity not only sets ACU apart, but recaptures the essence of what it means to have a Christian education," he explained.

"We have already made multiple adjustments and changes in emphasis based on the data we've received so far," Munsil said.

Munsil and Barna both stressed the importance of knowing whether the worldview teaching and training are bearing fruit. When it comes to a student's worldview, good intentions are not enough.

Barna's evidence shows that what ACU is doing stands in stark contrast to what is happening in the world outside of the University. Earlier this year, he released the results of CRC's annual *American Worldview Inventory*,

showing that just 4% of American adults possess a biblical worldview. And that number drops to only 2% among the nation's college-aged students (ages 18-24).

"That national outcome underscores how critically important it is for ACU to continue to build its educational platform on biblical worldview development," Barna explains.

"We pray that our efforts will help catalyze a worldview development movement that will consistently increase both public awareness of worldview as a concept, and the importance of developing a biblical worldview as a widespread objective among Christians and in Christian school and ministry settings," Barna said.

Although having this data might give ACU an advantage in recruiting students, that is not the primary goal, Munsil said.

"We are making this testing available nationwide to churches and even to other Christian schools and universities," Munsil said. "This is about advancing the Kingdom, not just ACU. We would love to see every Christian church, school and university use this tool to measure how they are actually doing, and to make appropriate adjustments in order to make more disciples, and make them more effectively. We believe if every Christian institution were measuring worldview and adjusting their ministry accordingly, we could live to see another Great Awakening!

"That's the goal."

The Arizona Christian University Worldview Assessment

is an online survey for use by individuals, groups and churches, and K-12 schools, as well as by colleges and universities. It is available at www.ACUWorldview.com. More information about the Cultural Research Center and its ongoing worldview research is available at www.CulturalResearchCenter.com.

CULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER



ACU WORLDVIEW ASSESMENT



Track & Field MAKES HISTORY



Last spring marked a milestone year for Arizona Christian University's Track & Field program. Under the leadership of Head Coach Brian Bell, now in his fifth year on staff and third year as Director of Track & Field and Cross Country, the Firestorm fielded 70 athletes, each committed to using their God-given talents to glorify the Lord.

In April, the Firestorm women's track & field team captured the

GSAC Conference Championship on the campus of Soka University in Aliso Viejo, California. It was the first conference title in school history for the women's team. In addition, two months earlier, junior long jumper Mikhail Browne became ACU's first-ever NAIA national champion, winning the NAIA National Championship in the long jump with a jump of 24 feet 7.75 inches. The men's team also had a very strong year, finishing as the

runner-up in the GSAC Conference Championship.

Behind the athletes is a dedicated coaching staff that brings expertise across every discipline. Associate Head Coach Manuel Williams specializes in sprints, relays, and jumps. Coach Brent Fahsholz leads the distance runners, while Brenton Couch coaches high jump and



McKenna Rogers

Hometown: Peoria, AZ

Year: Junior

Major: Communication

Events: Pole Vault & 100m Hurdles

Track & Field accomplishments:

- 2nd place in pole vault at conference freshman year
- Conference champion
- 1st place in pole vault
- 3rd place in 100m Hurdles at conference sophomore year
- National qualifier in pole vault sophomore year

Favorite Bible verse: Psalm 18:32-33. "It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; He causes me to stand on the heights."

Favorite team memory: Winning the women's track team's first conference title last year.



multi's. Coach Matt Rogers guides the pole vault squad. Coach Bell works with middle-distance athletes and throwers, in addition to directing the entire program.

Track & Field at ACU spans two competitive seasons each year. The indoor campaign runs from December through February, followed by the outdoor season from March through April, culminating with Nationals in May. This past year, multiple ACU athletes qualified for championships in both seasons. At indoor nationals, Browne claimed first in the long jump, while junior TaHaj Acoff earned NAIA

All-American honors with an eighth place finish in shot put. Outdoors, sophomore McKenna Rogers placed 13th nationally in the pole vault, while Acoff added another top-15 finish in shot put at the NAIA Outdoor Track & Field National Championships.

Beyond the championships and accolades, the team members' relationship with Christ remains the foundation of the program. The team prays before every practice and meet, and gathers weekly for devotionals led by Coach Bell, followed by student-led discipleship groups. The program's theme, as Bell describes it,

is simple but powerful: *"Follow Jesus - to become more like Jesus - to be able to do the things that Jesus did."*

For Coach Bell, success is measured not only in records broken or championships won, but in the spiritual growth of his athletes. "When our athletes graduate, my ultimate goal is that they are equipped to live on mission wherever God sends them next," he states.

A recent example of the spiritual "fruit" being produced by the program is Kourtney (Brunner) Carter, Class of 2024, who is now a first grade teacher

Isaac Liñan

Hometown: I was born in Phoenix, Arizona, but I was primarily raised from the age of 6 1/2 in Switzerland.

Year: Sophomore

Major: Biblical and Theological Studies

Events: 800m & 1500m

Track & Field accomplishments:

- 2nd place at the GSAC Championships in the 800m with a personal record of 1:56.82.

Favorite Bible verse: Joshua 1:9. "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Favorite team memory: Being able to abide in everyone's presence with the Lord every time we have discipleship and training together.





Sedona Dietrich

Hometown: Tucson, AZ

Year: Sophomore

Major: Secondary Education with a concentration in History

Events: Discus, Shot put, Hammer, and Weight Throws

Track & Field accomplishments:

- 1st Place in Discus and Shot Put for GSAC Conference.
- All Conference in Hammer Throw at the GSAC Conference.
- Christian Character recipient for ACU Track and Field 2025.

Favorite Bible verse: Galatians 6:9. "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Favorite team memory: Competing at and winning the GSAC Conference alongside all my amazing teammates, especially the throwing crew. All of our team worked so hard throughout the year, it was joyous and rewarding to see it pay off when we won the conference championship. The Lord was faithful to our team and blessed our work to glorify Him.

and coach at Dream City Christian School in Glendale, Arizona. Kourtney spends her days teaching and discipling eight-year-olds and serving as one of the high school track and field coaches after school. She is passing on the spiritual and athletic lessons she learned during her time at ACU to the next generation. Kourtney was a standout in the track program and served as the women's team captain. She remains in the top three all-time in the 200m sprint, 60m hurdles and 100m hurdles.

Tanner Johnson (Class of 2028) is another notable example of the type of student-athlete Coach Bell's program is producing. A Wyoming native who came to ACU to further his track and field career as a 400

and 800 meter runner, Tanner was initially drawn to the University by the opportunity to compete on the track. Midway through his first year, however, he felt God asking him to surrender his track identity and embrace his identity in Christ. As a result, Tanner shifted his focus to spiritual growth and community building. He helped stand up and now leads the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) club at ACU. He also serves as the President of the "Ring of Fire" student community. Additionally, Tanner serves in a leadership role where he disciples five fellow male freshmen teammates. And his athletic and academic success has mirrored his

spiritual growth. He was a GSAC All-Conference 4x400 and 4x800 relay team member last season and has a 4.0 GPA.

"I CAME TO ACU FOR TRACK, BUT GOD HAS HELPED ME TO SEE MY MISSION BEYOND ATHLETICS AND I LOVE SERVING HIM WHEREVER HE DIRECTS ME"

Arizona Christian University's 2024-2025 Track & Field season will be remembered not just as a year of firsts, but as a testimony to what happens when athletic excellence is paired with a passion for Jesus Christ.

Zachary Cornelius

Hometown: Camp Verde, AZ

Year: Sophomore

Major: Business

Events: 400m Hurdles & 110m Hurdles

Track & Field accomplishments:

- 2025 GSAC 400m Hurdles Conference Champion

Favorite Bible verse: John 13:7. Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

Favorite team memory: Watching the coaches dance during practice!



A portrait of Susan Johnson, a woman with shoulder-length blonde hair, smiling. She is wearing a bright blue button-down shirt and a long necklace with gold and dark beads. She is seated in front of a dark wood bookshelf filled with books, decorative items, and historical artifacts. On the top shelf, there are two small pillows with historical illustrations. To the right, a red banner with the text 'FIRESTORM GO TO' is visible. Below it, a blue banner with 'THE ENDS' is partially seen. The background is slightly out of focus, emphasizing Susan.

SUSAN JOHNSON

Professor, Scholar, Historian

Professor's THREE LESSONS

It is quickly approaching two decades since Arizona Christian University first welcomed Professor Susan Johnson to campus. Throughout those years, colleagues and students alike have consistently admired her love for ACU, the Lord Jesus, her family, church, friends, and of course, the subject of history.

Arizona Christian University embraces a Community Covenant based on the four pillars of its core values, which spell out the acronym FIRE (Faith, Influence, Relationship, Excellence). But to see those qualities lived out by a faculty member, one needs to look no further than Associate Professor of History and University Historian Susan Johnson.

For many, she is ACU personified.

In her smartly decorated office, Professor Johnson often goes over her notes before heading to class. Surrounded by WWII artifacts—posters, planes, and belongings each with their own provenance—she frequently shares stories and takes time to laugh and connect with students, colleagues, and fellow historians. A hand-painted picture of Abraham Lincoln in a top hat, given years ago by a nephew, hangs nearby.

When the topic turns to teaching accurate history within a biblical framework, Professor Johnson expresses her vision with one memorable sentence: ***"We need to become better storytellers with the best facts we have."*** Spoken like a true historian, this statement defines her method. Whether you are an ACU student in one of her classes or not, there is much to learn from Professor Johnson.

Her love for history began early. In the fourth grade at her elementary school in La Mesa, California, the Scholastic book cart rolled by. While her classmates grabbed popular titles, little Susie Weaver reached

for a book on Abraham Lincoln. That first encounter with the stories of that era grew into a lifelong interest in the Civil War, leading her to Gettysburg and many other important historic sites. Though she grew up in California, a part of her heart has always been in the East. Think: Boston and Plymouth, too.

Professor Johnson's expertise reaches beyond the Civil War, and includes an encyclopedic understanding of the American Founding. And since ACU acquired its current campus which sits on the former land of Thunderbird Airfield No. 1, a historic WWII Army Air Corps base, her research into the WWII airfield has made her one of the world's leading experts on the history of the site. At first glance, one might wonder what 58 Chinese pilots, Hollywood actor Jimmy Stewart, Thunderbird Airfield, and Arizona Christian University all have in common? The answer is history—a history that Professor Johnson knows and shares with conviction.



Here is the first lesson from Professor Johnson. She wants ***the best facts***, meaning that she starts and ends with the truth. Truth is her pursuit, passion, and proclamation. She researches diligently, walking battlefields, conducting interviews, reading through archives, and consulting with fellow historians. She models lifelong learning by attending camps, seminars, and courses. She also speaks nationally to large

audiences, sharing about the history of Thunderbird Field and serving as a key voice on topics related to American history.

The second lesson flows naturally from the first. Those who want to be winsome educators must become ***better storytellers***. Her classes brim with wonder. In one memorable instance, students arrived in dresses and suits, prepared to role-play in front of community business leaders who acted as President Grover Cleveland's Pullman Commission of 1894. On another occasion, a member of the American Rosie the Riveter Association spoke to her class. Tears filled eyes as the nonagenarian shared stories with youthful spunk about that pivotal time in history. The students listened with respect and awe, asking thoughtful questions. Some of Professor Johnson's classes have enjoyed historic "picnics," "concerts," and even the occasional live broadcast from their professor while she visited an important historical site. Johnson educates by creating memories, employing active learning strategies, and nurturing cooperative learning.

The third lesson, and perhaps the most important, is hidden in the word ***"become."*** Johnson openly admits she has not yet "arrived." Committed to continual improvement, she presses on, echoing the apostle Paul's words, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

She works at her dual crafts of historian and teaching. She solicits feedback from peers, strives to refine her skills, and embraces what she calls a "growth mindset."

Professor Johnson teaches that history is not just about the past but also about who we are becoming. With faith as her compass, excellence as her standard, and relationships as her joy, she continues to influence us all.

A close-up portrait of a man with dark hair, a beard, and a mustache, smiling. He is wearing a light blue turtleneck sweater under a black quilted vest. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

MANNY HIGUERA

Paying it Forward

PLAYING FREE

Nestor Manuel Higuera Rodriguez—or Manny—is the greatest football kicker in ACU Firestorm history. He also has the distinction of being a two-time viral social media sensation, first from his time at ACU, and second during his stint as a member of the AF1 Arena Football League's Washington Wolfpack this past spring. His list of accomplishments on the football field is long, though with his distinctive grin, Manny will tell you that he ventured into the game of football rather reluctantly. As God would have it, however, this game has led him on an amazing journey to discovering his calling, and God has used Manny and his unique background to encourage many.

Manny grew up in the greater Phoenix area with his parents and two brothers. He attended school in the Paradise Valley Unified School District, and since English was not the primary language spoken in his home, early on was identified as an English Learner (EL) student. His father, Nestor, was a Mexican immigrant who just recently earned his United States citizenship, and his mother, Laura, was the child of immigrant parents. The family primarily spoke Spanish at home, though Nestor and Laura were very committed to their children's mastery of English and their educational achievement.

Manny also struggled with dyslexia, which led to additional challenges throughout his schooling. To help him succeed, he was placed on an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) to address his needs, and thanks to the excellent teachers and parental support he received, Manny was able to test out of the English Language Learning program by sixth grade and participated in all general education classes throughout middle and high school. Even so, Manny admits that his primary and secondary school teachers would be surprised that he went on to successfully complete not only his bachelor's degree, but also a

master of arts in education—as a first generation master's graduate on both sides of his family.

Throughout his childhood and youth, Manny was an avid and skilled soccer player. But during his eighth grade year, he was faced with another challenge that changed the trajectory of his life when he was diagnosed with a type of cancer that affected his lymph nodes. His subsequent treatments derailed a trip to Europe that he had planned with his club soccer team. Crushed by this, Manny (who had been raised in a Catholic home) felt driven to pray, and asked God why this was all happening to him, especially just as his soccer skills and opportunities were beginning to develop. His diagnosis and treatment led him and his family to begin attending church at Iglesia Cruz Del Calvario Asambleas De Dios, where his uncle was the pastor, and—as Manny puts it—also led him “back to life.”



Three surgeries later Manny was declared cancer-free, and he continued to grow academically and spiritually over the next several years. During his junior year at Paradise Valley High School, Manny's journey took another turn when his brother encouraged him to try out to be the kicker for the school's football team. Manny, however, was reluctant. “Why would I play football?” he remembers thinking. “Soccer is my game. That's where I can use my feet!” After some persuasion, he joined his brother in trying out for the team.

Both brothers worked with a kicking coach, the legendary NFL and AFL placekicker Luis Zendejas. As Manny's

placekicking skills developed, he began to see football as a possible pathway to earn a scholarship to college. He knew he wanted to go to college because, in addition to finding football in high school, he had also found his calling—special education.

During that same junior year of high school, Manny purposely failed his Spanish placement exam so he could avoid taking a difficult Spanish course. The lead teacher in the department knew him, however, and told him to go to his counselor and sign up for the more advanced Spanish course. Reluctantly, Manny did. This schedule change resulted in a free period during the day, and his counselor suggested that he use that period to be a student assistant in the school's special education classroom. “I thought, ‘this is great; I can sit around on my phone and do nothing all hour!’” Manny recalled. “But boy, was I wrong!” Manny instantly connected with the students

who needed extra academic and behavioral support in the classroom. He reflected on his own early struggles with dyslexia and learning English and realized that being a special education teacher was the job God had been preparing him to pursue. He enjoyed serving in the special-ed class so much, he purposely arranged his schedule for his senior year to include this student assistant position again.

After graduation from high school, Manny pursued enrollment at Arizona Christian University and went on to serve as the placekicker on the football team for four years. “Coming to ACU changed my life. It changed my whole life,” Manny said. College was difficult, but Transformation Coach Randy Chambers encouraged him with the words, “Play free!” and focus on glorifying God through his studies, his placekicking, and his relationships. And today, whether on the field as a player or coach or in his role as a special education teacher, Manny is teaching others to “play free!”

FIRESTORMFAMILY



1. MACY SPANGLER ('25) works as a Resident Director for ACU. She is also a music director, working with theatre companies such as Moezart Productions and Christian Youth Theater. Macy is assistant directing ACU's production of *Into the Woods* this spring! She is the youngest in a family of ACU/SWC college alums that spans two generations! Both of her parents, **Brad ('00)** and **Sarah ('98)** are alums, along with her older brother, **Dalton (24')** and his wife, **Ava (23')** (Addleman) Spangler. Also pictured are Macy and Dalton's siblings.

2. ELIJAH ('21) AND GABBY (GUTIERREZ, '20) OLANDER welcomed their first baby, Caris Jo Olander, born October 19, 2024. Elijah is serving as a pastoral assistant to Senior Pastor Andrew Gutierrez at Canyon Bible Church in Prescott, AZ. Gabby works for Colorado Christian University as an Enrollment Counselor and is pursuing a Masters in Curriculum and Instruction.

3. MEILING (MILGRAM) RHYNARD ('23) and her husband, Easton, welcomed their second daughter, Sonya, this past September, making them a family of four along with big sister Myla. They attend New Promise Christian Fellowship, where Meiling helps on the worship team. She also volunteers at the Phoenix House of Prayer on their worship team. Meiling started teaching music lessons in August of 2024 with Arise AZ, and says, "It's a joy to help and watch kids grow in their confidence in music."

4. JORDAN ('23) AND SOPHIE (HENZE, '22) CLAYTON were married on April 12, 2025. Both Jordan and Sophie work at Alliance Defending Freedom—Jordan on the IT team and Sophie on the events team. They consider it a gift to share both their work and home life, and are grateful for where life has taken them since college.

FAITHFUL SERVANTS

B. Alexander Wright

When B. Alexander Wright felt the call to ministry in March 1997, he could not have foreseen the impact that moment would have on so many lives. Today, as the founding and Senior Pastor of The Citadel of Praise Christian Church in Peoria, Arizona, Pastor Wright continues to serve with the same passion and purpose that first drew him into Gospel ministry nearly three decades ago.

Before launching The Citadel, he spent 13 years faithfully serving at Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church under Bishop Alexis Thomas, also an ACU graduate, where he was Pastoral Assistant and Director of Evangelism & Ministry Support. His leadership extended beyond the local church as well—he also served as Director of Protocol for the State of Arizona with the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship.

In addition to his pastoral work, Wright is the founder and CEO of Triumphant Ministries, an author (*Do You Know the ABC's of Your Faith*), psalmist, and communicator known for his energetic, Spirit-led approach to ministry. Originally from Baltimore, Maryland, he studied at Baltimore City College and Morgan State University before earning his B.A. in Biblical Studies from Southwestern Bible College (now Arizona Christian University) in Phoenix.

Those who know Pastor Wright describe him as a true servant-leader, discerning and dedicated to advancing Kingdom work wherever God leads. Together with his wife, Lady Nicole, he is raising four children and living out a personal conviction that defines both his life and ministry: When praise fills the atmosphere, nothing is impossible.



Scott Olander

For Pastor Scott Olander, life has always been about one central purpose: leading people into a passionate relationship with Jesus Christ. Guided by Philippians 1:21—"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain"—and John 3:30—"He must increase, but I must decrease"—Scott has devoted his life to growing in love for the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. Since 2008, Scott has made a daily habit of reading God's Word, a discipline that anchors his priorities: first, to love the Lord; second, to love and serve his wife, children, and grandchildren; and third, to serve both believers and the lost in fulfillment of his calling. That same commitment to Christ is reflected in his family—his son Elijah also graduated from Arizona Christian University, following in his father's footsteps.

Scott earned his Bachelor of Science in Christian Ministries from Southwestern College (now Arizona Christian University) and a Master of Arts in Theology from Trinity Theological Seminary. He served as Youth Pastor at Manzanita Baptist Church in Kingman, Arizona, for 16 years before becoming Pastor of First Baptist Church in Page in 2012. His ministry is defined by a love for expository, Christ-exalting preaching and one-on-one discipleship that equips others to become disciple-makers.

Outside the pulpit, Scott and his wife Stephanie have two adult children. He enjoys college football, boating and kayaking with his family on Lake Powell, bodyboarding at Carpinteria Beach in California, and even mowing his yard. His culinary favorites—Asian cuisine, pizza, and hot wings—round out a life joyfully lived for Christ in every setting.



CLASSNOTES

'20s

KANE KIAUNIS ('25) signed a professional baseball contract with the Portland Mavericks.

TYMEN HENRY ('25) graduated with his Bachelor of Arts in Family Studies and is currently working as an Admissions Counselor for his alma mater, Arizona Christian University.



▲ **JOEY ELLIS ('25)** was recently engaged to Ashley Fox, who leads the music program at New City Church in downtown Phoenix. They are counting down the days until their wedding on April 12, 2026! Joey also started a new job with Stewardship—home to many Southwestern alumni—as a realtor specializing in the East Valley. When he's not working, Joey enjoys volunteering at New City Church, golfing, or cheering on his favorite sports teams. And perhaps his favorite new role of all: He's officially been promoted to "fun uncle."

MARK SIERRA ('24) graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and is currently enrolled in the Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.) Program at Midwestern University.

REGGIE ROBINSON ('24) is currently serving at Scottsdale Bible Church as a Minister in Residence. He is also pursuing his master's degree in Theological Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. In addition, Reggie works at ACU as the Student Engagement Coordinator, where he trains and supports student leaders. He also does videography for Student Life.

CHRISTOPHER BECK ('23) is co-owner and Vice President of Beck Build, a company he launched in early 2023 with his father to redefine what it means to run a construction business with integrity, innovation, and intention.

JACOB STEVENS ('23) is a Financial Services Representative at Morgan Stanley, where he is able to apply the knowledge he learned earning his Business Administration / Concentration in Entrepreneurship from ACU.



▲ **MICHAEL AND EMILY (HOBROCK) ROGERS ('21)** were married in April 2022. They have two children, a son born in June 2023 and daughter in April 2025. Michael graduated from Phoenix Seminary with his Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies in December 2023 and is the irrigation coordinator at Dupper Landscape. Emily is the Director of Giver Services at National Christian Foundation Southwest, the nation's largest Christian donor-advised fund provider.

JENNIFER (VICKMAN) AND ETHAN WATT ('21) met and started dating during their freshman year at ACU. They married in May 2024. In January 2025, they bought their first home and added a golden retriever puppy to their family. Ethan has been advancing in the HVAC industry as an assistant installer and is set to become a lead installer in the next few months. Jennifer recently transitioned from her role as an accounting specialist at a property management company to a new career as an office manager at Dino Turf Cleaning.

ROCK HUDGENS ('20) is the Director of Baseball Operations at the University of Southern California. Before joining USC in 2022, Hudgens played a pivotal role at Grand Canyon University, collaborating closely with Head Coach Andy Stankiewicz to achieve remarkable outcomes during their successful two-season tenure together.

GRACE KOURY ('20) went on to Midwestern University after graduating with her Bachelor of Science in Biology, and subsequently graduated in 2025 with her Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine. She is currently practicing as an Associate Veterinarian at Kaibab Veterinary Clinic in Flagstaff, Arizona. She and her fiancée, Justin, love finding new adventures with their three dogs, Ellie, Bunny, and Luffy.



▲ **MAVERICK AND KYLIE (NEAFUS) GAMEZ ('20)** celebrated their five-year wedding anniversary this July! They also welcomed their daughter, Journey, to the family in April. Their two-year-old son, Lincoln, is doing

a great job transitioning into his big brother role. They feel blessed that Kylie is able to stay home and raise their kids. Maverick recently earned a promotion to Engineer with the Goodyear Fire Department and continues to serve the community he grew up in. He also recently took on the opportunity to coach quarterbacks for the new Goodyear High School, helping to build a strong program and culture from the ground up.

'10s

- ▼ **DARIUS GASATURA ('19)** graduated from ACU with an undergraduate degree in Biblical Studies and went on to earn his Master of Divinity from Phoenix Seminary. Gasatura, who came to the United States from Rwanda 10 years ago, was appointed Vicar of St. Nicholas Anglican Church in September of 2024. He is married to Diane and they have one son, Shima James.



COURTNEY CHRISTMAS ('19) was inducted into the Liberty High School Athletics Hall of Fame in September 2025, as a member of the Class of 2015. She was recognized for her impressive high school basketball career (including 4X All-Region and 3X All-State honors,) leading the NAIA in scoring her senior year at ACU, finishing her collegiate career as the all-time leader in points, rebounds, blocks, and steals for ACU.

BRIDGET KRUCK ('18) is in her seventh year as an Associate Head Softball Coach at Chandler Gilbert Community College.

ZACH VOGEL ('17) graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration and is the Executive Director at Identity Sports, a ministry that inspires athletes and sports fans to find their identity in Christ.

ALI (VETNAR) PARDI ('17) graduated with a Communication degree, with a concentration in Broadcasting, and currently serves as the Deputy Communications Director for the Phoenix Fire Department.

RYAN LASHUA ('16) and his wife, Kassie, have been married 17 years and in ministry for 14 years. They have four children: Emma 14, Micah 8, Noah 3, and Judah 1. Presently Ryan is the Pastor of Youth and Connections at CityView Church in Glendale. He wishes to express heartfelt gratitude for prayers and support of fellow ACU alumni and staff while he was fighting brain cancer between 2009-2017, including four brain surgeries, two years of chemotherapy, and two months of radiation treatments.

- ▼ **DR. BENJAMIN A. JOHNSON ('13)** and his wife **BREANA (FRANKS, '15) JOHNSON** recently completed missionary training with Global Outreach International and have plans to relocate to Burundi (East Africa) in the spring of 2026. Ben will work as a missionary doctor in the world's most medically underserved region, and Breana will be involved with a Christian School for the deaf in their rural village. The Johnsons are in the process of raising funds, as well as preparing for the birth of their third child this coming December. They are also parents to Benaiah, age 7, and Brielle, age 2.



DR. TYLER BROWN ('12) is a Pediatric Cardiac Critical Care physician at Phoenix Children's Hospital. After graduating with his Bachelors of Science degree in Biology from ACU, he went to Loma Linda University School of Medicine, graduating with his M.D. in 2016.



- ▲ **JAYSE AND BRITTNEY (MOLLERUP, '12) MEYER ('11)** married shortly after graduation and are parents to three children, Maylee, Easton and Colton. Jayse has served as a youth pastor at Desert Breeze Community Church in Phoenix, AZ for the past five years. Brittney is working as a pediatric sleep consultant for Taking Cara Babies.

MATTHEW MOSCHGAT ('10) has served in the U.S. Army for over 15 years and currently holds the rank of Major. For the past three years he has worked with the United Nations in South Korea. He and his wife, Lydia Allison, are proud parents of five children. The Moschgat family represents the second generation of ACU alumni with Matthew's mother, Jill Bailey, graduating in 2002 with her Bachelor's in Christian Ministries.

'00s

JONATHAN BENTLEY ('08) has had a successful business career for the last 20 years, most recently at Christian Brothers Automotive. Jonathan's wife, Bethanne (Garrison, '08), stays busy homeschooling their four children. They are both actively involved in their church.

SCOTT LARTER ('07) recently accepted the position of Principal of Desert Sky Middle School. Scott has been in education since 2007 and joined the Deer Valley Unified School District in 2011. Over the years, he has served as a teacher, behavior coach, athletic coordinator, coach, dean of students, and most recently, assistant principal—an experience that led to being named DVUSD Assistant Principal of the Year in 2024. Outside of school, Scott is a husband and dad to two young children. He enjoys traveling, visiting national parks and Disney destinations, watching movies, and cheering on the Suns, Cardinals, and Diamondbacks.

MATT CURTIS ('06) is the Family Ministries Pastor at Highlands Church. His wife, Shayla (Moll, '08), works in the health and fitness field. Matt and Shayla are parents to three children.

CASSY LOUGH THRUSH ('05) stays active with her many roles as a mom, teacher, mentor, and business woman.



▲ **MARSHA DAVIS ('03)** and her husband Todd are a dynamic husband-and-wife team whose passion for people, purpose, and play has inspired thousands through their work in leadership development, recreation and personal wellness. In addition to keynote speaking, they serve as college instructors in Recreation, Leisure Studies and Leadership at Scottsdale and Mesa Community Colleges. Outside of the

classroom and workplace, Todd and Marsha cherish their most rewarding role—being grandparents to four amazing grandchildren. Together, they have co-authored two impactful books: *Fun at Work*, and *Park and Recreate*.

ANGELA (UHLER) ANDERSON ('02) is an English and Concurrent Enrollment teacher at Castle View High School in Colorado. She graduated with her Masters in Fine Arts in writing from the University of Nebraska-Omaha in 2022 and was awarded UNO's Graduate Research and Creative Activities Grant. Her publications include Red in *All the Promises we Cannot Keep*, an *R.H.S. Anthology*, and "A Tooth for Trulian" in *Meet Me At Midnight: an RHS Anthology*. Angela debuted her first novel, *The Elixir of the Green Willow Guard* this past April. In addition to writing and teaching, Angela is mom to four children and helps her parents on their family farm.

SCOTT LAWRENCE ('00) has been successful in youth work, worship leading and in business. He and wife, Sarah (Gosch, '02), are celebrating their 25th anniversary. Sarah is presently teaching special education in the Phoenix area.

'90s



▲ **JASON LEHMAN ('99)** is a consultant and coach for churches and faith-based organizations seeking to rethink and reimagine their mission and strategy for more effective ministry. He has partnered with nationally and internationally recognized organizations, as well as small, local ministries, helping them identify and overcome

communication barriers so they can strengthen their ministry impact. Over the past 25 years, Jason has served in a variety of roles, including pastor, board member, creative professional, business owner, speaker, and mentor. His work is driven by a passion for helping ministries thrive in an ever-changing world. Jason has been married to his wife, Melinda, for 27 years. They have three daughters and live in north Phoenix, Arizona.

BRIAN FARONE ('99) has served as District Superintendent for EFCA's (Evangelical Free Church of America) North Central District since 2017. In addition, he spent four years serving in district leadership on the staff of EFCA West. Brian and his wife, Teri, are the parents of two young adults, Samuel and Grace. As District Superintendent, his ministry focuses on shepherding North Central District pastors and church leaders, providing spiritual leadership for the NCD staff and Board of Directors, preaching and teaching God's Word, starting and overseeing NCD ministries and initiatives, identifying, serving, and recruiting future district leaders and researching and promoting pastoral discipleship.

▼ **PHIL AND HEIDI KOOISTRA ('98)** have been married and in ministry for over 28 years and have three children Elizabeth, Rachel, and Benjamin. Phil recently received his Doctorate of Ministry from Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon. He serves as the lead pastor and primary teaching elder at Grace Bible in Bend, Oregon. Heidi works alongside Phil at Grace Bible in women's ministry.



CHRIS MORRIS ('97) recently published his latest book, *Trekking Towards Tenacity: Your Family's Roadmap to Stronger Mental Health*. It is a walk through Psalm 139 verse by verse, designed to help children develop mentally healthy habits. He is an accomplished author and speaker, promoting mental health in the church and family.



▲ **MATTHEW SELLERS ('97)** is currently serving as Lead Pastor at Paragon Church in Rio Rancho, New Mexico. His wife, **CHRISTY (BEAVERS) ('98)** is also a grad who homeschools their children and helps in ministry and in the community. Matt and Christy have seven children: Camden, age 23 (currently serving in the US Air Force and married to Cecilia), Payton, age 18; Maylee Grace, age 16; Lev, age 14; Endale, age 12; LillyAnn, age 12; and Glory Kate, age 7.

'80s

DEBBIE (CLIBBON) SHAEFFER ('85) works as a music teacher in the Scottsdale Unified School district. She was in the Chenaniah Singers traveling group at Southwestern College for two years. She and her husband, David ('83), met at Southwestern College. Debbie and Dave have four grown children and 6 (soon to be 7) grandchildren.

ALLAN HARRIS ('84) retired after teaching at the same elementary school for more than 40 years, Campo Bello Elementary in Phoenix, AZ. Allan taught with fellow alumnus **DAVID SHAEFFER ('83)**.

EDWARD AND TERRI (SONMOR) GODOY ('84) live in Washington State, where Edward is the owner and general contractor of Greenway

Custom Homes. Terri is the Children's Director at Westside Church.

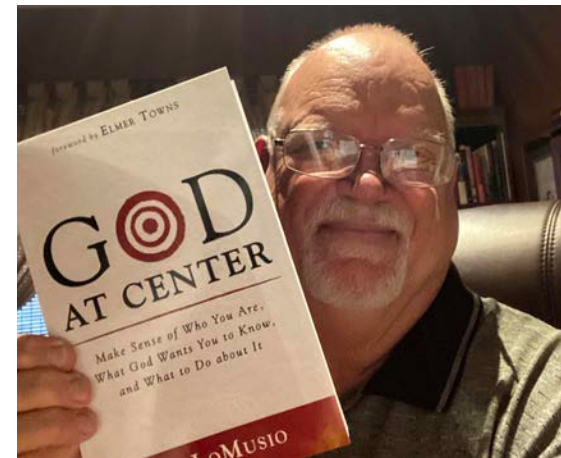
▼ **DAVID SHAEFFER ('83)** graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Pre-seminary ('83), and Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Ed. ('86). He recently retired from Paradise Valley Unified Schools after 36 years of teaching 5th and 6th graders. David sang in the Chenaniah Singers traveling group and the Chenaniah Quartet for about seven years at Southwestern College. After graduation, David spent one year full time on staff at Shiloh Community Church working with Christian Education, then once he started his teaching career, he and his wife, Debbie ('85), stayed at Shiloh part time as worship leaders and helped a Shiloh church plant. The Shaeffers have ministered with Shiloh Church in some form for 37 years now. David attributes the direction in his life, many lifelong friends, and the happiness he has had over his adult life to "God working through the life changing years he experienced at Southwestern College."



'70s

LARRY AND VONNIE (EARL) PRATT ('78) met freshman year at Southwestern College in the fall of 1973. They currently live outside of Port Orchard, WA, on a small farm with a few sheep, a donkey and a barn cat. They married in 1975 at Calvary Baptist in Wickenburg, AZ. They are parents to two daughters Barb and Bethany, and nine grandchildren. Larry and Vonnice worked in secular jobs for 40 years

while staying involved with a variety of volunteer ministry opportunities. In 2018 they started full time with InFaith as puppet and music missionaries, as well as occasionally serving as pulpit supply. They also volunteer two days a week at One Less Orphan benefit store, a thrift store (started by their daughter, Bethany), which benefits orphan care and offers financial grants to help adoptive families. Vonnice has published two devotional books in the last couple of years, *From This Shepherd's Heart* and *Life Lessons From This Shepherd's Heart*.



▲ **JOE LOMUSIO ('76)** has more than 40 years of pastoral ministry experience and is currently the Director of the Doctor of Ministry program at California Graduate School of Theology at Haven University, where he is also the professor of Old Testament and Hebrew. Dr. LoMusio has received strong reviews for his fourth book, *God At Center*, published by Wipf & Stock Publishers.

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