

ARIZONA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE // SPRING 2026

ABLAZE



**A BORN
SHEPHERD**

STUDENT FEATURE

**15 YEARS OF
VISIONARY LEADERSHIP**

PRESIDENT MUNSIL

**GEN Z
UNTETHERED**

CULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER

the PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

SPRING 2026



It is hard to believe that more than 15 years have passed since I stepped into what I thought would be a temporary assignment to serve as interim President of Southwestern College.

What a rollercoaster of a journey! From seemingly insurmountable challenges to extraordinary breakthroughs and even miracles.

I remember a board meeting more than a decade ago when ACU was facing significant financial distress. As we often do, we heard a testimony from an ACU student whose life had been transformed by Christ through ACU's unique educational community.

After the student left, we were reminded again that ACU was making a huge spiritual and educational difference—and yet here we were grappling with existential threats to its survival. Just then the late John Miller—a trustee and former bank executive—looked slowly around the room and said, “Failure is not an option!”

As ACU's leaders, that became our mindset. We firmly believed if we continued to faithfully grow students spiritually while providing an increasingly excellent education, God would show up and meet needs. And He did—again and again.

The future is always uncertain. There will always be threats and obstacles.

But we look to the next 15 years of ACU with increasing confidence in God's plan and provision for ACU, and that's because we are wholeheartedly committed to the mission of educating and equipping Christian leaders of influence and excellence.

We know from the sad history of Christian higher education in America that at some point most Christian colleges abandon or substantially undermine their original purpose—and this decline is inevitable when they start admitting large numbers of non-Christian students. Rather than evangelize the students, history reveals that eventually the non-Christian students evangelize the school away from its mission.

So ACU will remain committed to discipleship—we will continue to admit only those students who profess faith in Christ and a desire to grow in that faith.

Through ground-breaking research from ACU's George Barna, we now know that ACU students grow spiritually each year they attend ACU. On average, we know that while they arrive with a genuine relationship with Christ, they are largely thinking and living like their peers. But by the time they graduate, they are 28 times more likely than their peers to think and live biblically! We know there is more than an

eight-fold increase in commitment to biblical worldview from freshman year to graduation.

With these results, it should be obvious what's next. Our ACU graduates are what our world needs—and we need more of them! Back in 2011 we celebrated 57 graduates in the first year of our new name. In May of 2026, we will produce about 250 graduates.

Now that we have “proof of concept”—that even in this culture, surrounding students in a community of faculty, staff, coaches and administrators who have a discipleship mindset leads to significant spiritual growth—we can ask God to continue ACU's growth with confidence.

We are grateful in 2025-26 that we were able to complete the unfinished northwest corner of our Glendale campus with soccer, lacrosse, baseball, and sand volleyball facilities. As we head into summer, we will be undertaking a master plan to determine ACU's future academic, residential, and extracurricular facility needs as we anticipate an 11th straight year of record enrollment in the fall.

Academically, we are exploring an expansion of our educational offerings to include nursing and engineering—the top two programs where students who want to come to ACU are not able to because we don't have them yet. Our biblical studies programs will be enhanced by new training through the International Evangelism Association, the upcoming launch of the Tom Elliff Missions Center at ACU, and an exciting new partnership with Dallas Theological Seminary.

ACU students will now have opportunities to lead in our newly launched Honors College and in two new programs next year—a speech/debate team and an entrepreneurship club. We are also exploring expansion into more professional degrees both at the undergraduate and graduate level.

We remain committed to building Kingdom influence in our world. That includes helping Christian schools, colleges, and churches embrace a culture of measuring biblical worldview development through our Cultural Research Center at ACU.

We are grateful for all of you who have joined ACU on this journey of growth and Kingdom influence, and we are excited about where God will lead us next!

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

President Len Munsil and his wife, Dr. Tracy Munsil, in front of the Floyd C. Brown Global Missions Statue on the campus of Arizona Christian University.

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EMMA HEJNY

Walking with Others

A BORN SHEPHERD



Excellence can feel increasingly rare in modern culture, but it remains a trait Arizona Christian University seeks to cultivate in its students. At just 21 years old, ACU senior Emma Hejny already displays it in abundance. On any given week, she might be mentoring freshmen in her residence hall, organizing events for honors students, or serving creative coffee drinks through Barista Buddies, a club that offers free, original drinks at campus events.

While many students arrive at ACU with a built-in social network through athletics, music, or other affinity groups, Emma's path on campus has taken shape differently. Through leadership, service, and intentional friendships, she has built a community around her, and in the process has become a steady source of encouragement and guidance for the students she encounters.

That instinct to build community is visible in many corners of campus

life. Emma serves as president of two student organizations—the University Scholars Association (USA) and Barista Buddies—while also participating in several others. As president of USA, she helps integrate honors scholarship students into campus life while organizing service projects and social events that build connections among some of ACU's most accomplished student leaders. Through Barista Buddies, she oversees the creation of drink menus, experiments with flavor combinations, coordinates volunteers, and manages the club's inventory as students serve handcrafted drinks at campus events. She has also previously served as a student leader in the Volleyball and Christian Challenge clubs.

But it is Emma's role as a Resident Assistant (RA) that most clearly reflects the heart behind her leadership. "I became an RA my sophomore year," Emma said, "and I've done it for three years now. All

three years have been spent with primarily freshman girls, and I just love that. It's been really fun to get to walk with these girls as they're kind of transitioning into adulthood, on their own for the first time...just to really make those connections right from the start."

Emma especially enjoys creating memorable moments for the young women on her floor—simple experiences that help turn a residence hall into a community.

One of her favorite memories came during her sophomore year. "For Thanksgiving or Christmas, I can't remember what holiday now, we put together a dinner within our budget," she recalled. "We had mashed potatoes and vegetables, and we had a really, really long family-style table outside on the grass in front of Freedom [dorm]. It was candlelit, there were black tablecloths, and everyone came dressed nice. It was just a really fun time."

Moments like that reflect something deeper about Emma's character. She enjoys being present during seasons of transition—helping people feel seen, supported, and less alone. That instinct did not begin in college. It traces back to her childhood.

Growing up in a Christian home, Emma decided at the age of 8 that she wanted to be a missionary. After returning from a mission trip to Trinidad, she felt certain that sharing the Gospel would always be central to her life. As she grew older, however, Emma realized that missionary work did not always require traveling overseas. Her ministry could also take place close to home. That realization eventually led her to her current work with Choices Pregnancy Center, a pregnancy resource center on the ACU campus, where she now works full-time.

Majoring in Family Studies, Emma has long been passionate about advocating for life and supporting women facing difficult circumstances. In April of 2024, she began volunteering at Choices, an experience that soon grew into a full-time role. Today, Emma serves as a Center Coordinator, organizing volunteers and helping ensure the ministry operates smoothly. Yet for

Emma, the most meaningful part of the work is still the personal interaction with the women who walk through the doors.

"You really get to sit with a woman," Emma says. "You're the first connection with them. You get to be the one to run their pregnancy test, get them resources, and just connect with them on their way out as they are just looking at their next steps."

**"YOU'RE THE FIRST
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Choices operates multiple locations, including a mobile unit, serving women who are navigating unplanned pregnancies. The ministry provides a range of practical support, including free ultrasounds, pregnancy testing, parenting classes, and other resources. Staff members and volunteers meet with women to help them understand the options before them and to offer support as they consider their next steps.

"These moms have just found out they're pregnant," Emma explains. "A lot of times they're pretty stressed about that, and now they have to make a decision. I get to sit with them, counsel them, and tell them about their options; because legally speaking, they do still have three options. They can choose to parent, they can choose to adopt, or they can choose to abort...but our job at Choices is to tell them the truth about those choices...and how that really can impact their life for better or for worse."

From mentoring freshmen in a residence hall to sitting with women facing life-altering decisions, Emma has found herself repeatedly stepping into moments where people need guidance, encouragement, and biblical truth. At ACU, that calling has taken shape through leadership, relationships, and opportunities to serve both on campus and in the community.

It is a quiet kind of leadership, but a powerful one. In classrooms, residence halls, and ministry settings across the city, Emma Hejny is learning to shepherd people well—living out a calling she sensed years ago and pursuing it with faith, compassion, and excellence.





ACU to THE WHITEHOUSE

For Arizona Christian University alumna Olivia (Brown) Escobedo, the path from a college classroom to the White House has been shaped by faith, conviction, and a desire to serve in the public square. Today, Escobedo serves as Deputy Director of Presidential Correspondence Management in the administration of Donald Trump—a role that places her at the intersection of the American people and the president.

Her journey into national politics began during her time as a student at ACU.

“My political involvement actually started at Arizona Christian University,” Escobedo said. “While I was there, I studied communication and then minored in biblical studies and political science. And that experience really shaped how I think about leadership and public service and who I am today.”

She said the faculty challenged students not merely to study culture, but to engage it.

“My professors were amazing and they really encouraged us to engage culture and to be out in the arena and

lead from a place of conviction and a place of faith,” she said.

One professor in particular had a lasting impact.

“A shout out to Dr. Tracy Munsil,” Escobedo said, recalling how influential the former Chair of the Department of Political Science had been in her journey. “She was someone that really, really guided me during my time at ACU, and I was so grateful for that.”

Those classroom experiences translated into leadership opportunities on campus. During her final semester in Spring 2019, Escobedo founded an ACU chapter of Turning Point USA, an experience that helped confirm her interest in political engagement and public service.

Shortly after graduation, she stepped directly into the world of national campaigns.

“Right after graduating, I jumped right into campaigns,” Escobedo explained. “My first job was working for the America Fighting Back PAC... to help elect President Trump.”

In 2019, she became the first regional field director hired in Arizona for the campaign, organizing volunteers, building grassroots networks, and connecting with voters across the state.

“I oversaw hundreds of volunteers and staff, and it was an amazing experience,” she said.

The campaign also shaped her personal life. During that season she met Christopher Escobedo, who would later become her husband. Today the couple both work in the White House, with Christopher serving as Special Assistant to the President and Western Regional Political Director of the Office of Political Affairs.

Looking back, Escobedo sees God’s providence throughout her journey.

“God has just been leading me to the right experiences and to the right people this entire time,” she said. “And I have really utilized everything that I’ve learned at Arizona Christian University and holding on to that faith.”

Between election cycles, Escobedo continued working at the intersection

of faith and public life, helping Christian organizations with political and philanthropic fundraising. In 2024, she accepted what she describes as one of the most meaningful roles of her career: serving as political director and spokesperson for Arizona's pro-life "No on Prop 139" campaign.

That season of work eventually led to another major opportunity—serving on the Presidential Inaugural Committee preparing for the president's inauguration.

"That was setting up President Trump's 2024 inauguration, which was crazy," she said with a laugh. "It was such a blast. I was so grateful to be a part of that."

Today, Escobedo works in the White House Office of Presidential Correspondence, which reviews and responds to letters sent to the president from across the country.

"What the Office of Presidential Correspondence does is receive all the letters and gifts that the president has and manage those to make sure that they get a thoughtful response from the president," she explained. "It really, truly bridges the gap between the American people and the president."

Her role involves reviewing thousands of messages and identifying stories and concerns that should be elevated for the president's attention.

"Throughout the day I'm combing through letters, making sure that the president sees these really special letters," she said. "And you never know—they can end up at the State of the Union, they can become law."

Sometimes those letters carry deeply personal stories that shape national policy. One such letter came from the family of Laken Riley, a 22-year-old University of Georgia nursing student who was killed by an illegal immigrant while out for a run near campus. The family's letter sharing her story was brought to President Trump and helped spur the development of the Laken Riley Act, which was signed into law on January 29, 2025. The legislation strengthens federal authorities' ability to prevent the release of non-U.S. nationals who commit crimes.

MOMENTS LIKE THAT REMINDESCOBEDO WHY HER WORK MATTERS.

"It's just such an amazing experience," she said. "And I'm so grateful to be a part of it."

For Escobedo, serving at the White House is more than a professional milestone—it is the realization of a lifelong dream.

"It's been my dream since I was a little girl to work in the White House," she said. "And it's only through God that I am where I am today."

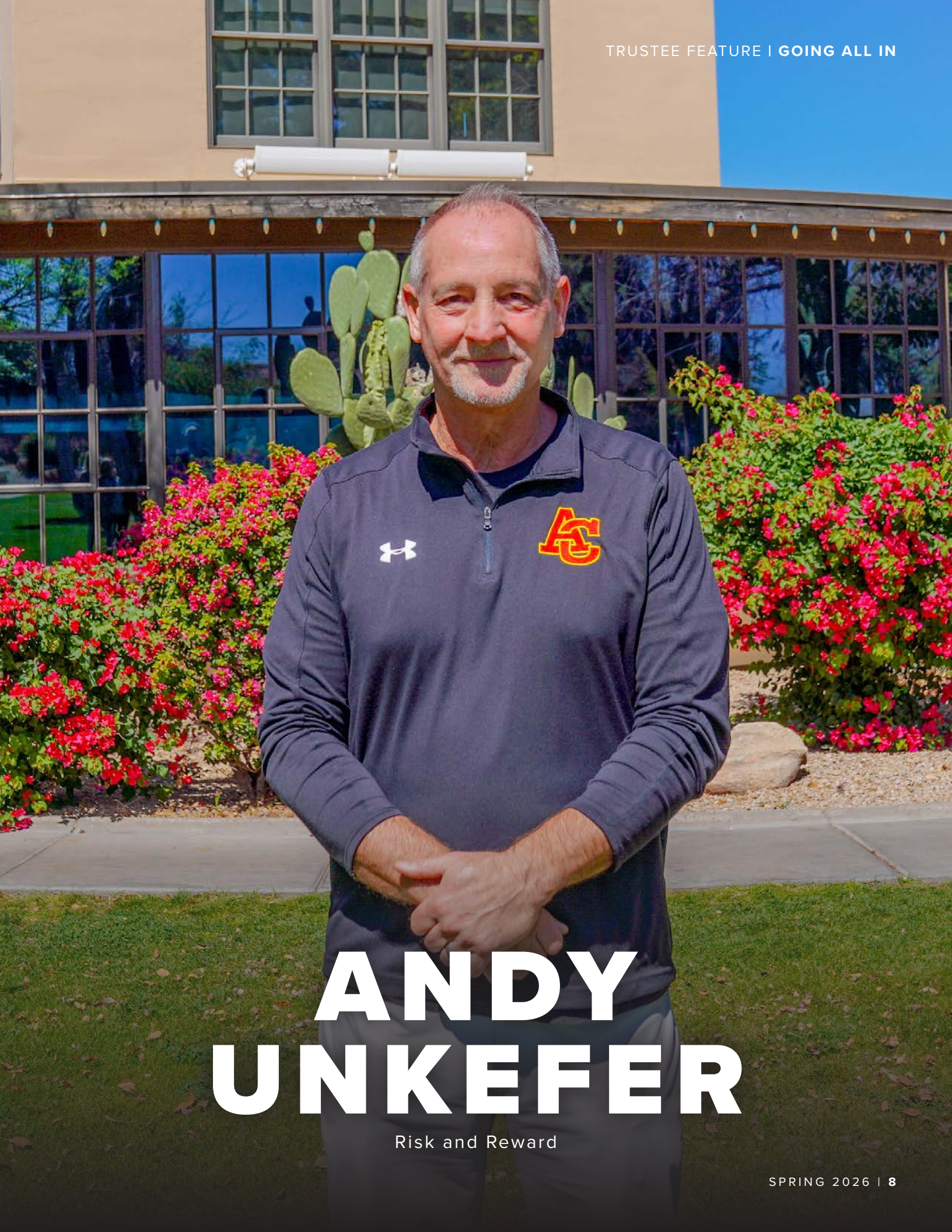
Even while navigating a demanding role in one of the world's most visible institutions, her faith remains the foundation guiding her work.

Her next season will include another major milestone as well: welcoming a new baby. The Escobedos are expecting their first child soon, a son Olivia jokingly calls a "White House baby."

For ACU students and alumni watching her journey, Escobedo hopes her story serves as a reminder that faith and public leadership can go hand in hand.

From founding a campus organization to helping manage communication between Americans and the president, Escobedo's path reflects the calling she first encountered in the classrooms of Arizona Christian University—to step into the arena and lead with conviction, faith, and purpose.



A man with a grey beard and short grey hair is standing outdoors in front of a building with large windows. He is wearing a dark blue long-sleeved polo shirt with an Under Armour logo on the left chest and a red and yellow 'A&C' logo on the right chest. His hands are clasped in front of him. The background features a building with a curved roofline, large windows reflecting the sky, and lush green bushes with bright red flowers. A large saguaro cactus is visible behind the man. The ground is a mix of grass and gravel.

ANDY UNKEFER

Risk and Reward

Going ALL IN

For Andy Unkefer, risk has never been theoretical.

It showed up early in life, long before business success, boardrooms, or his relationship with Arizona Christian University.

As a young child battling severe asthma, he spent time in the hospital under an oxygen tent, struggling to breathe. His fingers would turn blue from lack of oxygen. Even then, he understood something was wrong. He remembers wondering if he might die.

Around that same time, an older couple offered his parents a simple but consequential piece of advice: *"You have two kids now—you need to get into church."*

That decision would shape everything.

"I began learning about the Bible and the forgiveness we receive through Jesus' death and resurrection," Unkefer recalls. "It had an immediate and lasting impact."

But coming to faith did not mean things were suddenly smooth sailing for Andy. His family's financial life rose quickly and then collapsed. For a brief season, they lived lavishly, with a beautiful home and vacations to Europe and Hawaii. Then came bankruptcy and divorce during his high school years, exposing him to the fragility of success.

"Having much and losing it taught me not to depend on money," he says. "It taught me to depend on God."

That lesson would become foundational.

At Grand Canyon University, where Unkefer walked on to the basketball

team under future Hall of Fame coach Paul Westphal, life demanded a new level of discipline. He balanced school, work, and athletics, learning that focused effort pays off over time.

Adversity followed him there as well.

During his college years, his father was arrested for fraud. The impact was immediate. Financial support for college disappeared, and the future he had been building suddenly felt uncertain.

"Life will be full of challenges," he says. "That season forced me to decide who I was going to be."

Westphal's influence helped anchor that decision. More than a coach, he modeled a philosophy of excellence rooted in character.

"He expected the pursuit of excellence rather than perfection," Unkefer says. "He taught us about the dignity of pursuing a goal and the personal rewards that come from each step along the way."

Those lessons extended far beyond basketball.

Unkefer's early career moved through several industries, from technology to sales to insurance. Each step added experience, though not every environment aligned with his values. In one role, he helped a small

business grow significantly, only to realize that the owner's priorities were not the kind he wanted to build his life around.

"I thought, this is not the kind of person I want to work for long-term," he says.

The defining moment came when a corporate acquisition eliminated his division. Suddenly, he was out of work with three children at home and another on the way.

It was a moment that required a decision.

"This is when I chose to start my own marketing company," he says. "We had very little money. It took a tremendous amount of effort, and God's protection."

The risk was real, and so was the pressure.



Andy Unkefer with his wife, Amy.

Over time, the company succeeded. Through that process, Unkefer developed a clear understanding of leadership, one shaped as much by conviction as by experience.

"Leadership is putting yourself at risk for the benefit of your team and your clients," he says. "A lot of people do the opposite."

His approach, rooted in service, transparency, and shared success, reflects the influence of his faith.

"Jesus came to serve, not to be served," he says. "That shapes how I think about leadership."

As his business grew, so did his capacity to give. What began as sacrifice—stretching to afford Christian education for his children—gradually became a more intentional way of living.

"There was a point where we gave more than we ever had before," he says. "And as the business grew, it gave us the room to give more."

That shift reframed success.

"Truly successful people love to see others win," Unkefer says.

For Unkefer, Arizona Christian University represents a rare alignment of conviction and opportunity. Investing in young people, particularly through Christian education, became central.

"What better thing can you do than teach a young person the Gospel and prepare their mind for the future?" he says.

"Higher education is suffering from negative cultural influences right now," he says. "But what can we do better than teach the Gospel, feed the soul, and prepare students for lives of influence?"

What stood out about ACU was not only the mission, but the consistency behind it.

"The commitment of the Board, the leadership, the faculty, is to deliver a biblical worldview in every classroom," he says. "At the end of the day, that's what really matters."

As a trustee, he has seen that commitment play out in tangible

ways. And in some key moments in ACU's history, his commitment has required more than oversight. It has meant stepping forward personally, accepting real risk to help protect and sustain the University's mission. For Unkefer, that kind of action is not unusual. It is sacrificial leadership.

He points to sustained growth and moments that defy conventional explanation, including the University's dramatic campus expansion.

"You can see God's hand directly blessing what's happening here," he says.

The impact, he believes, is most evident in the students.

requiring patience, new approaches to parenting, and a deep level of trust. It has also been transformative.

"The best part has been watching them change," he says. "From believing churches were bad to becoming young men who understand God's grace."

One moment stands out to Andy. A photograph captures the instant one of his nephews came to faith, hands raised and face filled with joy.

"That's it," Unkefer says. "That's the legacy."

For him, the connection is unmistakable.



"There's only one meaningful legacy we can leave," he says. "To show the truth of the Gospel to our children and establish a family culture that can impact generations."

From a hospital bed to the boardroom, from financial loss to entrepreneurial risk, from business success to personal sacrifice, Unkefer's life has followed a consistent pattern. He steps out in faith, even when the outcome is uncertain.

"We're seeing students come here for one reason and leave on fire for Jesus," he says. "That's life-changing."

For Unkefer, investing in ACU is not simply strategic. It is deeply spiritual.

If Unkefer's business career reflects risk and resilience, his personal life reflects something even deeper.

In recent years, he and his wife, Amy, made the decision to adopt their nephews, children who had experienced significant trauma, including neglect and abuse.

"It didn't feel like a decision," he says. "It was a matter of life and death, both physically and spiritually."

The journey has been demanding,

It is the same posture he brings to his role at Arizona Christian University, where he believes a mission grounded in truth makes all the difference.

"When his people submit to him, God is faithful beyond our imagination," he says.

For Unkefer, that faith is not abstract. It is something he has lived. It has shaped his decisions, defined his investments, and now guides the legacy he is building in the lives of others.



President Len Munsil and his wife, Dr. Tracy F. Munsil.

15 Years of Visionary **LEADERSHIP**

More than 15 years have passed since Len Munsil took the helm of the institution now known as Arizona Christian University.

The average tenure of a university president is just under six years, according to the American Council on Education. Munsil is approaching three times this number, despite having never previously served in higher education leadership, instead having spent the previous quarter-century as an attorney fighting for biblical values and principles in public policy.

"I never intended to be a college president," Munsil said, reflecting on the past decade and a half of his life.

Munsil's time as university president could well have ended soon after it started. When he assumed his new position at what was then Southwestern College in the middle of the fall 2010 semester, the institution seemed to be approaching the end of its life in the Phoenix-metro area. Closing Southwestern or trying to give it away had been on the Board agenda for consideration during most of the previous two years.

Founded by Conservative Baptists a half-century before, the school and denomination had mutually agreed to separate a few years prior. Without denominational ties, Southwestern College had a small and shrinking base of church support, and no real constituency or pipeline for

attracting new students. Combined with an aging and limited campus, no endowment or financial reserves, limited visibility, no real academic reputation and a small enrollment of 355 students in Spring 2011, the future did not look promising. Simply put, Southwestern College was fighting for survival. There was no guarantee of a lengthy stay for Munsil, or even that he would finish a two-year commitment as interim President.

"Southwestern College had a faithful history of commitment to Scripture and preparation of young people for ministry," Munsil said. "But like many small Bible colleges that failed during this period, including Arizona College of the Bible, it did not have

the resources or strategy to survive a rapidly changing and increasingly challenging higher ed landscape.”

“I did not fully understand any of this when I stepped in,” Munsil admitted.

What catalyzed the change of heart for Munsil was when his daughter Anne announced her intent to attend Southwestern College to play basketball. Munsil, seeking to do everything in his power to give his daughter the college experience she

“It was as if God was telling me to look at what was possible,” Munsil said. “Yes, there will be fallout and resistance and challenges—but He wanted me to focus on the difference between where the school was and where it could and should be.”



Prof. Tim Reed prays for President Munsil after he was announced as interim President at the College's 2010 fall dinner event.

Like many small colleges, Southwestern College's problems weren't due to poor leadership or mismanagement of funds or resources. Rather, the issues were part of a systemic crisis facing small colleges across America. According to one report, “Nearly 300 colleges and universities offering an associate degree or higher closed between 2008 and 2023.” Addressing this, SHEEO Senior Policy Analyst Rachel Burns said, “It's not corruption; it's not financial misappropriation of funds; it's just that they can't rebound enrollment.”

Munsil's ascent to president almost didn't happen at all. He had taught at the school since 1995 as an adjunct professor and was invited to join Southwestern's Board of Trustees in 2004. Despite his love for the college and its students, Munsil in 2008 had contemplated leaving the Board to focus on multiple opportunities following his unsuccessful run for Governor—at that time he had a law practice, consulting contracts, a start-up nonprofit, a political action committee and was being recruited for various new political opportunities. It was here, though, that God performed a miracle for Southwestern College's future, changing both Munsil's heart and the institution's next chapter.

desired, stayed on the Board and began to pray more fervently for Southwestern. The defining moment came when he was driving around the school, praying for its future, and listening to Christian music on his car radio. The song “Dare You to Move” by Switchfoot came on and these lyrics came alive for him as he considered not just the obstacles, but the college's potential:

“Welcome to the fallout
Welcome to resistance
The tension is here
The tension is here
Between who you are and who you could be
Between how it is and how it should be.”

—Lyrics from “Dare You to Move”
Switchfoot - The Beautiful Letdown
Columbia/Sparrow, 2003.

Munsil also sensed for the first time, right in that moment, that he might be asked to step in as an interim president—although that did not happen until many months later. But when it did happen, he was not surprised. And after some prayer and discussion with his wife, Tracy, he put his other plans on hold and said “yes” to what he thought was an interim assignment.

At his first Board meeting as interim president, he proposed a rebirth and re-branding for the school. Long-time Trustee Don King remembers: “In my first board meeting—and his first as president—Len outlined the slogan [“transform culture with truth”] ... suggested changing us to a Christian liberal arts university ... and suggested the name Arizona Christian University.” In addition to adding new academic majors like Political Science/ Pre-Law, Communication and Biology/ Pre-Med, Munsil proposed expanding athletic opportunities as an additional way to draw students, and set a goal of getting ACU to a sustainable population of 1,500 students.

Munsil was adamant, however, that the school maintain its commitment to admitting only believing Christians as students, and continue requiring that every student receive 18 hours of Biblical Studies and graduate with a Bible minor.



President Munsil meets with Dr. Wallace ‘Wally’ Woods, who served as the first president of then Southwestern Conservative Baptist Bible College, 1965 to 1975.

He was under no illusions that it would be easy. However, he never could have envisioned the challenges and struggles he and the college would face. Munsil had to immediately address several crises to stave off permanent closure. One of the most important tasks was growing the college's tiny pool of donors. He immediately turned over to ACU his entire personal mailing list, built during his campaign for Governor, adding thousands of names and bringing hundreds of new donors to the college.

Then, an early miracle—President George W. Bush, who Munsil met during his political campaign, agreed to speak at an ACU fundraiser and receive the inaugural Daniel Award for Courageous Public Faith. Just two years out of office, this was one of Bush's first public speeches post-presidency, and received national media attention.

"I was told he turned down 100 invitations for every one he accepted in 2011," Munsil said. "The event drew 1,200 people, raised \$1.5 million—which was about 25 percent of our

entire budget then—and allowed us to launch our new name and vision to a wider audience."

Despite these early successes and immediate enrollment growth, the economic realities afflicting all small colleges took their toll. Munsil often felt alone and utterly incapable of solving the myriad of issues confronting the school.

to the realization that I couldn't solve it. Yet, in those moments late at night when I was on my face before God, begging Him to intervene and help the school survive, for the sake of its vital mission and the transformation of lives—He always showed up! I realized that it wasn't up to me. This was God's place—always has been, always will be."

Many times, God showed up through people. "It seemed as if at every crisis point, God used different people—board members and major donors who sacrificially and generously put our students and mission ahead of their own financial interests; administrators, staff, faculty, and coaches with just the right skills and experiences to serve students above and beyond their job description," Munsil said. "It was like manna from Heaven—just what was needed for the day."



President Munsil congratulates President George W. Bush as he receives the inaugural Daniel Award for Courageous Public Faith (2011).

"It was very clear to me on many occasions in those early years that all of my connections and all of my best efforts to keep the school alive were not going to be enough," Munsil said. "It was very humbling to come

"It was a real financial struggle for survival for over 10 years as Len and the board provided funding at many crucial times under leadership and guidance from God," said Don



President George W. Bush shares his experiences as a Christian in public life with President Munsil at the 2011 Daniel Award Event.

King. “Len’s personal financial commitments were certainly an example for all of us to follow and give greater than we might have.”

Munsil also saw the hand of God in protecting ACU from untimely decisions that would have been detrimental. Understanding early in his tenure that ACU required more space to reach a sustainable size, he set out to acquire necessary acreage around its existing Phoenix location. While he did manage to add two acres to the 18 that comprised the original Southwestern College, efforts to buy additional land were thwarted again and again. Next he looked at land near the city center in Surprise—but God shut the door on this opportunity as well.

Instead, God miraculously led Munsil and ACU to a 68-acre campus in Glendale—formerly home to the Thunderbird School of Global Management, an internationally renowned graduate business institution. Thunderbird had been acquired by Arizona State University and when ASU decided to close the Glendale campus and move the school to its new downtown campus, Munsil immediately reached out to ASU President Michael Crow. Their late-night email exchange led to 11 months of secret negotiations—culminating in a deed swap announced in October of 2018 that



President Len Munsil and Glendale Mayor Jerry P. Weiers cutting the ribbon at the Thunderbird campus dedication in 2018, with members of the ACU Board of Trustees and Administration.

enabled ACU to trade its 20-acres and 140,000 square feet of buildings for 68 acres, nearly 500,000 square feet, and more than triple the parking, academic space, and residence hall rooms. ACU was ready for the next stage of growth.

However, the very first year on the new campus presented a new crisis to manage—COVID. Munsil and the ACU Board had to make a decision—follow the crowd and close like most other institutions, or continue to operate knowing the data showed COVID was not a significant threat to young adults. The school took precautions to protect older people from COVID and followed medically advised protocols for those testing positive for the virus.

However, Munsil resisted mandates and allowed the community to make choices as free individuals in the best conservative tradition. He believed the dangers of sending students home to isolation would be, in many cases, more detrimental than allowing them to remain in a social setting on campus. So ACU remained open and functioning throughout 2020.

By God’s grace, no ACU student was hospitalized due to COVID and the school operated with full in-person classes and athletics in the fall of 2020—when many universities were closed or kept students locked in their dorm rooms. Looking back, many students have expressed gratitude for ACU’s decision to keep a semblance of normalcy during this trying time.

While most colleges went backwards during COVID, ACU continued to grow

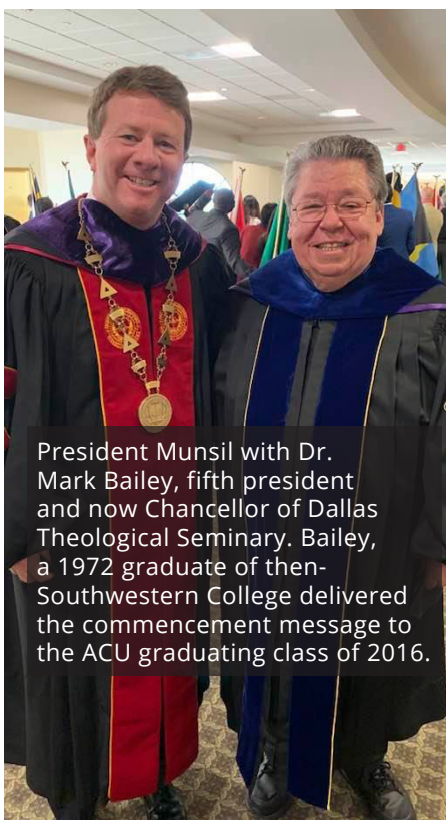
and topped 1,600 enrolled students at the start of the 2025-26 school year—more than four times the number when Munsil arrived in 2010-11. Christian employment opportunities at ACU have expanded from about 50 jobs to more than 200 full-time positions serving the growing student population.

With college enrollment declining 15 percent during that same time, and with budget shortfalls, faculty cuts, staff layoffs, and small college closures becoming standard in higher education, ACU’s growth and Kingdom impact have been noticed around the country.

“During all the missional and financial challenges of the past 15 years, Len Munsil has been a steady and deep source of principled leadership for Christian higher education,” said Dr. John Jackson, long-time president and former chancellor at Jessup University in Rocklin, CA. “Len’s commitment to Christ, to his family, to ACU, and to our nation are all of the highest caliber.”

“LEN’S COMMITMENT TO CHRIST, TO HIS FAMILY, TO ACU, AND TO OUR NATION ARE ALL OF THE HIGHEST CALIBER.”

Another aspect of Munsil’s vision has taken successful shape on the athletic fields and arenas of collegiate sports. As an avid sports fan and serious athletic competitor, he understood that in our culture,



President Munsil with Dr. Mark Bailey, fifth president and now Chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary. Bailey, a 1972 graduate of then-Southwestern College delivered the commencement message to the ACU graduating class of 2016.



President Munsil introduces the ACU Chorale at the 2011 Daniel Award event.

athletes are leaders—the very leaders he is trying to cultivate at ACU for Kingdom impact. Over his tenure, Munsil expanded the school's athletic footprint by augmenting the offerings, excellence, facilities, and standards of play. By doing so, he and his coaches have provided opportunities to earn a college degree to thousands of young men and women, and also to help them realize that the same discipline and commitment they have brought to athletics—when translated into academic and spiritual pursuits—sets them up for a successful and flourishing life when athletic competition is done.

Munsil notes that his work at ACU would not have been possible without a partner in life and ministry who makes great contributions to ACU in her own right. After home-educating, raising, and launching eight kids into the world, Dr. Tracy Munsil went back to school and earned her Ph.D. in Political Science from Arizona State University. She was teaching full-time

at ASU when she was recruited to become the founding chair of ACU's Political Science Department. There she mentored students who went on to excel in law schools including Harvard, Virginia, and ASU, while other former students now work in politics from local government to

ACU, where she serves as Executive Director and also Publisher of Arizona Christian University Press.

"We've been blessed to not just share a life and raise a family together, but also to do ministry together," Munsil said. "She has been an amazing

encourager through the years for our shared vision to advance the Kingdom by preparing Christian leaders, but she didn't just encourage—she was a huge contributor to ACU's growth and success. She's so much more than your typical university 'First Lady'."



Dr. George Barna, Dr. Tracy Munsil, and President Len Munsil founded ACU's Cultural Research Center in 2019.

the White House. She also chaired the faculty committee that created ACU's CORE—a humanities-based and biblically integrated classics curriculum that is foundational to every ACU student's experience. Then, after 10 years in the classroom, with Len and George Barna, she launched the Cultural Research Center at

What has always been more important to Munsil than the school's enrollment growth is the institution's commitment to spiritual growth for its students. Southwestern College had always been known as a faithful Bible school, but expanding its mission to "Transforming Culture with Truth," required a commitment from the entire community to recognize that Christians are called to engage culture, to be "salt and light." The

ACU community began to focus on its mission to prepare leaders of excellence—an ever-increasing army of students committed to building Kingdom influence in America and the world. Students would be encouraged to recognize that, as followers of Jesus they are already in full-time ministry—no matter what their vocation might be. These biblical truths encapsulate ACU's mission, giving students a mindset of service, opportunities to lead, and bold desire to shape the world around them with conviction, grace, and hope in whatever cultural spheres they land.

TRANSFORMING CULTURE *with* TRUTH

ACU freshmen read *Transforming Culture with Truth* (ACU Press, 2020, 2nd Ed.), in which President Munsil shares the vision and history of the University.

LEN MUNSIL

PRESIDENT, ARIZONA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

"Transforming Culture with Truth" is more than a tagline to Munsil; it comes straight from Scripture, as the Bible exhorts Christians to recognize that God does not call us to hide from the outside world but to engage. And ultimately, the goal is to make disciples. His leadership at the school has not just been about giving students head knowledge about the Bible but helping them apply the truth of Scripture to every facet of life they might encounter outside of ACU.

The results have already been astounding. After six years of measuring the worldview of every ACU student, George Barna has provided data showing dramatic increases in the spiritual maturity of ACU students from the time they arrive on campus until they graduate. Every year a student is at ACU, he or she moves consistently in the direction of thinking and living more like Jesus.

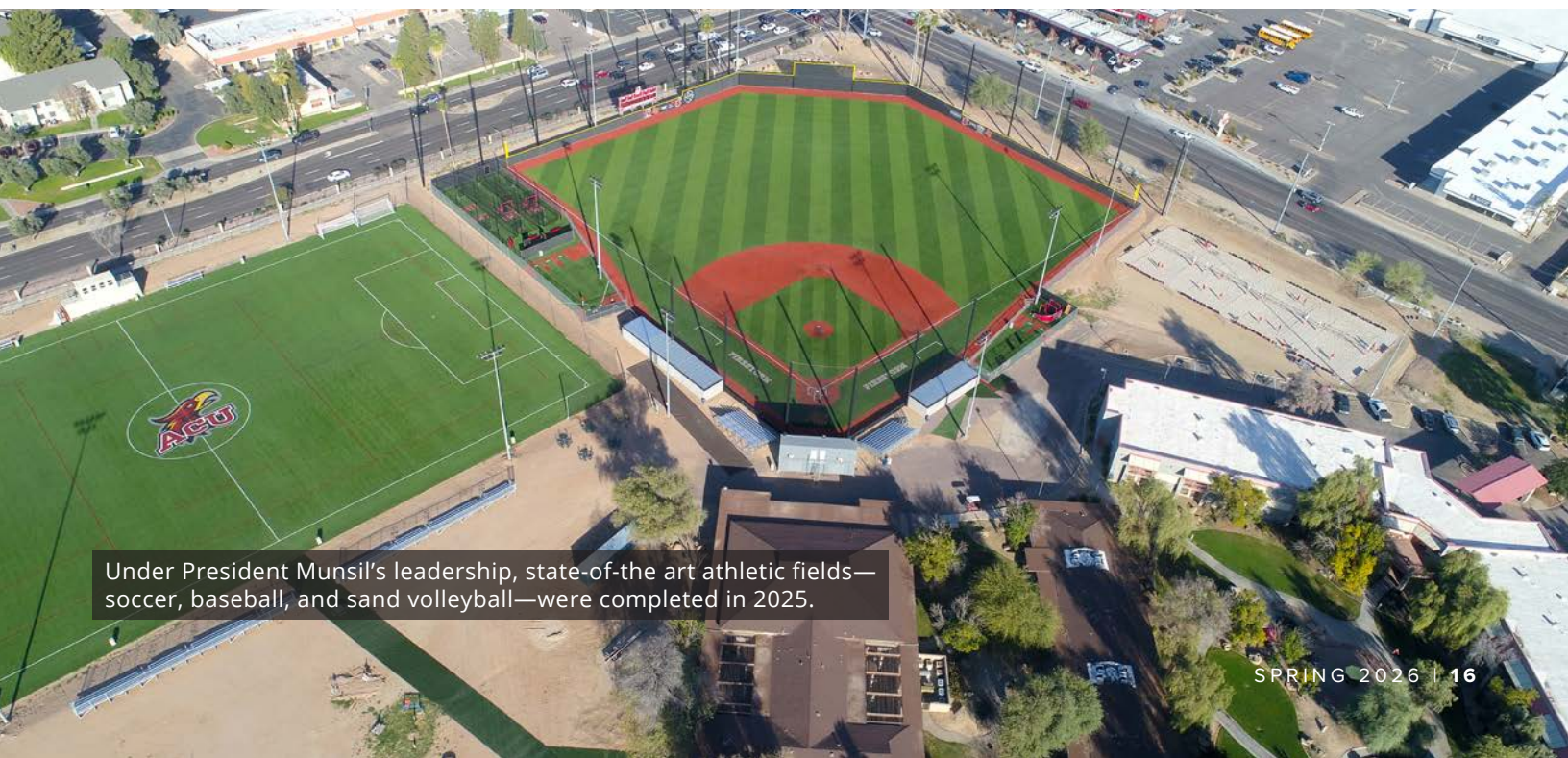
As Munsil thinks about what God accomplished over the school's history, especially the past 15 years, his mind remains focused on executing his original vision to see ACU achieve sustained growth and success for the next 15 years and beyond. Local leaders have taken note.

"Len knows the power of vision and determination," said long-time Scottsdale Bible Church Senior Pastor Jamie Rasmussen. "In the hands of God these two traits can accomplish what many say can't be done. This has certainly been the journey of ACU over the last decade and a half. The right man for the right time."

In its next chapter, Munsil desires to witness a university committed to continued growth and to greater influence beyond ACU—as part of a movement to increase biblical worldview in America by equipping the church to measure worldview development and implement effective discipleship. Ultimately, he wants ACU to be at the center of the next Great Awakening in America—a transformational movement he believes could be right around the corner.

When asked how he would like to be remembered after his time as ACU's President concludes, Munsil's response was succinct: "Moved the school from a small, faithful Bible college to a thriving Christian university with huge Kingdom influence and a sustainable future."

Thanks to Munsil's extraordinary vision, perseverance, and reliance on God to provide the increase—by God's grace, ACU will be a force for the Kingdom for many years to come.



Under President Munsil's leadership, state-of-the art athletic fields—soccer, baseball, and sand volleyball—were completed in 2025.

TIMELINE OF CHANGE

Journey with us through some Arizona Christian University history—from its start as a small Bible college to a growing Christian university transforming culture with truth.



1960 - 2010

Southwestern College

- Faithful Bible college, associated with Conservative Baptist denomination until 2008.
- Limited academic programs
- Board closure discussions 2008-2010 due to viability concerns

2011 - 2016

University Name Change

- First Daniel Award – President Bush (2011)
- Core Commitments adopted (2012)
- F-I-R-E adopted as ACU distinctives (2013)
- *Transforming Culture with Truth* is published (2016)



2017 - 2021

Miracle Campus Swap

- ACU acquires the 68-acre former Thunderbird School of Global Management (2018)
- Dr. George Barna joins ACU as Director of Research at the Cultural Research Center (2019)
- Green family gift enables ACU to buy a former YMCA, now the Firestorm Recreation Center (2021)

2023 - Present

- Graduate degrees approved (2023)
- ACU Press publishes Dr. Barna's *Raising Spiritual Champions* #1 Amazon bestseller (2023)
- ACU completes athletic fields (2025)
- ACU's Student Worldview Inventory demonstrates worldview growth, building ACU national visibility (2026)



Student Worldview INVENTORY RESULTS

The ACU Student Worldview Inventory, created by Dr. George Barna and the Cultural Research Center, measures the worldview of ACU students before they begin at ACU, at the start of each successive year and upon graduation. Six years of data demonstrates extraordinary spiritual growth for ACU students.



FROM 1x1 to
28x

Before they start classes at ACU, students have roughly the same level of biblical worldview as their peers. Upon graduating from ACU, students are 28 times more likely than other 21- to 24-year-olds in the United States to have a biblical worldview!



3x

ACU graduates are three times more likely to have a biblical worldview than theologically defined adult born-again Christians in America.



31%

Increase between freshman year and graduation in ACU students' belief that marriage is between one man and one woman for life.



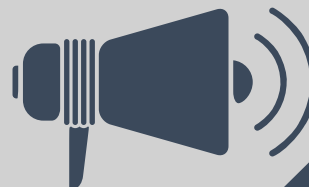
833%

Increase in biblical worldview commitment between freshman year and graduation from ACU.



59%

Increase between freshman year and graduation in ACU students' belief that human life is sacred.



100%

Increase in students who believe socialism is inconsistent with Christian beliefs.



Inside the Worldview of Gen Z **UNTETHERED**

Gen Z is officially reaching adulthood, with the generation's oldest adult members now between the ages of 18 to 22, populating colleges and workplaces across the nation.

Second in size only to the Millennial Generation and equal to that of the Boomers, Gen Z represents the leading edge of a large generational wave whose worldview is likely to transform the American cultural and religious landscape for generations to come.

So, what is Gen Z's worldview and what type of transformation can we expect from their generation? From the research we can see an emerging portrait of Gen Z:

Picture a 19-year-old who believes in Jesus, but not the Jesus embraced by their parents' or grandparents'

generations. They value kindness and tolerance; they are careful to avoid conflict in their relationships, even if they disagree with a friend or family member.

When it comes to the concept of truth, they believe it depends on the situation—and they are wary of anyone who claims certainty. They are also quick to reject the existence of absolute truth, instead trusting their feelings to guide their moral choices.

They don't reject spirituality; they remix it. The overwhelming majority of Gen Z—99%—lack any reliable biblical foundation and they're deeply confused about basic theological ideas. Yet they say their faith is important to them. They can attend church, check a horoscope, accept notions of reincarnation

and Karma, and call it all "faith"—without any sense of contradiction.

But that spiritual flexibility has a cost: they lack a stable framework holding everything together and helping them navigate the challenges of life. And that puts them at considerably greater risk than any other generation to suffer significant mental health issues.

This is not an exaggerated caricature of Gen Z. It is a data-driven portrait of our nation's youngest generation of adults, based on research by Dr. George Barna and the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University.

Emerging from years of national research is an understanding of the seismic shift in foundational beliefs held by the next generation of Americans. When it comes to

GEN Z WORLDVIEW CRISIS

ONLY 1% 

Have a Biblical Worldview

94%  Qualify as
World Citizens

66%  Say
“If it feels good and does no harm, it’s OK”

CULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER | UNTETHERED

GENZ's CONFUSED BELIEFS

67%  Reject
Absolute Truth

61%  Believe
Jesus Sinned

28%  Believe
in Heaven

12%  Believe
in Reincarnation

worldview, Gen Z is “untethered”—they have a tenuous, almost non-existent connection to the deep faith and spiritual truths that anchored generations before them.

In the wake of the tragic killing of Christian activist Charlie Kirk last September, speculation grew that signs of spiritual revival were emerging among young adults. College campus gatherings, viral testimonies, renewed interest in prayer, and even a bump in Bible sales fueled hopeful headlines suggesting that Gen Z is turning back to faith.

And in one sense, Gen Z is not hostile to spirituality. The data shows that many describe themselves as spiritually open, and a majority say faith matters in their lives.

But spiritual openness is not the same as renewal. Research from a new CRC special report, *Untethered: The Worldview Crisis Among Young Adults in America*, shows that Gen Z's biblical worldview is historically low. Instead of biblical beliefs and behaviors, Syncretism dominates, and deep generational confusion about sin, salvation, truth, and other basic

biblical doctrines is widespread. Yet the story of Gen Z is far from finished.

Because a biblical worldview is best shaped through intentional spiritual formation and discipleship, this generation's openness and curiosity represents opportunity as much as concern. Revival and renewal are possible—but not through merely emotional moments or social media posts. It will require deliberate investment in biblical worldview development, coherent theology, and deep, relational discipleship that anchors belief to truth.

Below, we unpack the worldview landscape of Gen Z, identifying seven key findings from the *Untethered* report, and offer insights that hopefully can address Gen Z's worldview crisis and begin to ignite true spiritual renewal in the next generation.

Gen Z Key Finding #1: Alarming Decline in Biblical Worldview

America has experienced a steady decline in biblical worldview since Dr. Barna began measuring it in the 1980s. The most recent *American*

Worldview Inventory 2026 national survey shows biblical worldview at 4% among American adults (matching the 2023 mark of 4% and marking a considerable drop from 12% in 1995).

But the decline is particularly striking within Gen Z—which has the lowest level of biblical worldview of any generation at just 1%.

Within Gen Z a handful—about 5%—possess measurable levels of biblical beliefs or behaviors, but not a fully defined biblical worldview, qualifying them as “Emergent Followers.”

But the rest—a full 94%—qualify as “World Citizens,” which means they generally believe and behave in ways that conflict with biblical teaching. This group has grown substantially among all American adults, but effectively dominates the world of Gen Z.

These trends reflect a worldview crisis of generational proportions. As Dr. Barna notes, the younger generations are having an outsized influence on American culture, especially as older generations shrink.

"It is time to reclaim the culture for Christ, who died for each of us," he explained. "With just 1% of Gen Z exhibiting a biblical worldview, the teachings of Christ are facing extinction in America unless we act today."

Gen Z Key Finding #2: Syncretism Is the Dominant Worldview

With only 1% having a biblical worldview, the default worldview of 98% of Gen Z is Syncretism.

The worldview known as Syncretism describes a customized blend of multiple philosophies of life that people piece together for their own satisfaction. Essentially, individuals embrace and adopt elements of various recognized worldviews to create an idiosyncratic, personally pleasing understanding of and response to the world around them.

The dominance of Syncretism among 18- to 22-year-olds is not surprising, considering their high levels of social media exposure and entertainment messaging, little of which is biblical or faith-based. To navigate the world around them, they choose from an abundance of competing messages, ranging from Postmodernism and Secular Humanism, to a variety of spiritual philosophies such as Eastern Mysticism, New Age, and Pantheism.

As Dr. Barna notes, "Despite widespread optimism shared by Christians about the faith of members of Gen Z, that cohort emerged as the generation most likely to merge Christian deities and non-Christian spiritual authorities within the pantheon of gods they worship." And the prevalence of Syncretism, with its inconsistent framework of competing worldviews, leads Gen Z to

such spiritual "merging" and clouds their understanding of spirituality and God.

Gen Z Key Finding #3: Rejection of Absolute Moral Truth

A biblical view holds that truth is objective and universal. Biblical truth is revealed in Scripture, shapes our moral reality, and is authoritative over human life and morally binding. God's truth is reliable and unchanging because it reflects His character.

But as Gen Z's recognition of God erodes, so does their acknowledgement of His standard of truth. Research shows that the rejection of truth is the most pervasive of Gen Z's false worldview beliefs.

- Two out of three members of Gen Z reject absolute moral truth.
- As a result, they rely primarily on themselves (29%) or family (25%) to understand moral reality. Only 15% rely primarily on the Bible for moral truth.
- In higher numbers than older generations, Gen Z consistently agrees with views that undermine absolute moral truth, including: agreeing that differing truth views can be equally valid (67% agreed); that perceptions of moral truth change over time and cultures, proving there is no universal truth (56% agreed); and that truth is a social construction (42% agreed).

Gen Z Key Finding #4: The Rise of "Feel-Good, No-Harm" Morality

When it comes to morality, our nation is experiencing an ongoing shift

from biblical standards to relativistic, emotion-based morality—led in large part by younger Americans in Gen Z.

A full two-thirds (66%) of Gen Z believe "if it feels good and does no harm, it's morally acceptable." As a result, they are more accepting of abortion (61%) and of consensual sex between unmarried adults (66%). And when it comes to personal ethics, they are more likely than older generations to say it's OK to skip out on a loan (50%), to lie (46%), or to falsely claim small tax deductions (49%) because they're unlikely to be caught.

Again, we see the culture and personal feelings having an outsized influence on Gen Z's moral views. As Dr. Barna explains, "Gen Z grew up with a daily bombardment of conflicting messages about right and wrong" and they grew up "without any deeper spiritual wisdom" to help them put these matters in context.

Gen Z Key Finding #5: Deep Confusion About Sin, Salvation, and Eternal Life

Although the research shows American adults misunderstand many key theological concepts, Gen Z is considerably more confused than older generations when it comes to the biblical concepts of sin, salvation, and eternal life.

Sin: They are substantially more likely than older Americans to believe there is no such thing as sin (21%), less likely to believe that everyone sins (41%), and few believe that they are sinners (22%). This misunderstanding of sin increases their tendency to dismiss traditional views of sinful behavior.



CRC's George Barna discusses worldview with ACU Gen Zers.

Salvation: When it comes to salvation, Gen Z believes “consistently demonstrating strong moral character” is “very important” to their post-life experience (eternity). And they are the only generation with a minority believing it is important to confess sins to Jesus (44%) or to embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior (48%).

Eternal Life: Finally, Gen Z expresses widespread confusion about eternal life—12% believe in reincarnation; only 28% believe their soul, spirit or essence will reside in the presence of God (a biblical view of Heaven), and only 5% believe they will experience eternal torment (Hell). Additional research in the *AWVI 2026* found that 14% believe they will go to Heaven because they worked hard to be a good person; 16% believed there is no life after death, you simply cease to exist; and 23% believe they will go to Heaven because they confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Gen Z Key Finding #6: Cultural Influence Vastly Outpaces the Church

Social media, entertainment, schools, and peers now shape worldview more than church and family, especially within Gen Z. And the importance of the Bible ranks particularly far behind other influences. For example, the idea of “Scripture first and foremost” has all but disappeared among Gen Z—with only 9% embracing this mindset when it comes to seeking moral truth.

Embracing culture over Scripture will continue to significantly shift our nation. As Dr. Barna explained, Gen Z will continue to be an influential subgroup when it comes to “moving the culture toward their preferred worldview, which is at odds with biblical morality.”

Gen Z Key Finding #7: A Wobbly ‘Faith’ Without Commitment

When it comes to personal faith, Gen Z is something of a mixed bag. Among the concerning statistics:

- 61% say Jesus Christ was both human and divine, and therefore

committed sins when He was on Earth.

- 67% say having faith matters more than which faith you have.
- Gen Z has the lowest belief in the Trinity—the foundational belief of the Christian faith—with only 8% believing in the existence and influence of all three persons of the Trinity.

Among the hopeful signs:

- 61% say they are deeply committed to practicing their religious faith.
- 33% say they read or study the Bible at least once a week.
- 45% say they thank, praise, or worship God at least once a week.
- 47% say they attend a worship service (in person or online) at least once a week.
- 39% say they acknowledge their sins and ask God’s forgiveness at least once a week.

A Generational Tipping Point and Opportunity

Dr. Barna has characterized today’s young adults as “the most spiritually disoriented generation in American history.” These worldview findings are not merely theoretical concerns; they are manifesting in tangible ways, most notably in the form of a widespread mental health crisis.

At the same time, there is compelling evidence that this trajectory can be changed through intentional, immersive discipleship. Research led by Dr. Barna at Arizona Christian University points to a clear “proof of concept” when it comes to Kingdom impact and worldview formation.

Recent data released from ACU’s Student Worldview Inventory, a longitudinal study of ACU students conducted over the last six years, shows that ACU graduates are three times more likely than the nation’s theologically identified born-again Christian adults to possess a biblical worldview. (see p.18 for additional

findings). Perhaps even more striking, the percentage of students who enter ACU as freshmen and go on to graduate with a biblical worldview increases by more than 800 percent. This incredible transformation occurs despite the fact that when they arrive on campus as freshmen, ACU students essentially look like the rest of Generation Z, and are just two percentage points more likely than their peers nationwide to hold a biblical worldview. By graduation, however, they are 28 times more likely than other young adults their age to be grounded in biblical truth.

This kind of transformation does not happen by accident. It is the result of a deliberate, campus-wide commitment to making disciples, one that integrates rigorous academics, intentional spiritual formation, and deep relational investment. The outcome is a community where the truth of Scripture is not merely professed but formed, tested, and lived. As Dr. Barna has observed after analyzing the SWVI data, ACU represents “the most effective worldview redevelopment model” he has encountered in more than 40 years of faith-related research, producing extraordinary gains in both belief and practice.

In a cultural moment defined by confusion and fragmentation, that kind of formation offers more than encouragement—it provides a blueprint for the path forward. If Gen Z is untethered, the work being done at ACU demonstrates that they can, in fact, be re-anchored in truth, equipped to live with clarity, and sent out to make a lasting Kingdom impact.

**Scan QR for the full
Untethered report**



FIRESTORMFAMILY



1. **MERCY JUNKERMANN ('21)** was engaged to Nathan Loux in December 2025, and the couple plans to wed in May 2026. They are preparing to serve together as missionaries with CRU, formerly Campus Crusade for Christ, in Orlando, Florida. Mercy continues to use the skills she developed in ACU's business program to support missionary staff. Through her work, she helps strengthen operations by improving cost efficiency, timing, and overall process quality, allowing ministry leaders to focus more fully on their calling.
2. **CALLY MARSH ('22)** was engaged to **JAKE ANDERSON ('25)** on New Year's Day, 2026. The couple plans to wed in July 2026. Jake works in a Leadership Management Training program at QXO and finds ways to minister to his colleagues daily as he learns the intricacies of the business/construction world. Cally serves as the Director of Student Experience at ACU. She loves to work with students and staff to grow discipleship, build programs—and enhance the student experience.

3. **KODY DEHART ('22)** and his wife, Aubrie, welcomed their first son, Brooks, on June 16, 2025. Brooks weighed 7 lbs., 1 oz. and has brought great joy to their family. Kody and Aubrie were married in August 2023. During their early years of marriage, they enjoyed traveling together, visiting places like Kauai, Boston, Anaheim, and Savannah. Today, the DeHarts continue their journey through seminary at Dallas Theological Seminary while staying active in ministry at CCV North Phoenix, where Kody serves as an associate pastor.
4. **JONNY AND VICTORIA (BRASFIELD) LEHMANN ('25)** were married on October 10, 2025. The couple met in ACU's music department in 2022. After spending time getting to know each other, they began dating in October 2023 and were engaged by Thanksgiving 2024. Following their wedding, Jonny and Victoria honeymooned in Kauai and are now enjoying married life together. Right after graduation, Victoria traveled to Poland with ACU students for a summer choir tour. The group explored the country, sang in beautiful cathedrals, and attended a royal ball. During that same season, Jonny began settling into his new role at Scottsdale Bible Church as the Next Gen AVL Engineer.

CLASSNOTES

'20s

ANNAKATE SHEEHAN ('25) graduated ACU in December with a degree in Non-Profit Management and Project Management. She now works full time on the ACU Student Experience Team, overseeing student clubs and student leaders. She recently helped lead a trip with students to Washington, D.C. for the National March for Life and serves with the pro-life club on campus. AnnaKate is grateful to be in a job that she loves right out of college and to have such quality colleagues and students to work with.

EMILY SHARON (KATZER) ('25) is using her Business Administration degree from ACU in her role as the Marketing Coordinator at Garney Construction.

SHAYLA MOBO ('24) is working as the Operations Manager at Sun West Health and Rehabilitation.

JACOB STEVENS ('23) graduated with a degree in Business-Entrepreneurship from ACU and is currently in the Certified Financial Planner program at Bryant University. He serves as a Premier Relationship Manager at Morgan Stanley.

KAITLYN ANDERSON ('23) after receiving her B.A. from ACU in Behavioral Health Counseling, went on to complete her Master's Degree in Sport and Performance Psychology at the University of Western States in 2025. She is currently a Performance Coach at the D-Bat Academies and is the Founder and Lead Consultant at Elevate Mental Performance.

▼ **CADEN AND RENEE (BAILIE) BELLAVIA ('23)** were married on August 16, 2025 surrounded by family and friends. Caden is working at Summit High School as a science teacher and Renee is preparing to graduate this May from ASU's Masters of Nursing program.



XAVIER ALMORO-WATKINS ('22) is working at Equitable Advisors as a Financial Advisor.

CADE MOUSEL ('22) married **SIERRA (STEPHAN) ('21)** in 2023 and the Mousels welcomed their son, Colter Everett, in 2025. Cade is keeping busy as the Student Ministries Director at Lincoln Heights Christian Church and as a head tutor and School Leader at Trinity Arch Preparatory for Boys. Sierra is the head administrative assistant at Lincoln Heights Christian Church.

RACHEL (ANKLAM) VAN DEN BERG ('22) married Josh van den Berg in April of 2023. She is currently working as a Corporate Paralegal for Hool Coury Law, PLC.

AL BURGE ('20) is employed as a Remodeling Consultant at Power Home Remodeling.



▲ **COHEN HECKETHORN ('20)** works for Environmental Concepts and has enjoyed traveling with his wife, Hayley (who he married in 2020), on several adventures. They recently started a new adventure, welcoming their first born son, CJ (short for Cohen Jack).

'10s

MARCO CASTILLO ('19) started in real estate in 2020 and continues to be a successful real estate agent licensed in both Colorado and Arizona.

JEREMY WEITZEL ('19) and his wife, Linda, celebrated 20 years of marriage this past July. Jeremy serves youth through United Christian Youth Camp (UCYC) in Prescott, AZ.

DANIEL SCHEMBRI ('18) and his wife, **KATHERINE (CALDWELL) ('20)**, are both serving the Lord. Katherine helps lead worship at Scottsdale Bible Church and Daniel recently finished his master's degree at Phoenix Seminary. Daniel has also been successful in business endeavors.

JAY NORTON ('18) is using his B.S. in Music-Modern Worship as a Worship Director at Scottsdale Bible Church. Jay and his wife, Emily, were married shortly after graduation in 2018.

CARTER WILSON ('18) is a Contracting Officer for the Naval Facilities Engineering Command.

AMAI MOORE ('18) works as a consultant for Northern Trust Corporation.

▼ **MATT AND JENNA (CASTILLEJA) ('19) MARA ('18)** are enjoying raising their son and are actively involved in North Phoenix Church, where they lead a small group of young adults in their home.



DAVID (BR. ANDRE) BEALE ('17) has been a Catholic Monk for seven years now with the Franciscan Friars of the Holy Spirit. He serves on the Gila River Native American reservation and ministers to individuals in the Juvenile Detention Center, prison, and rehab center on the reservation. He also helps with youth groups on the reservation. He lives with seven other Catholic monks in the community and is committed to serving the members of the community on the reservation (similar to St. Paul 1 Corinthians 7:32). In May 2025 David took his final vows to live the rest of his life as a friar.



▲ **ZACH VOGEL ('17)** is the Executive Director at Identity Sports, where he and his team seek to inspire athletes and sports fans around the world to find their true identity in Christ. Identity Sports has been ministering to athletes and coaches for the past 20 years.

ALI PARDI (VETNAR) ('17) spent six years as a television news producer, anchor and reporter in the Valley, and is now using her Communication-Broadcasting degree from ACU as the Deputy Communications Director for the Phoenix Fire Department.

TYLER CAWTHORNE ('16) graduated with a B.S. in Business Administration and works in the Phoenix area as an Associate Wealth Advisor with Charles Schwab.

EDDY (SHANAE) PALMER ('13) lives in San Tan Valley with her husband, Luke, and their three children: Caleb

(4), Eliana (3), and Silas, who is almost 2. She serves as the Office Manager at Chandler Bible Church.

ADAM STEARNS ('13) is working at Lone Star College as their Executive Director of Procurement.

KENDALL KONOPKA ('13) is a Branch manager at Charles Schwab.



▲ **TROY BANKS ('12)** is celebrating 12 years of marriage to his wife, Ashley, and is the father of two daughters ages six and 10. Troy works part time at his church at Life Link Church ministering to preteens and full-time at Honeywell in the space & marine missile program. Troy is also a cancer survivor.

MATT PORTER ('12) has worked as a youth mentor, military man, and in the business world.

GREER SAYLOR (EVANS) ('12) is the Program Director at Ohana AZ, which is an Arizona-based social services agency providing residential care and support for foster youth, young adults aging out of care, and individuals with special needs.

HUNTER AND ANDREA (HAMMOND) ('2014) ('11) are celebrating 15 years of marriage this year. They are parents to three boys, and have been faithfully serving as missionaries in South Africa for several years.

MELISSA (AMARAL) MAIDEN ('10) is a personal development coach in Laguna Beach, CA. She is married to Tim (attended 2007-2010), who she met at ACU, and they have two children.

'00s

JOHN JOHNSON ('09) and his wife, Juls, live in Huntington Beach, CA. John has been successful in business, traveled the world in mission endeavors, and cares deeply for the hurting in his community.

JILL (MOSCHGAT) BAILEY ('02) continues to serve with the local nonprofit MentorKids, a role she deeply enjoys. She plans to retire in 2027 after years of faithful work supporting children and families in her community. Jill and her husband, Scott, celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary last year. This Valentine's Day they marked the occasion in unforgettable fashion by skydiving together, something Jill proudly says she can now check off her list.

'90s

▼ **DANIEL ZIMMERMANN ('99)** and his wife, Brook, have been married for over 28 years. They have five children: Noah; Graham (and his wife, Tayla); Braxtyn; Cozette; and Quinn. They have also been blessed to play a part in raising many more. Daniel has spent his career as a schoolteacher, business owner, and strategy consultant to many companies throughout the Southwest. He currently serves as the Director of Business Development for Kraus-Anderson Construction and also owns Just Science, a biotech company that manufactures and markets complex consumer product lines. In each season and role, Daniel is deeply thankful for the discipleship and mentorship he received from ACU's former Campus Pastor Tim Reed and President Dr. Brent Garrison. He continues to cherish the relationships formed with many of his classmates as they have raised their families together to know, obey, and love Jesus.



MARK STAFFORD ('98) owner and creative director of Ablaze Media, recently published his first book, *The Ministry Media Toolkit*. His passion for combining ministry and media was first ignited during his time at Arizona Christian University—then known as Southwestern College—where he began developing his marketing skills in the 1990s as part of the admissions team. Since those early days, Mark has built a successful career helping churches and organizations share the Gospel through effective media and communication. In addition to leading Ablaze Media, he also serves alongside Randy Williams, former Dean of Men at SWC, at Sonoran Chapel in Anthem. Mark and his wife, Laura (Thowson) ('98), have been married for 28 years and are proud parents of four children: Trenton, Nathan, Natalie, and Owen.

BRIAN AND KATE ('03) GOODALL ('98) have been in ministry over 25 years. Brian Leads City Psalms Church in Tucson, AZ, as the Executive Director and Kate ministers as a chaplain.

LAURA (GATES) CARY ('94) is married to Adam Cary. She is busy raising their four boys. Adam has been president of CaryMillar PC for the past 10 years. Laura and Adam both became grandparents recently as well.

ROBERT SULLIVAN ('93) currently lives in Michigan. He is a Community Expert Instructor at Family Partnership School. Robert enjoyed attending homecoming last fall and connecting with both ACU and Southwestern alumni and families.

'80s

JAMES FLAMM ('89) is the Director of Friends of Internationals (FOI), which meets at the Campus Christian Center C3 at Arizona State University. James also leads students on trips around Arizona to explore the extraordinary beauty of the state.

RICK AND DIANA WILSON ('86) have been married for 51 years and have two children and nine grandchildren. In 1988, they were appointed as missionaries to Caracas, Venezuela,

where they served as church planters and helped establish three churches. Since 2000, they have continued their ministry with WorldVenture, focusing on church planting, evangelism, poverty alleviation, education and training, and economic development. Though now retired, Rick and Diana remain actively involved in supporting ministries in Kenya, Romania, Myanmar, Albania, and Spain. They also travel internationally and speak at churches across the United States while based in Belmont, North Carolina.

DARLENE (ORVIG) FOUSEL ('81) and her husband, Jerry, have dedicated more than 20 years to serving children and adults with special needs. Their passion for helping others has shaped their lives and careers, both in Arizona and beyond. Before entering the special needs field, Darlene served with United Indian Missions and at the Mt. Elden Christian Conference Center. Jerry spent much of his career with Goodwill Industries, where he rose to become the CEO of Northern Arizona Goodwill Stores. There, he led the organization's mission to help adults with special needs achieve greater independence and success in everyday life. Today, Darlene continues to live out her heart for service through her involvement with Hope Rising, an anti-trafficking organization based in Tucson, AZ.

'70s

MICHAEL BEARD ('79) and his wife, Wanda, retired from their vocational jobs in 2011 and 2016, respectively. After retirement, they lived and worked in Homer, Alaska, as volunteer missionaries at Alaska Bible Institute (ABI). Wanda managed most of the administrative functions of the small school, and Michael taught several classes as well as serving as Academic Dean for a few years. They retired from ABI in the summer of 2023 and moved to Millsboro, Delaware, where they now serve in their local church. Wanda exercises her gift of hospitality as often as she can, and Michael still teaches from time to time. Between them they have seven children and 18 grandchildren. Michael is also a published author of *How to Use Greek*

& *Hebrew Study Tools*, which has become the textbook for a class on word studies at Alaska Bible Institute, and is currently undergoing revisions for a second edition. He also writes fiction, including a fantasy book series *Discover the Gifted of Ada Ev.*



▲ **BEN JOSEPH ('74)** retired in August after working for 42 years in full-time ministry with Mission's Door at Arizona State University, where he shared the love of Christ with international students. Originally from India, he accepted Christ while at Southwestern College and went on to seminary, where the Lord called him to international student ministry. Ben now cares for his wife, Aleyamma, with whom he recently celebrated 50 years of marriage. Ben has published two books, *Dancing Through Sorrow* in 2023 and *Conquering the Christian Rat Race* in 2025. He and Aleyamma are parents to two grown children and five granddaughters.

IN MEMORIAM

RODGER LOAR ('09) passed away in December 2025 at the age of 53. For more than 20 years Rodger served his community with care and dedication. He pastored, cared for families, operated a daycare, and helped anyone in need. He is survived by his three children.

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