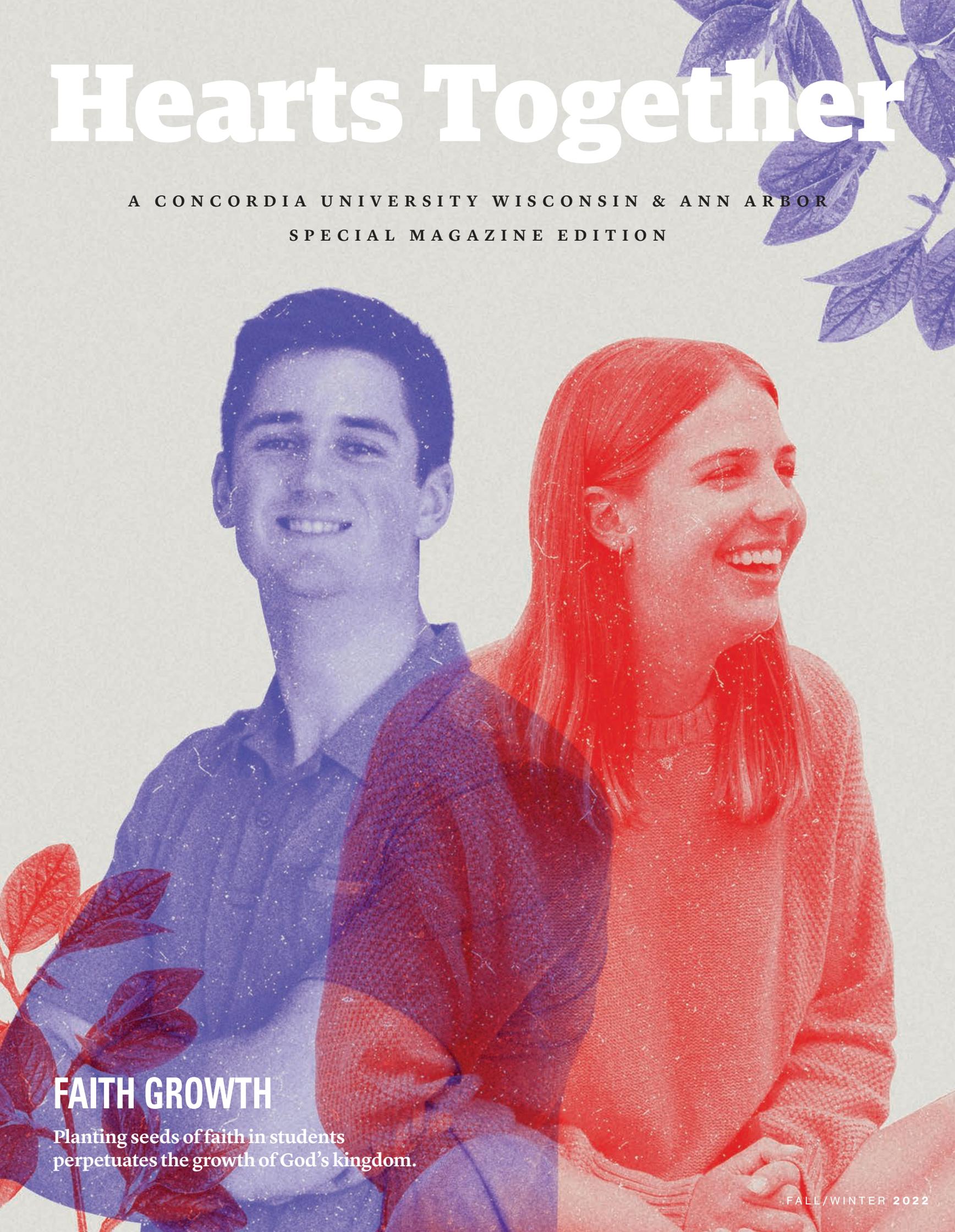


# Hearts Together



A CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY WISCONSIN & ANN ARBOR  
SPECIAL MAGAZINE EDITION

## FAITH GROWTH

Planting seeds of faith in students  
perpetuates the growth of God's kingdom.

FALL/WINTER 2022

# Hearts Together contents

FALL/WINTER 2022



## ON THE COVER

Grant Karsten (CUW '23) and Rachel Yuhas (CUAA '25) are just two of the many students who will attest that their faith has grown during their time at Concordia. Through surveys, students credit a combination of professors, peers, coaches, staff, community culture, and programming for helping them remain engaged in faith development activities such as Daily Chapel and Bible studies.

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(feature story)

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# Hearts Together

**HEARTS TOGETHER** is a joint publication of the Mequon and Ann Arbor campuses of Concordia University. In 2013, the two formerly independent universities merged into one institution, overseen by one president and one governing board. This publication shares the stories of the exciting advancements on each campus; the notable accomplishments of faculty, staff, students, and alumni; and the life-changing service Concordians—*hearts together*—undertake for Christ in the Church and the world.

The Strategic Communications department is responsible for the production of *Hearts Together*. The magazine's editorial team welcomes your feedback. Please send comments or queries to [Kali.Thiel@cuw.edu](mailto:Kali.Thiel@cuw.edu).

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**Go green!** If you would like to subscribe to our email edition instead of receiving a copy in the mail, please email [news@cuw.edu](mailto:news@cuw.edu) or [news@cuaa.edu](mailto:news@cuaa.edu).

Welcome to the fifth issue of *Hearts Together*, a combined magazine of Concordia University Wisconsin and Concordia University Ann Arbor. While our campuses are happily distinctive in their characteristics, we are one university united in our uncommon Lutheran mission and grounded in our identity as God's children. That's what makes us uncommon, after all; not our programs, not our faculty, not our business models; it's the fact that our God is able to bind our hearts together as Concordians, set apart for service to Him and to others.

While there are many ways our two campuses work together, perhaps the best demonstration is in this year's campus ministry theme verses. The 2022-23 academic theme in Wisconsin is "Guided by God," citing Psalm 25:4-5. In Ann Arbor, we look to Colossians 1:9-11 as we live out the theme of "Walking in Faith." Both themes suggest turning to God for direction and guidance as we strive to do His will. We are *guided by God as we walk in faith*.

Both passages also call us to *action*.

Within the following pages, you will meet Concordians in action, actively planting seeds and nurturing the work of the Holy Spirit in impactful and noticeable ways.

In the "On the bluff" section, we celebrate 40 years of Christian nursing and introduce a sweet new business opportunity. We also introduce you to students, faculty, and alumni who use their God-given gifts to serve others.

The "On the banks" section highlights the inaugural cohort of entry-level Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTDe) candidates. We also introduce you to a nursing couple who started their journey together at Concordia Portland, Oregon, before finishing at CUAA, and a host of Concordians who are continuing their faith walk with God's loving and protective guidance.

This magazine is just a tiny sampling of all the seed sowing at Concordia. God is working through and among us to fulfill our ultimate mission of preparing students in mind, body, and spirit for service to Christ in the Church and the world.

In Him,



**WILLIAM R. CARIO, PH.D.**  
*Interim President*



# social scene

## CONNECT WITH CUW

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-  cuw.edu/news

## CONNECT WITH CUA

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-  @CUAA
-  @CUAnnArbor
-  /CUAnnArbor
-  cuaa.edu/news



### • MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK

Members of CUA's Student Government Association used their "time off" to beautify campus. Over the summer, they joined employees to help install a new fire pit, hammock poles, and a furnished patio behind Krefl.



### For the masses

"God only knows" where we'd have been without for KING & COUNTRY at the LCMS Youth Gathering this past summer! Concordia was a proud sponsor of the headliner, and our Concordia YG Ambassadors got to meet Luke Smallbone, half of the Grammy® Award-winning duo.



• **ON TOP OF THE WORLD** Brian King, a Lutheran pastor in St. Louis, treated us to a bird's-eye view of campus courtesy of his powered paragliding hobby.

**A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT** CUAAs is fortunate to have a slice of the impressive Huron River in its backyard. Altogether, the waterway stretches 130 miles, and is a prime spot for canoeing and fishing.



**SPECIAL DELIVERY** Talk about a cool summer job! For two years running, psychology and social work double major AJ Theisz ('23) has competed against dozens to land a coveted job as a Lake Geneva mailboat jumper. Watch him take the leap at [blog.cuw.edu/cuw-mailboat-jumper](http://blog.cuw.edu/cuw-mailboat-jumper).



**Let's get creative**

CUAA alum Esther Schulze ('20) wasn't the only one to struggle to find a job amid the pandemic. So she used her double major in business and art to her advantage, and started her own digital marketing business instead! Read her story at [blog.cuaa.edu/alum-entrepreneur](http://blog.cuaa.edu/alum-entrepreneur).



**GOOD FOR BUSINESS** Matt Hurtienne, PhD, is now dean of Concordia's Batterman and Haab Schools of Business and executive director of strategic planning for the university. Did you know Concordia's business schools have the highest enrollment of any academic school in the university?

**A touch of class**

School is in session! A few of our alumni educators put their Concordia pride on full display within their classrooms.



**LIZ GARCIA ('07)**  
Preschool teacher

Immanuel Lutheran School in Bay City, MI



**BENNETT REISLER ('22)**  
Theology, world geography,  
and men's health teacher

Lutheran High School in Parker, CO



**COURTNEY SLUCTER ('21)**  
ESL program coordinator

Paramount Academy in Kalamazoo, MI



**SARAH SCHULTZ ('10)**  
Middle school teacher

St. John's Lutheran in West Bend, WI



**KEVIN GROSS ('87)**  
5th grade teacher

Shepherd of the Lakes Lutheran  
in Brighton, MI

# seeing with sound

At the start of every school year, second-year students in the diagnostic medical sonography (DMS) program help first-year students learn the ropes. One tried-and-true activity is having the second-years hide objects in gelatin, then challenging the newcomers to identify the items using the tools of the trade. It's not just a lot of fun, it's also great for team-building. Explore the program at [cuw.edu/sonography](http://cuw.edu/sonography).



# take five

Get to know one of our *uncommon* Concordians, **Yannik Gruner ('23)**, president of the SGA.



By **Lisa Liljegen**, *Strategic Communications*

There's a long-standing joke in the Strategic Communications office at Concordia University Wisconsin that the answer to any question is Yannik Gruner. Who's interviewing Karl Rove on stage? Who's the next SGA president? What student should we interview about the new business mentorship program? Who could give us an international student perspective? Yannik Gruner.

Every time.

In his senior year, the all-around Yannik is leaving his mark on the campus in the country he lovingly calls home. In athletics, Yannik is a quarterback on the football team. In student life, he's an international student, an assistant resident director (ARD), and the president of the Student Government Association (SGA). In academics, the economics and finance major is active in CU Ventures and the investment club, and serves as a research assistant in political science.

## 1 How did you get from Vienna, Austria, to CUW?

When I was 16, I did a foreign exchange year in Indiana. From there, I went to a boarding school in Georgia that focused on international students. I've played football since I was 9 years old and had the opportunity to play here in America at both those schools. During my senior year at the Georgia boarding school, Coach Adam Walker from CUW's football team recruited me.

## 2 As SGA president, what are you focusing on?

I want to invest in events that are fun and informative. We're working on the fun by collaborating with the Campus Activity Board (CAB) to bring more pop-out events and campus-wide celebrations. Regarding the informative events, as you know,

SGA brought Karl Rove to campus in spring 2022. We're looking to provide more big opportunities like that for students to engage with issues and information on a grander scale.

## 3 You seem to thrive in leadership roles. What advice do you have for students who want to lead but might lack confidence?

Being a leader is not about being the loudest person in a room. It's about understanding individuals and serving them; it's about humility. Some of the greatest leaders in this world are introverts and shy—they have just grown their comfort zones and want to serve others. I think the greatest encouragement I can give is telling people to keep testing their limits. Move out of their comfort zones one small step at a time.

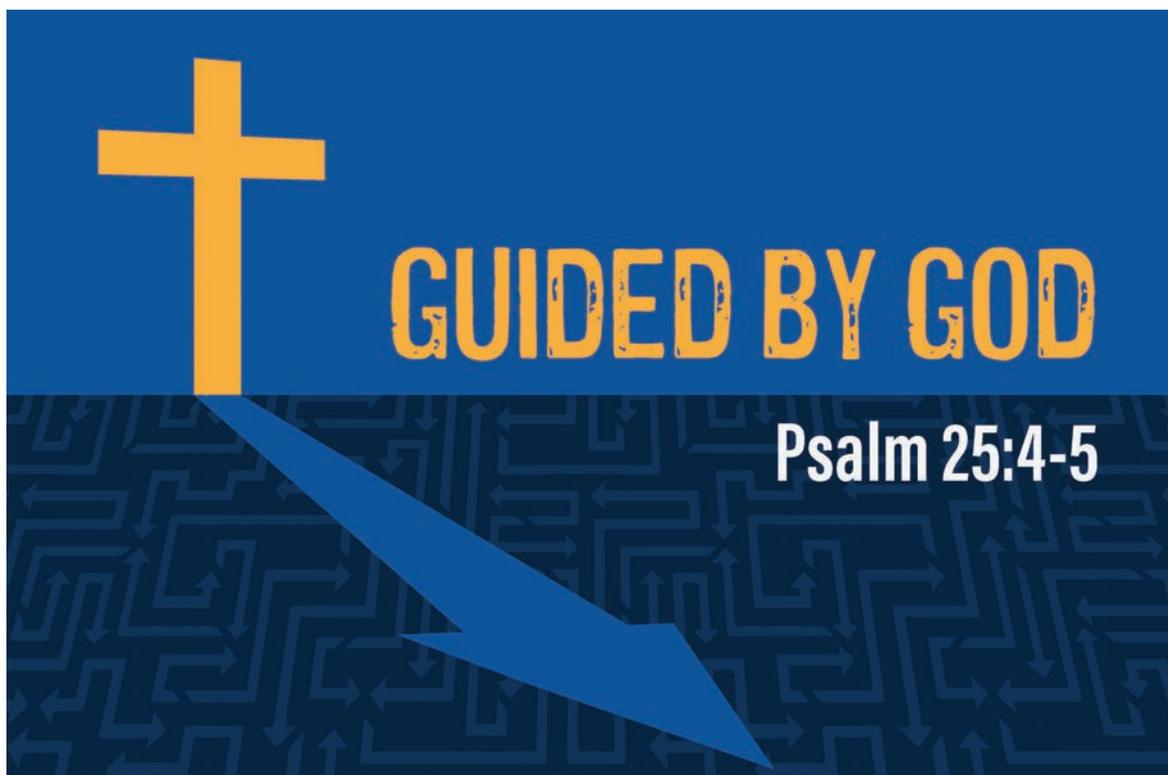
## 4 Clearly, you like to be busy! What do you do during your downtime?

I love to read non-fiction books, especially about Winston Churchill. I also like to spend time with my friends, go on hikes, and visit art museums in different cities.

## 5 How has Concordia prepared you for what's next?

Concordia has done so much for me! I've grown significantly in my faith, which has become an essential part of my life. My education has been outstanding, and my professors are always available to answer questions. Concordia helped me obtain a finance internship with a firm in Chicago, and this year I'll become more involved with CU Ventures.

Learn more about CU Ventures at [blog.cuw.edu/cu-ventures](http://blog.cuw.edu/cu-ventures).



### Meet the student designer

Taylor McKibbins ('25), a graphic design major from Menomonee Falls, is this year's theme verse student designer. Taylor explains that the small arrows on the graphic are meant to represent the chaos of the world and how it tries to push us on different paths. However, our Lord and Savior (symbolized by a cross) guides us on the right path. God continues to guide us throughout our lives as long as we trust in Him.



## CUW THEME VERSE LEADS THE WAY

“Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.”  
—Psalm 25:4-5 NIV

CUW’s Campus Ministry Leadership Team selected “Guided by God” as the theme for the 2022-23 academic year. The phrase is inspired by Psalm 25:4-5. Within the passage, King David, the speaker, uses three imperative verbs (show, teach, and guide) as pleas for God’s action and instruction. These actions are necessary for every good master-to-mentor, teacher-to-student relationship. And through ongoing experience with Him, God promises to fulfill these actions for His children.

As Associate Campus Pastor Rev. Doug Bender explains:

“Through faith, we have the perfect master and teacher in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We belong to a God who didn’t simply tell us to love; He shows us how to love. Jesus teaches with authority in the Scriptures, and yet He also gently guides His people to God’s promises, as a good shepherd does for his sheep. We have a God, in Christ, who shows, teaches, and guides us into all things—and we see the proof of this by His sacrifice on the cross and victory in the empty tomb.”

The word “guide,” in particular, implies participation from the Lord. How does one guide? By showing the way, often by going alongside.

In the opening verses of Psalm 25, David demonstrates his humble heart as he “lifts up his soul” to God and calls for the Lord’s help in the midst of trouble. Like David, our lives are full of trouble—unknown challenges, obstacles, and strivings. As we call upon the Lord with a humble heart, He not only hears us, He demonstrates His love by already putting himself in a position to experience it. We can rest assured that, whatever we face, we do not face it alone because we have One who has gone before us through His death on the cross. We have One who showed us the way by paving the way.

Through it all, we are guided by God.

Read more at [blog.cuw.edu/2022-23-theme](http://blog.cuw.edu/2022-23-theme).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

For more happenings or full event information, visit [cuw.edu/events](http://cuw.edu/events).



### WELCOME BACK WEEKEND

Homecoming and Family Weekend combined  
Oct. 7-9



### VISIT DAYS

Oct. 8, 13, 28; Nov. 4, 11, 18, 2022; March 24, 31; April 21, 2023



### LEADERSHIP SERIES

Oct. 20  
Featuring  
Cousins Subs CEO  
Christine Specht-Palmert



### CHRISTMAS AT CONCORDIA

Dec. 2 & 3  
Pops, Civic Chorale,  
Handbells, and Christ the King concerts Oct. 28;  
Nov. 12, 20



### DECEMBER COMMENCEMENT

Dec. 17



## SWEETENING THE DEAL

Life at Concordia is a little bit sweeter ever since the university acquired the assets of a successful Wisconsin chocolate business.

Richard Koenings, an adjunct instructor at CUW, had previously owned Red Elephant Chocolate, a popular artisan shop with storefronts in Milwaukee's historic Third Ward and downtown Madison. After more than a decade of operating the business, however, Koenings was looking to pass the torch. He saw the enterprise as a prime hands-on learning opportunity for Concordia business students and pitched the idea to Vice Provost for Research and Innovation Dan Sem, PhD, PharmD.

Now, the business is called Concordia Red Elephant Chocolates. There's no longer a storefront. Instead, the operation runs out of CUW's professional-grade kitchen on campus. Anyone nationwide can place an order to enjoy the handcrafted treats through Concordia's e-commerce website. There's even an opportunity to order chocolates with custom logos, which the LCMS English District took advantage of over the summer for its district convention.

Concordia Red Elephant Chocolates is made possible by the entrepreneurial nonprofit CU Ventures, which formed last year, and private investors, including CUW Assistant Dean of Professional Development Ken Harris Jr., PhD. Over the summer, the spin-off company and its investors acquired the industrial equipment necessary to make the chocolates, purchased the business assets, and hired the operation's two employees: Sue Krawczyk, who crafts the chocolates, and Cherie Banner, who serves part time as a business manager. Also involved in the effort is Jafar Payandeh, a graduate assistant enrolled in CUW's Master of Science in Product Development food and beverage track.

Now that CUW students are back on campus for the fall 2022 semester, Sem says he's eager to involve them as well.

"We are running this like a bona fide business but then looking to involve students in multiple ways," says Sem. "The applications are really endless—from marketing to bookkeeping to student projects. It gives them real, applied learning experiences. Plus, who doesn't like chocolate?"

Visit [relephantchocolate.com](http://redelephantchocolate.com) to order your own Concordia chocolates.

## PRESCRIBING FOR PRISONS

It's hard to grow up in Waupun and not be reminded of the criminal justice system. The Wisconsin city is home to three prisons, including the state's oldest penitentiary. About one-fourth of Waupun's 11,300-person population is incarcerated.

Although Makayla Hopp ('18) never had any direct experience with correctional institutions growing up, the Waupun native was acutely aware of their presence in her hometown. So when it came time to rank her rotation preferences while in her final year of pharmacy school at CUW, she naturally paired with the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC), whose pharmaceutical facility is in Waupun.

Hopp stayed on with the DOC after earning her PharmD in 2018, and quickly rose to a leadership position due to her aptitude and affinity for her native city. She now serves as assistant pharmacy director and oversees a team of 18 pharmacists who play a role in filling prescriptions for the entirety of the state's prison population. Altogether, Hopp and her team fill about 2,500 prescriptions a day.

"Our goal is patient care," says Hopp. "Ultimately, we want to reduce recidivism. We want to provide the best possible care for our patients while they're here in order to set them up for success."

That attention to exemplary care was modeled to her at CUW.

"It's more of a community at Concordia," Hopp says. "The professors know you and care about you, and if you need to get ahold of them they're available to you. At Concordia, they're really invested in your education."

Learn more at [cuw.edu/pharmacy](http://cuw.edu/pharmacy).



## A fresh look

**A NEW DEPARTMENT CHAIR. A NEW DEPARTMENT NAME. NEW EXPERTS ON STAFF. A REFURBISHED SPACE. REVAMPED PROGRAMS.** Upgrades abound within Concordia's visual and performing arts department. Learn more at [blog.cuw.edu/visual-performing-arts](http://blog.cuw.edu/visual-performing-arts).

# 14

**fine arts-related degrees offered** at CUW, including interior architecture & design, photography, and music therapy



## THE FIRST DAY.

- "Successful teachers have a script or a plan ready for the first day of school (12).
- Content/Fun vs. Organization/...

# '01, '05

## Chris Cody, EdD

BA in secondary education ('01);  
MS in educational leadership and  
administration ('05)

### EQUIPPED TO SERVE

Coming out of high school, Dr. Chris Cody didn't have a clear vision of what he should do next. He was "not exactly Mr. Studious," as he now puts it, so he decided he would attend UW-Oshkosh in a sports marketing program. "It's not like I had a real passion for it," he recalls. "I thought, 'Well, I like sports and I took a couple of business classes in high school, so maybe I'll try this.'"

But God had other ideas. Today, Cody is the education executive for the South Wisconsin District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. How did a kid with so little direction become a champion for Lutheran education, and urban education in particular? Find out at [blog.cuw.edu/cody](http://blog.cuw.edu/cody).



A photo from the '90s of nursing instructor Gail Eels engaged in learning exercises with CUW students. *Concordia University Wisconsin Archives*

## MEASURES OF CHRIST-CENTERED CARE

As the CUW School of Nursing celebrates its 40th anniversary this year, here are just a few of the milestone numbers this outstanding program has reached:

**#1**

FIRST AMONG THE CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM TO OFFER A NURSING DEGREE

**3,642**

CUW NURSING ALUMNI IN THE FIELD

**93%**

MOST RECENT NCLEX FIRST-TIME PASS RATE (MORE THAN 6 POINTS ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE)

**11**

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT BACHELOR'S, MASTER'S, DOCTORAL, AND CERTIFICATE PROGRAM TRACKS AVAILABLE

**14**

YEARS OF DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE, THE LONGEST-RUNNING SUCH PROGRAM IN WISCONSIN

**30**

NUMBER OF ANNUAL PARISH NURSE AND CONGREGATIONAL HEALTH MINISTRIES CONFERENCE EVENTS HELD ON CAMPUS TO DATE

## SCHOOL OF NURSING TURNS 40

Can you believe it has been 40 years since the first nursing class was admitted at Concordia College?! That was just the beginning of what has become a strong, enduring tradition of Concordia University Wisconsin nursing graduates fulfilling Concordia's mission to serve Christ in the church and in the world.

"It started with the Rev. Dr. John Buuck, the school president at the time, who really had a vision," reflects Dr. Carol Lueders Bolwerk, professor of nursing and director of parish nursing and congregational health ministry. "Based on his background as both a minister and a biologist, he felt that nursing was a calling, a vocation. So when the school bought this campus in Mequon, they hired Dr. Marge Viehl, who was LCMS, to develop a nursing program."

Ever since, the integration of faith into a nursing education is one thing that distinguishes the CUW program. One way that happens is through a dedicated course on Christian caregiving, which provides a Christ-centered framework to holistic health care. Since 1989, the program has also incorporated parish nursing—now often known as "faith community nursing"—into the curriculum.

This emphasis on faith is also reflected in the importance of annual nursing mission trips. Since 2005, hundreds of nursing students have traveled to places such as Mexico, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Belize, bringing much-needed medical care while spreading the Gospel of Christ.

Today, CUW's fully accredited nursing programs truly stand out, with state-of-the-art simulation labs, diverse clinical opportunities (including women's health in OB/GYN), excellent student-teacher ratios, and a wide variety of degree paths (including BSN to DNP, BSN completion, second degree in nursing-accelerated format, and more) to name just a few.

As the health care industry continues to face a severe nurse shortage, faith-based education and care become ever more important.

"Nurses offer hope and inspiration, things that are needed now more than ever, so we're going to continue to find new ways to train nurses to care for patients in mind, body, and spirit," Lueders Bolwerk says. "And, of course, we continue to share the Gospel. Because when all is said and done that's really the most important thing of all."

Learn more at [cuw.edu/nursing](http://cuw.edu/nursing).



Cindy Witte, ('90, '02)  
DNP, RN, FNP, CNE  
Associate professor of nursing at Concordia University Wisconsin

"Whether as a student or faculty member, CUW has been my home for the majority of my professional life. The opportunity to proclaim Christ amid coursework is paramount."



Sue Hafemann, ('92, '08)  
RN, FNP, APNP-BC

Family nurse practitioner for Aurora Health Care Wisconsin

"I continue to see the blessings of a CUW education in the students I mentor in practice, and I'm also very proud that my three daughters have pursued their nursing education/careers at CUW!"



Deanna Rusch, ('08, '15)  
MSN, APNP, FNP-BS

Lead nurse practitioner-neurology for Aurora Advanced Good Hope Clinic

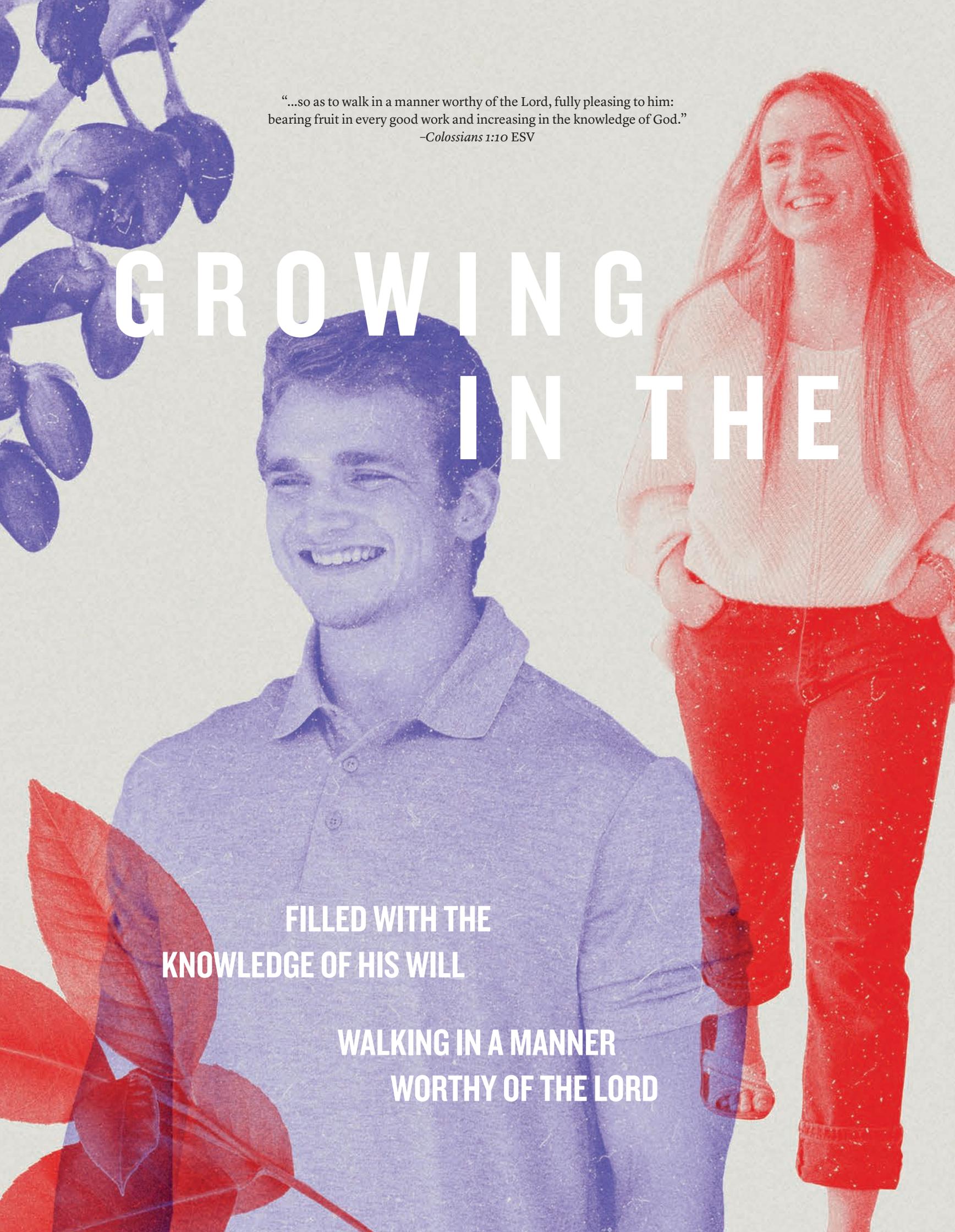
"Concordia taught me how to use servant leadership and provide care holistically in the field of neurology."



Conner Ruosch, ('16)  
MBA, BSN, RN

Emergency department and med/surg unit manager at Edgerton Hospital and Health Services

"I absolutely loved the faculty and staff at Concordia. It was like having 10 extra moms and aunts all cheering me on."



“...so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him:  
bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”  
-Colossians 1:10 ESV

# GROWING IN THE

FILLED WITH THE  
KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL

WALKING IN A MANNER  
WORTHY OF THE LORD

BEARING FRUIT IN  
EVERY GOOD WORK

INCREASING IN THE  
KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

COLOSSIANS 1:9-10

# KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

No matter where they are on their spiritual journey,  
God is at work in the lives of students at CUWAA.

By **Mike Zimmerman, Kali Thiel, and Allie Milot,**  
*Strategic Communications*



**“... A LUTHERAN HIGHER EDUCATION COMMUNITY COMMITTED TO HELPING STUDENTS DEVELOP IN MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT FOR SERVICE TO CHRIST IN THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.”**

**T**he above words, familiar to most as part of Concordia’s mission statement, represent a truly high calling.

At its inception, Concordia’s mission was to focus on “mature” Christians: young Lutherans, confident in their faith, called to church work as pastors, teachers, parish musicians, and more. Naturally, we lift up and celebrate these students who are guided by God to various vocations in service to Christ—and rightfully so. The world needs called church workers today more than ever.

In recent decades, as church involvement has become a less significant part of many families’ lives and the number of children being born to American households has dwindled, Concordia’s high calling has taken on new urgency. Recognizing that the campus itself can (and should) be seen as a mission field, the need to build up the faith of all students is ever more vital, no matter where these students are on their spiritual journey.

It happens in so many ways. A student invites her roommate to attend Daily Chapel. A fresh take on the Word of God is offered to a skeptical freshman in Bible class. An athlete brings his non-believing teammate to Bible study. In a time of crisis, a friend says, “I’ll pray for you”—and follows through. Someone reflects the light of Christ with a much-needed

smile in a crowded, bustling hallway. A campus pastor shares the Gospel with a student who then later becomes baptized.

These encounters happen every day on our campuses. In every single one, God is at work. A seed is planted. It is nurtured in the good soil of our Christ-centered community. Grace and forgiveness are offered and accepted. Growth begins. Faith takes root. In God’s own good time, fruit appears, and the process repeats.

“As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it,” explains Jesus in Matthew 13:23 (ESV). “He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

It truly is a high calling—a wondrous process to see and experience.

No doubt there are scores of such seeds being planted right now across our two beautiful campuses. The Lord only knows the true heart of mankind, and the Spirit is vigorously at work accordingly, tilling the field, watering the fledgling foliage, and shielding it from the threats of harsh conditions. Our job at Concordia is to do our best to intentionally nurture the work of the Holy Spirit.

Here are just a few students, each an essential part of God’s beautiful, perfect, eternal plan, whose time at Concordia has impacted their faith in noticeable ways.



One of the most famous passages of scripture takes place along the “road to Damascus” in Acts Chapter 9. Confronted by the presence of the risen Lord Jesus, Saul, a staunch persecutor of Christians, becomes the Apostle Paul, the greatest missionary the world has ever known.

This stunning conversion—from Christian enemy to ally—is why Skyler Moyer ('24) identifies so strongly with Paul. Skyler’s “road to Damascus” ultimately led him to Concordia.

“Growing up, I was very *anti-Christian*,” Skyler explains. “I was a militant atheist, and I actively tried to destroy the faith of people I knew. And looking back, that’s horrible.”

Skyler was raised in a poor household in Syracuse, New York, living primarily on government benefits with his disabled mother. High school was rough. In fact, he barely got through it, thanks to some poor choices that included plenty of partying and substance abuse. After high school, a betrayal by his longtime girlfriend led to a decision to join the U.S. Army. Lost and feeling alone, it seemed like a way to restore his wounded masculinity.

But it wasn’t the Army that ended up turning his life around. Rather, it was an early-morning chance encounter with some members of a Hispanic church in his neighborhood. Long story short, they invited him to church, he and his mom attended, and soon after the floodgates of grace began to open.

What really opened the eyes of his heart was realizing the stories about Jesus are true. “God put apologetics into my life,” Skyler says. “The historical evidence is just so overwhelming that Christ has risen. Realizing that was the turning point.”

Things happened quickly after that. “I could not get out of the Bible,” he says. “I’d wake up, and it was all about God and reading the Bible and learning more about apologetics, studying theology and philosophy, and just all this stuff.”

The pastor at the Hispanic church took notice and prayerfully suggested Skyler explore a future in ministry. At first, that seemed a little crazy, but he realized it “checked a lot of boxes” for things he was good at. But where to start? He wasn’t even sure what denomination he should be in. Following intense research and extensive prayer, God kept pointing him to Lutheranism—and then to Concordia University Wisconsin. So he applied ... and got rejected, thanks to a very low high school GPA.

Undeterred, he asked for a meeting. “I said, ‘Listen, I was a stupid kid. But I joined the military. I’ve grown a lot. I apply myself. I’m way more mature. Please, just give me a chance.’”

So they did. He promised the committee he’d

be on the Honors List, and he is. He’s involved in Campus Ministry: He’ll be the men’s Bible study coordinator this year. He gets help from Veterans Services and is still a member of the Army National Guard. He’s come a long way, but he also understands the road he’s on is long.

“When I came to Concordia, I knew that I was still a baby Christian and that I was still doing things that I shouldn’t be doing,” Skyler says. “I wanted to come here and be molded by people, and that’s what has happened. I’ve become intimately involved in the faith culture on campus, going to Chapel as often

as possible, usually five days a week, and just being completely submerged in this whole Christian culture.

“It has radically changed me—in how I think about things and how I conduct myself, you know? The people here just showed me how to do it. Everybody has been really patient and kind and caring and eager to get me involved.”

Radical change. At times, it’s what Christ wants from all of us. And that’s okay. Because no matter what road we may find ourselves on, He’s always ready to meet us where we’re at.

Just ask Skyler.



## SKYLER MOYER ('24)

The “road to Damascus”  
leads to Concordia

# CLAUDIA GREPKE ('25)

## Student-to-student support

As the child of two Concordia University Ann Arbor alumni, it was no surprise when Claudia Grepke ('25) decided that she wanted to follow in her parents' footsteps and attend CUAA herself. Along with her desire to play volleyball at a collegiate level, Claudia felt called to attend a Lutheran school, as she desired to grow in her relationship with the Lord throughout her college years.

Her transition to Concordia came with a cross-country move from Las Vegas, Nevada, where she attended First Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and graduated from Faith Lutheran High School. Not all students who choose Concordia have Lutheran backgrounds or any kind of faith life for that matter. Despite where a student is on their spiritual journey, Concordia puts the people and programs in place to encourage faith growth.

For Claudia, her faith growth started immediately her freshman year.

Although she had some extended family in the Midwest, she heavily relied on the Concordia community for support when she began her collegiate tenure. In particular, her resident assistant, Payton Lovins, had a big impact on Claudia.

"Payton was always quick to offer encouragement and love to me," says Claudia, adding that Payton also had a tremendous impact on her walk with the Lord.

While professors and staff play an important role in faith development, many students will attest that their peers are equally, if not more, influential.

In a 2019 survey, 12% of CUAA students said "friends" have the biggest influence on their spiritual growth compared to 5% who responded with "professors." In response, CUAA's Campus Pastor Rev. Randy Duncan implemented a new peer-to-peer spiritual support program.

Four Campus Ministry Resident Assistants have been hired for the 2022-23 academic year and serve in the capacity of spiritual caregivers for fellow students. The Campus Ministry RAs will also lead and coordinate community groups, service opportunities, mission activities, and worship experiences under Duncan's supervision and in cooperation with the Office of Residence Life.

"We know that peers play a really important role, and with 90% of our student body being believers in Christ, there are plenty of Christian supports for students to turn to," says Duncan. "But we want to be extra intentional about having students who are proactive with those conversations as well."

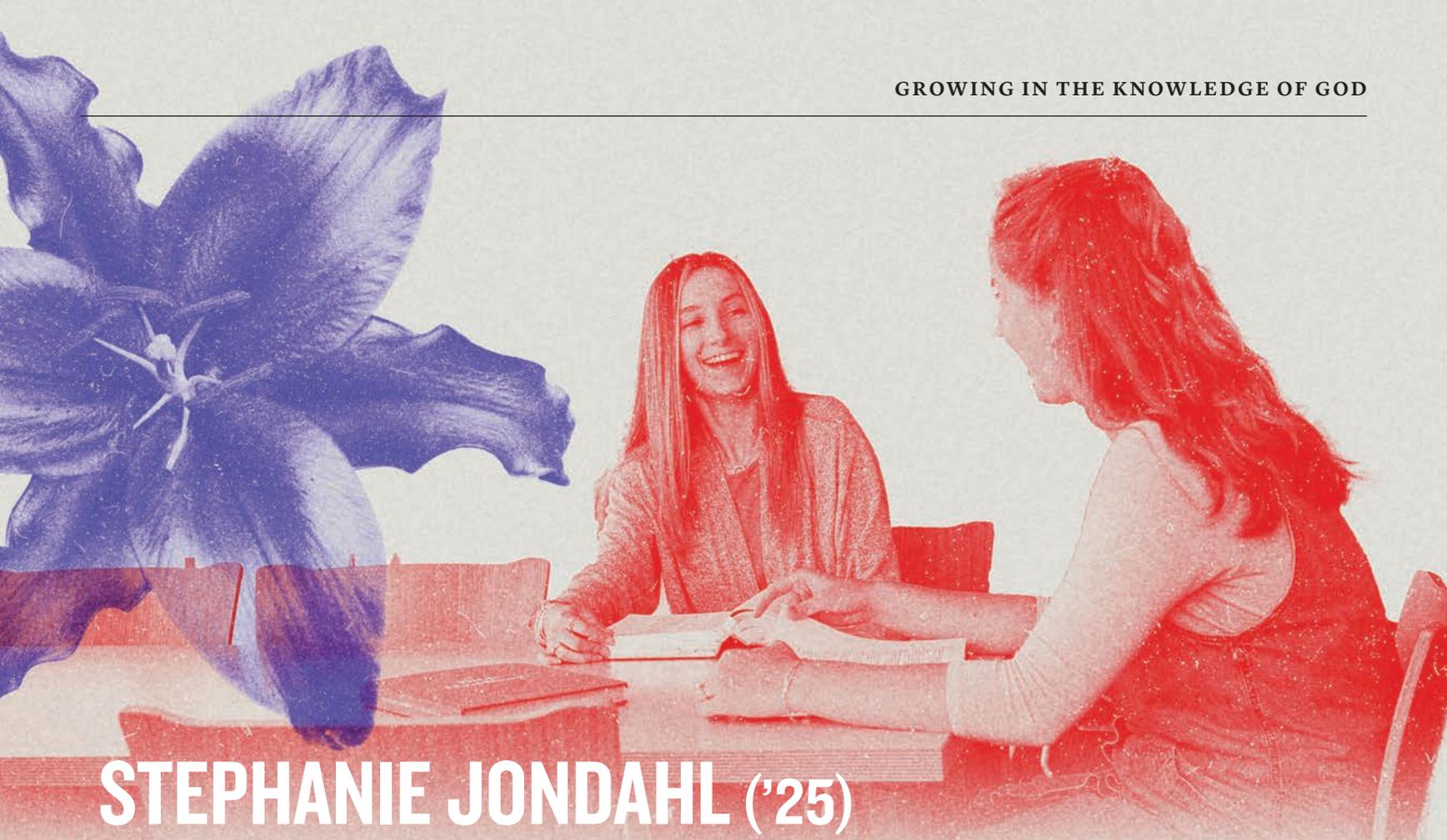
That's what Payton did for Claudia. Throughout Claudia's freshman year, Lovins stuck by her and continually pointed her to God throughout her lowest moments, including a time of personal trial that came during her second semester of freshman year.

Others can, and do, play a formative role in CUAA students' faith lives. People who poured into Claudia also include teammates and coaches of the volleyball team. Her coaches consistently begin practices with a devotion and a prayer, and encourage players to attend worship services on campus. Knowing that she couldn't get this kind of intentional faith-centered experience anywhere else, Claudia has been able to grow alongside her sisters in Christ on the team.

"Being an athlete in the nursing program with two on-campus jobs and other extracurriculars is very demanding," says Claudia. "I do my best to spend time in the Word and get to Chapel multiple times a week. Thankfully, I am surrounded by people who aim to do the same."

Not only does Claudia experience the gift of faith on her team and through the other students on campus, she has also been impacted by professors who have been open about their faith. Being able to take theology classes and be taught by Christian educators is something that Claudia has noticed makes CUAA stand out from other college campuses.

From her experiences in the classroom, the gym, and residence hall, Claudia has been able to see the Lord at work in her life and has been able to grow closer in her relationship with Him. Although she had established faith before attending CUAA, her faith has only grown since stepping on campus and into a community that genuinely cares for her and puts Christ first in everything.



# STEPHANIE JONDAHL ('25)

## The right environment

On a January day at the start of the spring 2022 semester, Stephanie Jondahl ('25) made her way to the back of Rev. Dr. Daniel Paavola's Religion 100: The Bible classroom. Even though she was a junior at this point, she still had a bit of the "new girl" jitters given that it was her first official year as a Concordia student. Having heard of the repute of Concordia's Batterman School of Business, she had transferred from UW-Green Bay the semester before to challenge herself academically and open herself up to more internship opportunities. Far less important to her was Concordia's Lutheran identity, and so for this particular class Stephanie was keen to fade into the background.

Paavola began the semester as he always does with a visual exercise meant to build rapport. At first blush, his get-to-know-you exercises may seem trivial, but Paavola will readily and compellingly defend his methods if asked. Above all, says Paavola, they're essential to set the right tone for the semester.

The "right tone" is especially important for classes like the one Stephanie found herself in that day. The Bible is one of three religion courses every Concordia undergraduate, regardless of major, is required to take before he or she graduates. For that reason, there's always an array of students with a wide variance of faith backgrounds in the classes.

If Stephanie were to be frank, she'd tell you that the graduation requirement was the only reason she was enrolled in Paavola's class. She otherwise had no experience with God's Word. In fact, she had never even cracked open a Bible.

On Day 2, the class began to dive into Scripture. Overwhelmed, Stephanie tried to seek help from the person next to her but to no avail. Paavola had sufficiently proven his affability on Day 1. Still, she waited until the end of the class period to approach him: "How do you read this?"

From that day on, Paavola continued to win her over with his effervescent positivity. Other professors did too. Stephanie was stunned at the difference between the environment at Concordia compared to previous schools she had attended.

"I absolutely love the people here; not just the students but the faculty as well," she says. "When I first came here, my mom and I walked around to find classrooms. A few students stopped us and asked if we needed help. At Green Bay, they don't do that."

Stephanie quickly found that with the right environment she could excel. For the first time in her life, she ended the academic year with a 4.0 GPA. It wasn't that she lacked the ability to earn As before. Ultimately, it came down to having someone care enough about her participation.

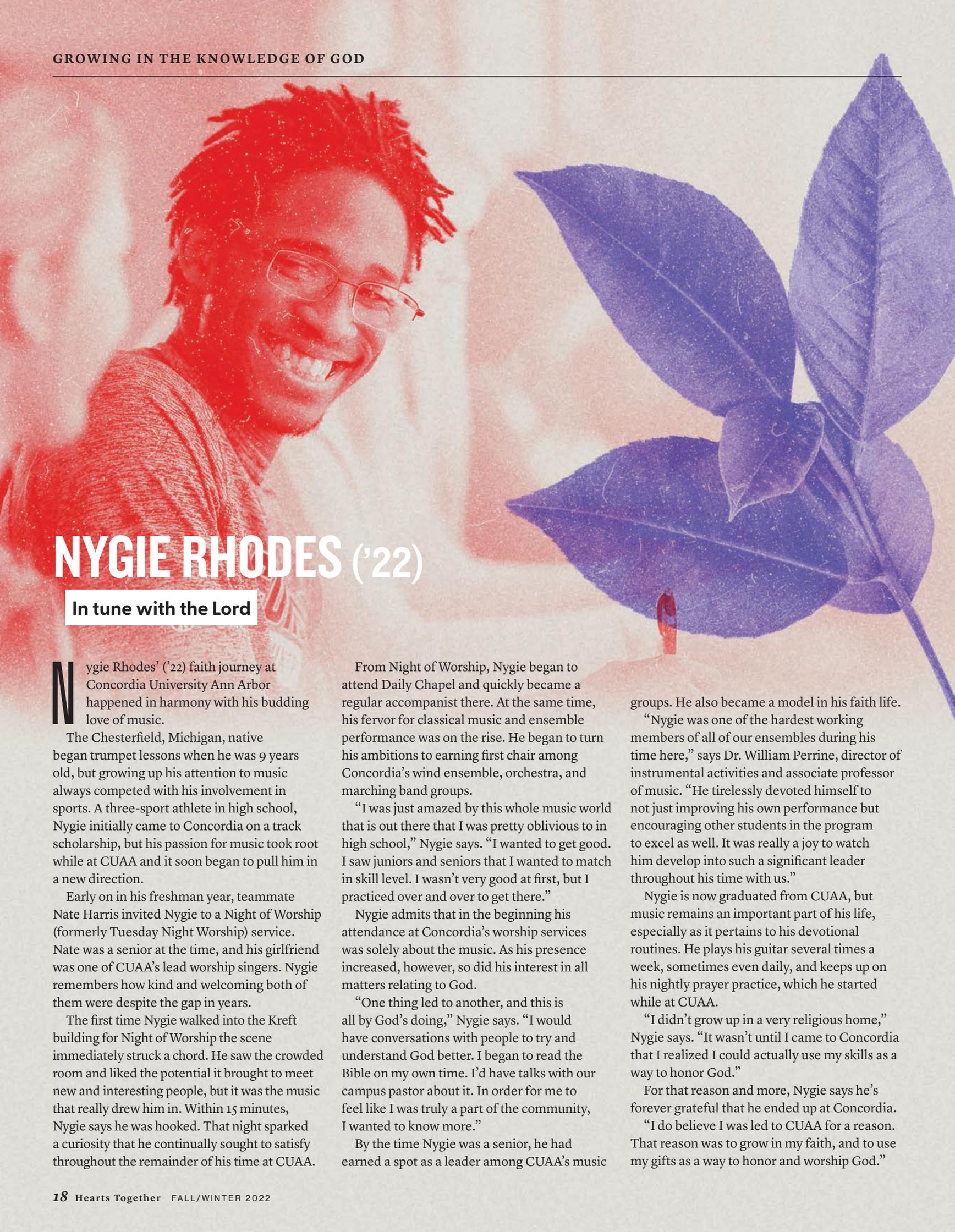
"I think I just thrive in this environment," says Stephanie. "I've felt comfortable participating, asking questions, and staying after and talking to my professors. It's like I've always known how to take the steps to get to where I need to be, but it's all about the environment."

The Concordia environment has continued to inspire her faith walk as well. While enrolled in Paavola's class, she began a weekly Bible study with one of her friends. With any remaining time, the two would go over assignments for class and then would also spend additional time digging into the Word freely. They continued the weekly meetups even after the class ended.

"There's always something for me to learn from the Bible, and that's what makes it so interesting. It's always something new."

Whether it's by God's Word or her coursework, Stephanie likes to be challenged. It took coming to Concordia to fully realize it.

"If I could do it over, I would have definitely started here," Stephanie says. "They challenge you here. You *earn* your degree. And I believe that's how it should be."



## NYGIE RHODES ('22)

### In tune with the Lord

**N**ygie Rhodes' ('22) faith journey at Concordia University Ann Arbor happened in harmony with his budding love of music.

The Chesterfield, Michigan, native began trumpet lessons when he was 9 years old, but growing up his attention to music always competed with his involvement in sports. A three-sport athlete in high school, Nygie initially came to Concordia on a track scholarship, but his passion for music took root while at CUAA and it soon began to pull him in a new direction.

Early on in his freshman year, teammate Nate Harris invited Nygie to a Night of Worship (formerly Tuesday Night Worship) service. Nate was a senior at the time, and his girlfriend was one of CUAA's lead worship singers. Nygie remembers how kind and welcoming both of them were despite the gap in years.

The first time Nygie walked into the Kreft building for Night of Worship the scene immediately struck a chord. He saw the crowded room and liked the potential it brought to meet new and interesting people, but it was the music that really drew him in. Within 15 minutes, Nygie says he was hooked. That night sparked a curiosity that he continually sought to satisfy throughout the remainder of his time at CUAA.

From Night of Worship, Nygie began to attend Daily Chapel and quickly became a regular accompanist there. At the same time, his fervor for classical music and ensemble performance was on the rise. He began to turn his ambitions to earning first chair among Concordia's wind ensemble, orchestra, and marching band groups.

"I was just amazed by this whole music world that is out there that I was pretty oblivious to in high school," Nygie says. "I wanted to get good. I saw juniors and seniors that I wanted to match in skill level. I wasn't very good at first, but I practiced over and over to get there."

Nygie admits that in the beginning his attendance at Concordia's worship services was solely about the music. As his presence increased, however, so did his interest in all matters relating to God.

"One thing led to another, and this is all by God's doing," Nygie says. "I would have conversations with people to try and understand God better. I began to read the Bible on my own time. I'd have talks with our campus pastor about it. In order for me to feel like I was truly a part of the community, I wanted to know more."

By the time Nygie was a senior, he had earned a spot as a leader among CUAA's music

groups. He also became a model in his faith life.

"Nygie was one of the hardest working members of all of our ensembles during his time here," says Dr. William Perrine, director of instrumental activities and associate professor of music. "He tirelessly devoted himself to not just improving his own performance but encouraging other students in the program to excel as well. It was really a joy to watch him develop into such a significant leader throughout his time with us."

Nygie is now graduated from CUAA, but music remains an important part of his life, especially as it pertains to his devotional routines. He plays his guitar several times a week, sometimes even daily, and keeps up on his nightly prayer practice, which he started while at CUAA.

"I didn't grow up in a very religious home," Nygie says. "It wasn't until I came to Concordia that I realized I could actually use my skills as a way to honor God."

For that reason and more, Nygie says he's forever grateful that he ended up at Concordia.

"I do believe I was led to CUAA for a reason. That reason was to grow in my faith, and to use my gifts as a way to honor and worship God."

## SEEDING GROWTH

What does it mean to grow in faith? Ultimately, it is to become more like Christ. And we become more like Christ through obedience to the Lord. At Concordia, we are deliberate about the ways in which we encourage and inspire students to grow.

### Daily Chapel

Each weekday at 9:30 a.m. Central/10:30 a.m. Eastern, the entire Concordia community pauses classes and business operations to allow for Daily Chapel. Chapel is optional, yet a couple hundred students, on average, elect to attend each day to immerse themselves in the Word of God, sing a hymn, and hear a message from one of Concordia's many Biblical scholars.

### Other worship opportunities

In addition to Daily Chapel, Concordia offers a variety of other evening services and opportunities for spiritual growth and praise, including a Wednesday night Candlelight Evening Prayer service on the CUW campus and Night of Worship on the CUAA campus.

### Weekly Bible studies

There are upwards of 20 Bible studies offered weekly on each of our campuses. Some are organized and led by students, and others are hosted by faculty or staff. Either way, there is no shortage of opportunities for students to regularly engage in God's Word.

### Faith-filled liberal arts core

Concordia's liberal arts core—a 45-credit course load required for all undergraduates, regardless of major—comprises more than a third of every Concordia undergraduate's academic experience. Within the liberal arts core are three requisite faith courses: "The Bible," "The Christian Faith," and a faith elective course. Of the dozens of instructors who teach within the liberal arts core, a majority are Lutheran. All who teach the faith courses are rostered LCMS pastors, some of whom hold leadership positions at the synodical or district levels.

### Campus Ministry programming

Under the faithful leadership and direction of Concordia's campus pastors—Revs. Steve Smith, Randy Duncan, and Doug Bender—several dozen CUWAA students organize and lead ongoing ministry efforts designed to "seek the lost, strengthen the saved, and nurture Christian leaders." The CUW and CUAA Campus Ministry teams are by far the most robust and active student organizations on each campus.

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

**80%**

80% of 2022 CUAA graduates indicated they **grew in their Christian faith** during their time at Concordia.

**82%**

82% of 2022 CUW students said that **faculty regularly integrate faith** into the curriculum of their classes.

### WHEN SURVEYED ABOUT FAITH, HERE'S WHAT STUDENTS HAD TO SAY:

**13%**

**7%**

**Non-believer:** "I currently do not believe in Christ, and I am not interested in exploring what it means to be a Christian."

**29%**

**28%**

**Beginner:** "I believe in God, but I am not sure about Christ. My faith is not a significant part of my life."

**45%**

**41%**

**Believer:** "I believe in Jesus and am working on what it means to get to know him and to share that love with others."

**16%**

**17%**

**Follower:** "I see Christ as assisting me in life and it is leading me to a much deeper love of family and others."

**6%**

**6%**

**Disciple:** "I have an intimate relationship with Jesus that drives my flourishing unity with others."

### STUDENTS' SURVEY RESPONSES RANKED CONCORDIA HIGHEST ON THESE FIVE FAITH INDICATORS (OUT OF MORE THAN 25):

Concordia helps me develop a **personal relationship with Christ**

Concordia has teachers/faculty that **model and consistently reinforce** how to grow spiritually

Concordia teaches me the **words, stories, and key messages** of my faith

Concordia inspires me to make my faith an **active part of my life**

Concordia helps me understand the **Bible in greater depth**

Concordia's Office of Institutional Effectiveness is committed to the ongoing, objective assessment of our university's progress and success. View more measures of success at [cuw.edu/fastfacts](http://cuw.edu/fastfacts) or [cuua.edu/fastfacts](http://cuua.edu/fastfacts).

# take five

Get to know one of our **uncommon** Concordians, **Aaliyah James ('24)**, biomedical sciences major and hockey athlete at CUAA.

By **Lisa Liljegren**, *Strategic Communications*



In hockey, a “Royal Road” is an imaginary line that splits the ice into two halves. For biomedical science major Aaliyah James, who plays hockey and lacrosse for the Cardinals, the Royal Road also describes the journey that the princess of a village in Ghana took to Concordia University Ann Arbor.

**1 So, you're a princess; what's the story?**

For over 60 years, my grandfather was a paramount chief of a village in Ghana called Tanyigbe. In Ghana, a paramount chief is designated as the region's highest-level political leader. Because of his status, I was born a princess and my brother a prince. When my grandfather passed in 2017, his status was handed down to my father and his brother who are currently sharing responsibility for our village.

**2 When was the last time you visited Ghana?**

Due to COVID-19, I haven't been back since 2017, when I participated in a weeklong celebration of life for my grandfather's ascension into heaven. Each of the seven days had a different ritual, and the entire experience was inspiring. I hope to return this year and partake in the annual Yam Festival, the largest festival in the village. I'm also craving fufu with goat and

okra soup, and a type of ice cream I've only seen in West Africa that comes out of a bag.

**3 What is fufu?**

Fufu is a West African dish that is sort of like extra-sticky mashed potatoes. I learned how to make it from my auntie Happy when I was in Ghana. Here in the States, my mom and I like to pair fufu with a spicy tomato beef dish that reminds me of our village.

**4 What brought you to Concordia?**

Hockey. I grew up in the U.S. and moved around a lot because my mom is a project manager with an oil and gas company. Before settling in Michigan, my family lived in six different states (including Alaska). No matter where we lived, I always managed to find a hockey team! When I was a high school senior, I was playing in a hockey tournament in Chicago when Coach Barlow reached out to me and invited me to visit Concordia. At that visit, I also connected with Coach Asher and learned that there could be a spot for me on the lacrosse team as well.

**5 What do you love most about Concordia?**

Well, obviously, the campus is so incredibly beautiful. I'm inspired to be here. One of my favorite things on campus is attending Chapel, especially when I go with my teams. I also appreciate how supportive everyone is here. Now that I've been around campus for a while, I look forward to getting to know first-year students and helping them find their way.



## keeping it cool

Marcus Taylor ('26) started the year off with some fun in the sun. After all, there's no better way to cool off and get to know new classmates than with a good-natured water gun battle. The activity was one of several Fall Welcome Weekend festivities that CUAA's Campus Activities Board sponsored for the enjoyment of students. *Photo courtesy of Lauren Martin ('24)*



John Boonenberg, DMA, is CUAA's first-ever Kreft Endowed Chair of Music.

## FROM JUILLIARD TO CUAA

**B**efore he was even tall enough to reach the keys by himself, young John Boonenberg sensed the heavenly power of music.

“People tend to assume that piano was all there was for me at the beginning, but it’s not actually true,” he explains. “The first keyboard I ever touched was the organ at my family’s Lutheran church. Our organist sat me on her lap so I could reach the keyboard, and as soon as I made that connection between the keys and sound I was hooked.”

That’s not all. Dr. Boonenberg also had an early appreciation for music’s connection to God, and to the liturgy and worship. “That’s always been a passion of mine,” he says. “Even when music is not explicitly sacred, but maybe a great classical masterwork, I fully appreciate it as a *gift from God*, in service to His wider creation.”

An acclaimed and accomplished pianist, he once considered pursuing a career as a performer—his master’s is in piano performance from the renowned Juilliard School. His deep connection to his faith led him to serve as a music director and Lutheran school teacher, ultimately following God’s leading to Concordia University Ann Arbor, where his musical gifts and his spiritual passion go hand in hand.

“It’s been such an unbelievable blessing for me to find a vocation where sharing the connection between God and music with students is one of the primary things I’m called to do.”

Boonenberg first joined CUAA in 2017. As director of choral activities, director of worship arts and church music, and assistant professor of music, his duties have been wide and varied. As CUAA’s very first Kreft Endowed Chair in Music, he takes on what you might call an even higher purpose.

“This position really helps the entire music department to make sure that we’re keeping Christ first as we grow,” he explains. “Because we all want to keep our priorities straight, to make sure everything we do is ultimately to glorify God in service to Christ in the church and in the world.”

Learn more at [cuaa.edu/music](https://cuaa.edu/music).

## FAR-REACHING CARE

**C**UAA’s Master of Science in Physician Assistant (PA) Studies program is just over a year old, but it already has a federal grant to its name.

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently awarded a \$1.48 million grant over five years to support students who elect to participate in rural clinical experiences. CUAA was one of only seven universities nationwide to receive the award.

Through the grant, PA students can qualify for a stipend of nearly \$2,150 for a four-week rural rotation or \$5,306 for an eight-week one.

The HRSA award underscores the urgency of the need for more rural health care workers. While only 14% of Americans live in rural areas, these communities represent nearly two-thirds of primary care health professional shortage areas in the country, according to a 2018 HRSA report. An estimated 14,858 additional workers are needed to eliminate the shortage nationwide.

Outside of recruiting individuals from rural backgrounds, research shows that exposure to clinical experiences is the most effective way to close the gap.

Daniel Shonnard was among the first CUAA students to take advantage of the grant this past summer. He participated in rotations in Lake Linden and Houghton, both of which are close to his hometown of Chassell, Michigan.

“I grew up in a town with a population under 1,000 people, so I know what it’s like to live in a small town,” Shonnard says. “Based on my background it’s just easier for me to relate to the patients in rural areas and to know the issues they might be facing since I have something in common with them.”

Learn more about CUAA’s PA program at [cuaa.edu/pa](https://cuaa.edu/pa).



### Higher ambitions

**CONCORDIA WELCOMED ITS INAUGURAL COHORT** of entry-level Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) candidates over the summer. The OTDe degree is also the first doctoral-level program to be offered on the CUAA campus. Learn more at [cuaa.edu/otd](https://cuaa.edu/otd).

**17%**

**According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics,** employment of occupational therapists is projected to grow 17% from 2020 to 2030, much faster than the average for all occupations.



## Meet the student designer

**E**llesyn Fritcha ('24), from Fort Wayne, Indiana, was this year's theme verse student designer. Fritcha, a biomedical sciences major, used a picture of her friend as the silhouette in the graphic to depict "a child of God walking toward His light." The mountains in the background are meant to portray the journey each of us has in our faith lives, while the cross rays represent God's constant protection over us.



## SETTING THE TONE FOR A NEW SCHOOL YEAR

**C**UAA's Campus Ministry team selected "Walking in Faith" as the theme for 2022-23. Inspired by Colossians 1:9-11, the phrase is meant to remind Concordians to walk boldly forward in Christ in spite of the challenges we may face.

"In some ways, we have been in a bit of a holding pattern these past couple of years," says Campus Pastor Rev. Randy Duncan. "Yet, we have been prepared and equipped to boldly live out the mission of Jesus Christ. It's time for action, and we are invited to join Jesus in the adventure of modeling Him to others in word and deed."

Duncan offers a few additional points of inspiration gleaned from the Colossians passage:

- We have been *prepared and equipped* to live out the mission of Christ. Jesus gives us what we need—wisdom, understanding, knowledge, power, endurance, patience, and joy—to be His hands and feet on earth.
- We have been *pre-prayered for this work*. The Apostle Paul's prayers, detailed within the chapter, are still at work for us today, as are the prayers of countless other followers who faithfully pray for the work of CUAA.
- This work is *not in vain*. God is pleased and people are changed when we walk according to His will and purpose.
- It's time to *get moving again*. The end of the pandemic is in sight. It's time to set our eyes more firmly on where God is leading us in the days ahead.

Read more at [blog.cuaa.edu/2022-23-theme-verse](http://blog.cuaa.edu/2022-23-theme-verse).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

For more happenings or full event information, visit [cuaa.edu/events](http://cuaa.edu/events).



### VISIT DAYS

Sept. 10, 24; Oct. 8, 22, 27  
Twilight Tours Sept. 8, 15, 22, 29; Oct. 6, 18, 27



### HOMECOMING AND FAMILY WEEKEND

Oct. 28-30



### FALL PLAY

Oct. 27-30

Agatha Christie's "Murder on the Orient Express"



### BOAR'S HEAD FESTIVAL

Dec. 2-4

Fall Fresco,  
Concordia Vespers, and  
Christmas concerts  
Oct. 18, Nov. 13, Dec. 8



### DECEMBER COMMENCEMENT

Dec. 18



## FAITH, LOVE, AND HEALTH CARE

An unplanned transfer to a new university. A trip across the country. An adjustment to a new nursing program, new city, and new community of friends. Joe Wright ('22) and Beckah Bottorff ('22) navigated it all. The silver lining? They did it together.

Wright and Bottorff each rejoiced when they received their acceptance letters to nursing school at Concordia University Portland (CUP) in Oregon during the summer of 2019. During their time at CUP, they struck up a casual friendship. Their bond quickly flourished after the spring of 2020, however, when university officials unexpectedly announced the school would close at the end of the semester.

With their plans upended, the entire CUP student body scrambled to find alternative options. After learning about multiple universities at a huge college fair, Wright, Bottorff, and a few of their friends decided on CUAA. Its close-knit community, technological advances within the program, and the opportunity to travel abroad made it the obvious choice, despite the fact that it would mean relocating to Michigan on short notice.

Their gamble paid off. Now a year in at CUAA, the transplants couldn't be happier with their decision.

Although Wright and Bottorff wouldn't recommend such an unceremonious life change, the two are quick to admit that nothing galvanizes a pair like a journey into the unknown. A couple months before the move, Wright and Bottorff decided to take their friendship to the next level. In April of the following year, Wright proposed. The two will marry in 2024 after they graduate.

From study buddies to life partners, as well as allies in their profession, the two have navigated it in tandem.

"We've already sort of tackled the unknown together," Bottorff says. "I can't wait for our adventures to continue."

Learn more at [cuaa.edu/nursing](http://cuaa.edu/nursing).

## HIGHLIGHT REEL

CUAA Athletics had a banner year in 2021-22. With a new season already underway, the Cardinals are looking to build upon their momentum. Take a look back at just a few of last year's highlights and look for opportunities to root for the home team in 2022-23 by visiting [concordiacardinals.com](http://concordiacardinals.com).



BASEBALL WINS 2022 NCAA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP



CHEER WINS 2021 WHAC CHAMPIONSHIP (4TH YEAR STRAIGHT)



FOOTBALL EARNS 2021 CONFERENCE CO-CHAMPION TITLE; HOSTS FIRST-EVER NAIA PLAYOFF GAME; REACHES NAIA QUARTERFINALS



STUNT COMPETES IN INAUGURAL SEASON; EARNS FIRST PROGRAM WINS



MEN'S BOWLING SECURES ALL-TIME TEAM RECORD FOR A SERIES AVERAGE OF 1,085.6



MEN'S GOLF SECURES ALL-TIME TEAM RECORD FOR TWO-DAY TOURNAMENT (654)

## GRATEFUL AND HOPE-FILLED

Typically the month of June is quieter on our Ann Arbor campus, but this past summer proved to be much busier than usual. Every three years the 35 districts of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod host conventions to elect new leaders, vote on bylaws, and more. As the Church's school, it was our privilege to host three conventions on our beautiful campus this past summer.

Reflecting upon those busy but meaningful days, where LCMS delegates worshiped, ate, and conducted business together, there is one word that keeps resonating in my heart: *grateful*. I am grateful for the Church. I am grateful that Jesus is the head of the body, the Church. As it states in Colossians 1:15-18 (ESV): "(Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created ... through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent."

Not only am I grateful, but I am hope-filled. As a campus in the Michigan District, this was a monumental year as the Michigan District elected a new district president. We are so glad to welcome new District President Rev. David A. Davis, who has continuously demonstrated tremendous support for CUAA, his alma mater. Rev. Davis ('79) served as an adjunct theology professor last year and was awarded the Outstanding Alumnus award in 2019. I am hope-filled, centered in the promises of God and the truth of Jesus our Savior, and look forward to working closely with Rev. Davis and all of our district presidents in the years ahead.

### REV. DR. RYAN PETERSON

Vice President of Administration  
Chief Liaison to the Office of the President





## Travis Grulke

BA in elementary education (CUAA '01); MS in educational administration (CUW '13)

### **A LIFELONG LUTHERAN EDUCATOR**

Throughout his more than two decades as a Lutheran educator, Travis Grulke has seen plenty of changes among the Church's schools. And he's had the perfect vantage from which to assess the shift, having served four years as superintendent of schools for The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) Ohio District, and, more recently, five years and counting as superintendent of the LCMS Michigan District. Prior to his district positions, he also served six years as a middle school teacher and six years as principal of Redeemer Lutheran in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio.

Despite the changes, one thing remains constant: "Christ is still central to everything we do," Grulke affirms.

Read his full story at [blog.cuaa.edu/travis-grulke](http://blog.cuaa.edu/travis-grulke).

# Ways to give to Concordia



## THE CONCORDIA FUND

Give annually and provide critical operational revenue for the university. Concordia Fund gifts are used in the year they are given, allowing us to offer Concordia students the increased quality and excellence they expect.



## ENDOWMENT FUNDS

Invest in Concordia's future! An endowment is an amount of money (a fund) given to the university, stipulating that the funds are invested to earn annual interest rather than being spent immediately.



## SPECIFIC PROJECTS & PROGRAMS

Support the capital projects and programs of the highest priority.



## ADOPT-A-STUDENT

Get matched with a student who will directly benefit from your generous gift of a Christian education. The student will send you a personal letter to share their progress, challenges, and joys of life at Concordia.

For more information, visit [cuw.edu/give](http://cuw.edu/give) or [cuaa.edu/give](http://cuaa.edu/give).



## COMMITTED TO *equipping*

**"A**dvancing the mission" has a new messenger. Dean Rennie, president of the Concordia Foundation, has added vice president of university advancement to his title following the promotion of his predecessor, Rev. Dr. Roy Peterson, who accepted the position of chief financial officer on July 1.

Rennie has served on the advancement team for the past five years, which have been some of the most successful fundraising years in Concordia's history, thanks be to God and a solid team effort. As a leader of the Concordia Foundation, Rennie primarily focused on growing the university's endowment and operating funds through corporate and community support, and securing funds for crucial capital projects on both campuses. Most notably, the advancement team is clearing the financial hurdle on new athletic facilities on the Ann Arbor campus and is in the prelude phase of funding new music performance spaces in Wisconsin.

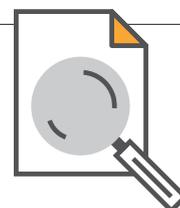
"I'm proud to serve on a team that is so mission conscious," says Rennie. "Every member of the advancement team is here to serve God by serving our students, and we do that by focusing on projects and programs that will go well into the future and are meaningful to our students."

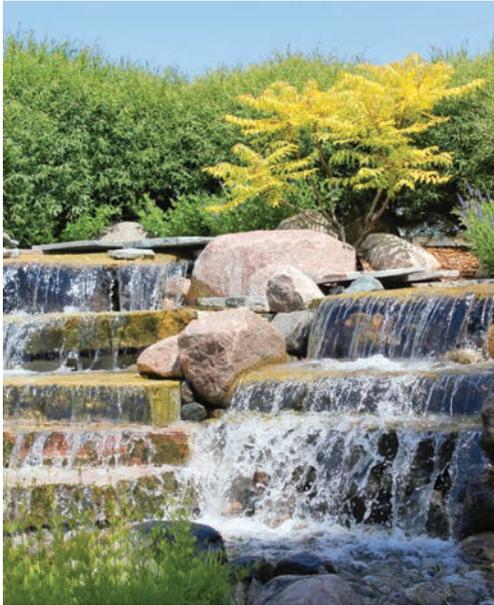
Rennie is quick to credit his predecessors, Duane H. Hilgendorf, who served as the university's first vice president of advancement from 1994 to 2013, and Rev. Dr. Roy Peterson, who will remain intimately involved in the department's efforts and outcomes as the newly appointed CFO. In addition, he notes that the longevity and dedication of his colleagues on both campuses, along with God's blessings in opening doors, have made success possible.

"The administration established a solid foundation for me to build on," says Rennie. "Of course, the Concordia story is an easy story to tell and an exciting one. When I talk about Concordia, I get to share how we are two thriving campuses comprised of students who choose to be in our Christ-centered community to learn and prepare for their unique callings in life. And we are a community of faculty, staff, alumni, and supporters committed to equipping the next generation of leaders to change the world."

## The presidential search continues

Concordia invites you to stay up to date with the search process. Updates and all search materials are posted at [cuw.edu/president-search](http://cuw.edu/president-search) or [cuaa.edu/president-search](http://cuaa.edu/president-search).



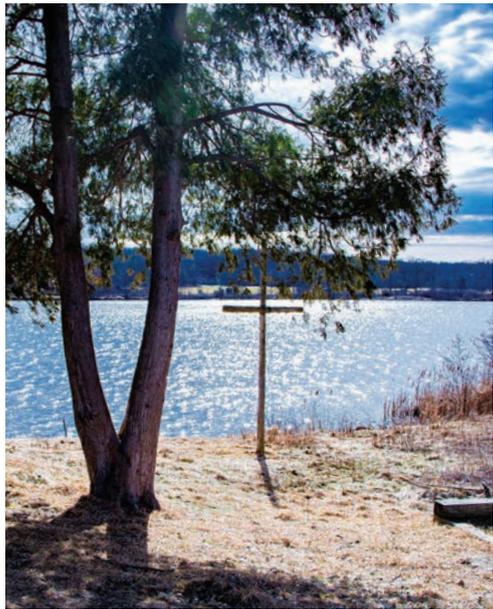


**A watershed moment**

CUAA Pre-seminary Director Rev. Ted Hopkins reflects on the paradoxical powers of water, both literally and spiritually. Read the full *Hearts Together* closing devotion at [blog.cuaa.edu/benediction-Hopkins](http://blog.cuaa.edu/benediction-Hopkins).



**Romans 6:3**



“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?”



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