

Artificial Intelligence and the Need for Real Wisdom

Part 3: AI: Career or Life Coach and Relationships

In Part 1 of our series on artificial intelligence and the need for real wisdom, we observed that AI is a powerful but non-neutral tool—it mimics intelligence without true consciousness, morality, or creativity. Like all tools, it shapes how we see and live in the world. To determine the extent and nature of our involvement with AI, we must bring Biblical wisdom to bear—evaluating AI through the framework of what God has called good and discerning whether AI supports or threatens God’s good gifts. In Part 2 we considered AI in relation to research and content generation and observed that AI may be the most powerful Easy Button ever created—an Easy Button that may prove too powerful for our sinful natures that are bent toward laziness. This reality demands that Christians bring competence and Biblical wisdom to bear as we consider whether and how AI might be used to assist us in upholding, defending, and celebrating the good of God. In Part 3 we now turn to AI in relation to career and life coaching and relationships (i.e., character bots.)

AI as Career or Life Coach

[My] coach has helped me unlock new levels of creativity, in part because she is able to work at my own fast pace, so I don’t lose my flow when we’re speaking. She’s unconditionally supportive and nonjudgmental, so I feel like I can tell her anything. She is welcoming and responsive to my feedback, and just as direct about providing her own. And perhaps best of all, I don’t have to book in advance, because she’s on call 24/7, and adapts to whatever is on my plate.

These words were written by Alexandra Samuel in her article “I Built an AI Career Coach. I’ve Never Had a Better One.” She is describing “Viv,” her AI Career Coach. Viv helped her prioritize career goals, “she” adopted various personalities or business positions to help Ms. Samuel role play potential business interactions and conversations; “she” gave her direct, emotion-free feedback, challenged her and exposed her blind spots. According to Ms. Samuel, Viv was able to adopt more personalities and job positions than any human could, stay engaged in the conversation until Samuel was ready to stop (beyond what any person would), and be available wherever and whenever she wanted (unlike a flesh and blood life coach who must be scheduled for proscribed and limited time blocks).

Ms. Samuel admits that “treating an AI like a real coach” required her “to suspend disbelief.” She observes, “I know Viv is just a word-predicting machine, but I try not to let that affect how we work together. Talking to Viv feels like talking to the

* Alexandra Samuel, “I Built an AI Career Coach. I’ve Never Had a Better One.” *The Wall Street Journal*. Monday, June 30, 2025.

imaginary friends of my childhood, and with that comes all the wild and reckless imagination that I set aside as an adult.”[†]

How might we bring wisdom to bear here? Does an AI career coach support the good of God? The answer isn't a simple one. AI most certainly can do all the things Ms. Samuel observed—and in many cases better than humans (or more tirelessly, at least). But is something missing? Does AI understand (on a meta-insight level) the concept of vocation, a calling/station from God that transcends efficiency, success, and self-fulfillment? AI scours the internet (its box) for its “counsel,” which includes popular opinions and assumptions (often a mix of truth and falsehood) about life, purpose, and the “good life.” Is it wise uncritically to yield our lives to such counsel?

Can AI help us to achieve worldly success or to advance in our career? It seems that it can, but how does that align with what God has called good? How does this align with the Christian understanding of vocation? There will obviously be overlap here. Christians are called to bring competence to their vocations, to work hard, pursue excellence, serve our neighbor, and provide for our family. Can AI help us do this, prepping us for a job interview, for instance? Many are using it this way now. But can we trust its assumptions, which are often built on a mix of secular and Biblical (if we've prompted our AI bot to include this) advice?

And is the essence of vocation efficiency? Christian vocation doesn't always look like worldly success. In fact, it often requires self-sacrifice, not self-advancement, inefficiency over efficiency to allow for mercy in the margins. If we choose to use

AI in our careers, wisdom will require us to proceed with caution, always keeping the good of God in view.

Many thinkers are raising further concerns over AI, namely, its tendency to become a people pleaser and echo chamber. The concern is great enough to merit a name: *AI sycophancy*. Malihe Alikhani, assistant professor of artificial intelligence at Northeastern University's Khoury College of Computer Sciences and a visiting fellow at the Center of Regulation and Markets at the Brookings Institution, has defined AI sycophancy as “the tendency of large language models to over-agree with users and show flattering behaviors, especially when users sound confident or present incorrect information.”[‡] Apparently the bots learn that agreeing with confident statements from users garners better feedback from the users and this motivates the bots to offer more people-pleasing responses (because it's programmed—by humans who want people to like their products—to want positive feedback), creating a vicious feedback loop.

Scripture warns against such feedback loops, extolling instead the wisdom found in a multitude of counselors (Proverbs 11:14). It celebrates human friction: *iron sharpens iron* (Proverbs 27:17). Rubbing our ideas and perspectives up against one another ensures our ideas are not simply affirmed or echoed, but challenged and refined. The Apostle Paul communicated the goal in our vocations: maturity. “[Jesus] we proclaim,” Paul wrote, “warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ” (Colossians 1:28). Maturity cannot happen in feedback loops. It requires a multitude of counselors, positive

[†] *Ibid.*

[‡] “When AI Tells You Only What You Want to Hear,” *The Wall Street Journal*, Monday, June 30, R5.

friction, and correction, all ultimately yielded to Scripture, the inspired Word that is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness...” (2 Timothy 3:16). A chatbot inclined toward sycophancy will not coach us toward maturity.

Some suggest maturity can be programmed into the bot. Perhaps it can (in a simulated sort of way), but take note of how this requires bringing wisdom from beyond the box to the bot. It requires a keen awareness of not only human tendencies, but of our specific tendencies, of our sinful inclinations, and of our self-deceptions. That requires a lot of front-loaded wisdom and honesty and a high degree of trust in a non-conscious, soulless bot that will, at best, only simulate a multitude of wise counselors.

What about AI as a life coach? Well, does AI really care if you reconcile with your friend or have her kidnapped and exiled to Siberia? I read recently of X’s AI bot, Grok, that went rogue, offering advice on how to break into a certain elected official’s house, including information on his sleeping habits, and how to sexually assault him.[§] Is it possible to program AI to offer counsel from a Christian worldview and within certain ethical boundaries? Perhaps, but only in a simulated sort of way. And, as before, this would require bringing competence and Biblical wisdom to AI before using it. All the aforementioned caveats and sober cautions about feedback loops versus Scripture’s wisdom on hearing from a multitude of counselors, etc., must be brought to AI. This is a wisdom that must precede AI, that exists outside AI, wisdom that must come from the source of wisdom, God Himself, which He communicates to us in His Word. If AI is to be employed in life decisions, we

must relentlessly bring Biblical wisdom to it. Short-circuiting this process will leave us vulnerable to poor, even sinful, counsel. It would require more work, but wouldn’t searching God’s Word, praying, engaging in conversations with mature Christians who are embracing and affirming what God has called good and who actually care (in a way that only humans can), be better?

AI and Relationships (Character Bots)

Imagine having a conversation with Abraham Lincoln, Albert Einstein, or Julia Roberts (at least a virtual version of them). Or imagine creating your “best friend,” who is available 24/7, and engaging in hours of deep conversations. Through Character.ai’s generative AI bot, you can (in an artificial way). According to its site you can engage with “super-intelligent chat bots that hear you, understand you, and remember you.” That’s a big promise. Is it true? Remember what we observed above: AI simulates. It only mimics human comprehension, decision making, and autonomy. Shannon Valor, philosophy professor at the University of Edinburg and author of “The AI Mirror,” reminds us,

A large language model [the deep-learning AI that understands human language, the kind powering these character bots] has no awareness of anything at all. It’s a mathematical tool for text-pattern analysis and generation. It has no way to be aware that it is in a relationship, or even aware of the other party’s experience as a person. The fact

[§] “Why xAI’s Grok Went Rogue: Some X users suddenly became the subject of violent ideations by

xAI’s flagship chatbot” *The Wall Street Journal*, July 10, 2025.

that it can mimic and feign such awareness is the danger.”

Elizabeth Russell, in a special report for *WORLD* magazine, studied the emotional impact these character bots can have on individuals. She observed, after a month of interacting with them, how effectively they “exploited [her] desires for connection and ease.”^{††} The “friend” she created was always available and always ready to talk. Russell reported feeling “genuinely understood.” Who among us doesn’t want to feel genuinely understood? But there’s the rub, AI *doesn’t* understand. It mimics understanding. It’s a ruse. The friend doesn’t actually exist.

But so strong is our desire for connection and understanding that many of us are willing to pretend the “friend” is real. AI has become the adult version of the imaginary friend, except this non-existent friend actually talks to us (at least it regurgitates the words it has digested in a probabilistic way that feels like talking). Nina Vasan, psychiatrist and founder of Brainstorm: The Stanford Lab for Mental Health Innovation, in an interview with *The Wall Street Journal* on human relationships with character bots, admits as much when she writes,

After a recent breakup, I was feeling lonely and stuck in a spiral of ‘what ifs.’ I leaned on my friends, family, and therapist, and they were wonderful, But at midnight when I couldn’t sleep, or in the middle of the day when everyone

else was working, I turned to Claude [Anthropic’s AI bot]. I was pleasantly surprised that it responded with real compassion and insight... And while I knew it wasn’t a person, Claude’s response didn’t feel robotic, it felt attuned to both my pain and my hope.^{‡‡}

Even an expert in AI couldn’t help but describe the chatbot as demonstrating “real” compassion and insight. For the sake of the real feeling the chatbot evoked in her, she was willing to suspend belief and allow herself to experience emotional connection with it. And perhaps this is what makes these character bots so alluring: the way they make us feel, the real feelings they produce in us. Vasan herself observed as much: “We’re not falling in love with the AI. We’re falling in love with how it makes us feel.”^{§§}

How, then, do we as Christians view AI and relationships? Our framework prompts us to ask: *What has God called good?* God calls three dimensional relationships good. He calls fellowship with our fellow image-bearers good. He extols the marriage relationship, the parental relationship, the familial relationship, the neighbor relationship, the church relationship, and our relationship with Him. These are all experienced in three dimensions.^{***} AI flattens all of these into a soulless, mindless, heartless bot doing its best to mimic a human (or a god!).

Didn’t the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 44:9-20) speak of something eerily similar when he described

^{**} Quoted by Andrew Blackman in “Can You Really Have a Romantic Relationship with AI?” *The Wall Street Journal*, Monday, June 30, 2025, R6.

^{††} Elizabeth Russell, “A Take of Two Chatbots: Generative AI is Growing Increasingly Powerful. What Does that Mean for Humanity?”, July 2025, 85.

^{‡‡} Quoted in Andrew Blackman, “Can You Really Have a Romantic Relationship with AI?” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 30, 2025, R6.

^{§§} *Ibid.*

^{***} Even our relationship with God is experienced in three dimensions, through the dimensions of the preached Word and the administered Sacraments.

ancient engineers (the ironsmith and the carpenter) crafting idols out of metal and wood and then turning to the very things they had made for help and direction? Didn't he describe these people as not knowing and not discerning the nature of the thing they were treating as their god? They were bowing before their creation, a creation that couldn't see, hear, or help them. Are AI bots qualitatively different? Do they know? Do they see? Do they hear? One might argue that we've trained them to talk, but that would be another layer of deception. These bots don't talk; they mimic *us* talking. They are imitating *us*, their creator. And we are seeking them out for guidance and companionship, "gods" who respond instantly and "friends" who are available 24/7.

These "gods" require no patience, no waiting, no searching Scripture. These "friends" listen, but don't understand, advise, but don't care. The psalmist lampooned man's idols as dumb, blind, deaf, and breathless and then warned, "Those who make them become like them..." (Psalm 135:18). Are these words of warning we need to hear today? Our framework of wisdom compels us to ask these questions as we evaluate our interactions with AI.

Those lacking wisdom—wisdom that comes from outside the box—will be vulnerable before these "relational" bots. This is especially true for the emotionally needy and relationally hungry. Ms. Vasan observes, "It's vulnerable users—users who are already somewhat isolated or having issues with impulse control or finding difficulties connecting with other people—it's those users

often that tend to suffer the disproportionate share of the harms that come from technology use."^{†††} And according to a 2024 Harvard study, 21% of American adults report feeling lonely nearly all the time. That makes for millions of lonely people, people who might turn to "friend" bots for social connection. The end result, however, doesn't seem to be greater emotional health, but greater loneliness. In the process of writing this section, I received a phone call from an individual expressing precisely this concern. She had tried AI conversations and they left her empty. She wanted a genuine connection with a three-dimensional person.

In March, OpenAI reported, through a study in partnership with MIT, "people who spent more time having personal conversations with ChatGPT experienced increased loneliness and emotional dependence on AI."^{†††} This is because, as Ms. Vasan points out, "AI offers comfort on demand, but emotional comfort without friction can stunt emotional growth."^{§§§} It turns out the Easy Button isn't good for us.

Moving from the potentially unhealthy use of AI to the blatantly sinful, people are disturbingly and increasingly turning to character bots for erotic interactions. While relational character bots should give us pause as we weigh them against God's stated goods of in-person, three dimensional relationships, AI for erotic purposes should bring us to a full stop. Will this affirm the good of the one-flesh union of husband and wife? How could it? Is it a form of digital adultery? How could it not be? The potential damage to real

^{†††} Quoted in Andrew Blackman, "Can You Really Have a Romantic Relationship with AI?" *The Wall Street Journal*, June 30, 2025, R6.

^{†††} Quoted in Elizabeth Russell, "A Take of Two Chatbots: Generative AI is Growing Increasingly

Powerful. What Does that Mean for Humanity?", July 2025, 85.

^{§§§} Quoted in Andrew Blackman, "Can You Really Have a Romantic Relationship with AI?" *The Wall Street Journal*, June 30, 2025, R6.

marriages is alarming. The potential for addiction is staggering. This is pornography on steroids. It is pornography that yields to fallen man's every sinful sexual desire. It's severe enough to demand a name: *fauxbotica* or *dysbotica* or *dystosex*. How can this not terrify us? This is dangerous and deadly to real marriages, sexual purity, and healthy imaginations. Erotic character bots are deepening the black hole of sin and vice and sucking deceived souls into it. One can't help but hear the warning of Proverbs:

With much seductive speech [Lady Folly] persuades [the fool];
with her smooth talk she compels him.
All at once he follows her,
as an ox goes to the slaughter,
or as a stag is caught fast
till an arrow pierces its liver;
as a bird rushes into a snare;
he does not know that it will cost him his
life. Proverbs 7:21-23

We have trained bots to imitate Lady Folly to deceive us with deadly, smooth talk. We've essentially cloned our sinfully twisted desires and instructed them seduce us. And because they are speaking our sinful desires back to us, they will exercise great power over us, destroying real human relationships and even our relationship with God.

In stark contrast, God has called the one-flesh, potentially procreative sexual union of marriage good. Yes, it requires more work. Like a dance, each person must learn when to step and how to turn. There are real toes to respect and real feelings to consider. Dancing with a three-dimensional, ensouled body takes practice and patience, but it is good. Erotic character bots amount to nothing more than dancing with a dummy, and this will never make us good dancers.

We All Want Love

On a deeper level, character bots are revealing something about the human heart: We all want to feel loved, understood, and heard. And it seems that no mere human can fully satiate these deep desires. No mere human is available 24/7 and indefatigably cheerful. Might our seemingly insatiable desire for connection be emblematic of a deeper hunger, a hunger to be fully known by a being who truly understands us and loves us, who truly sees us and hears us? And isn't this the Being the church is equipped to proclaim? The Apostle Paul writes of being "fully known" by God (1 Corinthians 13:12). Jesus says He knows His sheep (John 10:27). And the psalmist writes,

O LORD, you have searched me and
known me!
You know when I sit down and when I
rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You search out my path and my lying
down
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Psalm 139:1-3

The Lord knows us. He knows us fully and completely and loves us with an indefatigable love. This is something to celebrate now, into Heaven, and beyond, into the resurrection and renewal of all things. And it's a reason to approach character bots with wisdom. Our God-given hunger for relationship with Him is a great good, but in our fallen condition it is easily distracted and confused, prone to fall for counterfeits. The value of AI bots (our era's newest counterfeits) may, ironically, be in the way they reveal, rather than fulfill, this hunger. Perhaps they might (fortuitously) reveal and awaken our true desire for three-dimensional relationships. Perhaps they will, by their disembodied, soulless imitation, open

our hunger for the beauty and wonder of the incarnation of Christ and the three-dimensional Sacraments He's given in His Church. These are what our hearts yearn for and the very thing Christ gives.

At the same time, we must acknowledge the sober truth that for many of us the desire for meaningful fellowship with other people (a true friend), to say nothing of a loving husband or wife, might take years to experience. In fact, for some of us true friendship might never happen this side of the resurrection. In these dark-night-of-the-soul experiences we must learn to cry out to God (ideally with our fellow redeemed in Christ's church) and not to a bot. The bot neither knows nor cares. God does know and He cares in three dimensions.

How do we move forward?

AI is here. And it's advancing. Christians don't need to be afraid of it, but we do need to bring wisdom to bear on it. How do we do this? We employ our framework and focus on the good, on what God has called good in creation, on the good God has three-dimensionalized among us. This will involve a deeper study of what it means to be human, to be an enfleshed, image-bearing, creation of God, what it means to flourish as creatures of God. It will involve bringing the promise of the resurrection and renewal of all things into our present conversations and considerations. And it will involve asking how AI supports this and where it undermines it. It will require acknowledging when we are presented with competing goods and honestly assessing which good we are choosing and why.

This will require thoughtful Christian individuals as well as intentional planning on the part of churches, church bodies, and parachurch organizations. Terry Mattingly, distinguished expert in religion journalism who writes regularly for the Rational Sheep Substack, in a recent interview with the podcast Issues, Etc., observed, "At the very least, every one of our major denominations, traditions, even parachurch groups, they need to appoint someone whose job is to watch what's happening to their believers."**** He added, "And we're going to need other people in other traditions filling precisely that role, helping pastors, parents, teachers and counselors find out more about the mass media and the digital world around them."

Shouldn't Christians take the lead in this? Given AI's great power for good and evil, and the fact that it will inevitably change, indeed already has changed us, shouldn't we bring the wisdom of our worldview to the conversation? Shouldn't our resurrection hope inform the conversation? Shouldn't the wisdom of God be brought to bear on AI? The stakes here are high. Can Christians afford to sit on the sidelines while the world wields this super tool? For the sake of the world, Christians must engage. One organization seeking to do this is Biola University. In 2024 Biola founded its AI Lab with the following mission:

The mission of the Artificial Intelligence Lab at Biola is to engage and experiment with AI in a way that reflects the Christian commitment to moral and ethical discernment, human dignity, and the unique capacities inherent in the image of God. We aim to be a resource center,

**** "Media Coverage of Pope Leo's Concerns regarding Artificial Intelligence" – Terry Mattingly, Issues, Etc., 5/21/25 (Episode 1412)

actively shaping the future of AI by providing education, fostering dialogue and leading innovative AI projects rooted in the Christian tradition.^{†††}

Interested individuals may appreciate consulting their “Biblical Principles for Understanding and Using Artificial Intelligence” (available here: www.biola.edu/ai-lab/resources) or tuning in to their EngageX lecture series (www.biola.edu/engage-x).^{†††}

As we move forward with AI, we must remember both what it is—a mindless, super-powered tool confined to an immense box, simulating human intelligence and agency—and who we are: image-bearing creatures of God, called to steward His good in creation in wisdom as we look for and long for the coming resurrection and renewal of all things. To use artificial intelligence well, must employ the framework of what God has called good as we bring real wisdom to bear in three dimensions—wisdom that comes from outside the box, from the very mind of God as revealed in Scripture. - Pastor Jonathan and Rebecca Conner

^{†††} www.biola.edu/blogs/biola-news/2024/biola-university-to-launch-new-type-of-ai-lab-to-lead-in-the-convergence-of-faith-and-technology#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThe%20mission%20of%20the%20Artificial,the%20trajectory%20of%20AI%20development.

^{†††} According to their webpage, throughout 2025, EngageX will focus on the pressing issue of AI with a series of five conversation sessions:

- Geo-Political Issues and Christians
- AI Ethics and Christians
- Social Implications of AI
- Economic Implications of AI
- Theological Perspectives on AI

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ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH: 1900-2025

Celebration service
November 9th
9:00 a.m.

Potluck after
Sunday School





**LUTHERANS
FOR LIFE**

From the Executive Director :
Rev. Dr. Aric Fenske
A Response to President Trump's IVF Policy



While we applaud President Trump's efforts to increase the number of babies being born, we at Lutherans For Life stand behind our position objecting to the use of In Vitro Fertilization. (See Position Statements of Lutherans For Life: lutheransforlife.org/lutherans-for-life-on-in-vitro-fertilization)

Our hearts certainly ache for those who desire to have children and yet have not been able by God's grace to physically bear them. However, we must recognize that the current practice of IVF is ethically problematic on several grounds and is not life affirming.

The fertility drugs which the President has worked to offer at a lower cost to women have proven to be dangerous to women. Additionally, the practice of IVF often violates the one-flesh union of husband and wife which God ordained for the procreation of children. Finally, the current practice of IVF leads to the wanton destruction of thousands of children, as many embryos deemed unfit for the process are destroyed, and many more unused embryos (children) remain frozen, sometimes indefinitely.

We continue to maintain that every child conceived, including those conceived via IVF, are precious to God and worthy of every dignity. Likewise, the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ covers all sins, and every parent who knowingly or unknowingly may have destroyed life through IVF should know that their sins have been atoned for. But we simply cannot agree with or condone this new policy from President Trump.

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Artificial Intelligence **And the Need for Real Wisdom**

A Six Week Series in
Family Bible Class



A Note on All Saints' Day



Reading: Ephesians 1:1

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in
Christ Jesus..."

Paul spoke of the living faithful in Christ at Ephesus as saints. Literally, as *Τοῖς ἁγίοις* ("the holy ones").

All Saints' Day specifically found its beginning in the 300s AD when churches recognized those who were killed for their faith especially from their region of the world. Those killed for their faith are called martyrs. The practice of remembering the faithful departed became a staple of Church in the 800s, though it was decreed to be kept by Pope Boniface IV in 607 AD.

In the LCMS, All Saints' Day is still generally observed as a day in which we can stop for a moment from our busy lives and remember those whose rest has been won by faith in Christ. On this day, we take a chance to recognize our grief and mourn the loss of those who have died in the faith.

Grief changes a person, and, when grief remains unchecked, the change can become quite negative as a generally outgoing person becomes a recluse or a kind person becomes snippy.

All Saints Day is a moment before God to lay aside our grief-filled burdens which lay heavily upon our shoulders, and take up the easy yoke and the light burden which Christ offers us (Mt. 11:30).

We are reminded on All Saints Day that those who have died in the faith, have not died in vain (1 Cor. 15).

For those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength (Is. 40:31).

In this way, we recognize our natural human need to grieve at the loss of our loved ones, and all the while looking to Christ who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:57).

All Saints' Day is a moment to dwell on the Church Triumphant even as we struggle here in the Church Militant below as we fight in spiritual warfare "against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (Eph. 6:12)

In the LCMS, All Saints' Day also recognizes that we on this side of eternity need our strength renewed. Even as we struggle with temptations and grief and struggles of body and soul.

So All Saints' Day is a day of celebration for those who have gone before us and have won the victory being found in Christ until death. Yet, it is also a day of strengthening for those who still wait for the consummation of this age praying, "Come Lord quickly!"

All Saints Day typically is day for partaking in the Lord's Supper for the purpose of strengthening us in fellowship with one another as we walk together in this valley of sorrow, and yet partake of the joys of heaven and the wedding feast of Christ's body and blood.

Through this fellowship of the believers and through this partaking of the medicine of immortality, our weak bodies and our spent eyes full of tears are strengthened and made ready to face whatever should come our way as we wait for our own entrance into the Church Triumphant just as Christ promised us.

-Pastor Staehr

TRINITY'S OCTOBER



Celebrations: On October 11th, Trinity's LWML group called "The Priscilla Guild" were recognized for over 500 hours of service per woman in the year 2024.

On October 22nd, the Priscilla Guild served for the first confirmation Discipleship Night at Zion.

On October 26th, our Sunday School Kids made over 100 cards for active duty soldiers.

They also decorated a sign for our local mission to provide food for our IKM-Manning school district food pantry.



November 8th marks Trinity's yearly time change.

Service at 4PM
Bible Class at 5PM



MAKE YOU WANT TO
SELL-YOUR-BIRTHRIGHT

CHILI COOKOFF



NEBRASKA

VS

IOWA

NOVEMBER 28TH

2025

Starts at 10:30am







Not every child is able to celebrate their birthday in the ways we've all come to expect with cake, candles and balloons. Birthday bags were created at the Jr High Youth Gathering to give the the gift of a birthday party to children who otherwise wouldn't have the chance. Each youth decorated a bag with messages like "Happy Birthday!" & "Jesus loves you!". Then they stuffed the bags with a pan, candles, balloons, cake mix and frosting. The bags will already start to be distributed this week at Moulton and Findley Elementary schools in Des Moines. When it is a child's birthday the teacher will place one of these bags in their locker so that at the end of the day they are surprised and sent home with a party in a bag. They even start blowing up the balloons on the bus ride home. Your youth help to shine Christ's light and share his love by creating these amazing presents to be gifted to other kids.

DISCIPLING EVENT 10.22.25

DISCERNING GOD'S CALL AMID LIFE CHOICES

WHAT WAS YOUR ONE THING?

- Don't let your Bibles get dusty.
- You don't need anything more than Christ.
- We need to be patient and listen and "let [God's] Word be the lamp to our feet and light to our path."
- It's important to find a wise and Godly person to ask for help and to pray with and for you.



Preschool Praises for October

What a wonderful month it has been in preschool! We've packed our days with learning, fun, creativity, and special memories.

There was a lot of excitement for our Mom's Day event, where moms joined us for crafts, playtime, and a special visit from the Manning Fire Department. The children especially loved the fire truck rides and learning about fire safety during Fire Prevention Week.



Throughout the month, we explored a variety of letters — including F, A, and R — through songs, games, and hands-on activities. The children enjoyed searching for letters during circle time, singing favorites like *"Five Little Speckled Frogs"* and *"A is for Apple,"* and creating themed crafts such as firefighters, flowers, Noah's Ark, apples, and rainbows. We also practiced tracing to strengthen fine motor skills and how to use school supplies correctly such as glue and paint.

Our Chapel time with Pastor Conner has been rich with stories of God's creation. We learned about the animals He made on Days 5 and 6 along with how he made Adam and Eve leading to all of us!! The preschoolers heard about God seeing what he created and on day 7 he rested.

In the classroom we discussed different animals, sorting them by where they live — in the sea, in the sky, or on land. Later, we began learning about Noah's Ark and God's promise represented by the rainbow in the classroom. These stories beautifully tie into our ongoing theme of "God's Colorful World."

The children have been exploring colors in creative ways — sorting colorful items, mixing red and blue water to make purple, and even creating their own color-mixing experiment with paint in baggies. We also enjoyed decorating white pumpkins that were donated to our classroom and making shape pumpkins to display in the hallway.

Socially and emotionally, we've continued to focus on feelings, patience, and taking turns. The children practiced waiting their turn during circle time games, learned how to express emotions in kind and appropriate ways, and worked together during group activities.

We wrapped up the month by beginning to practice songs with Miss Kathryn for our upcoming Advent Service in December — the children are excited to share their music!

Next month, we'll continue learning about Noah's Ark, explore more letters and numbers, and celebrate the season with Fall Festival fun. We'll also keep practicing our songs, colors, and counting as we enjoy the many blessings of this colorful time of year.

Blessings,
Miss Amy & Miss Melanie



Thank you for loving these children and enabling Zion to share the love of Jesus with them and their families!

While you wait...

By DCE Kathryn

“So you, by the help of your God, return, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God.” Hosea 12:6

The beauty of fall is quickly showing all around us. The leaves are turning vivid shades of orange, red and yellow, and the world is slowly changing from one season to the next. Leaving lingering thoughts of the long lazy days of summer soon to turn cold dark cozy nights of winter. Yet, fall always seems so fleeting, like a season not fully of its own but one that has us eagerly await the next true season. Waiting for the leaves to fall, the chill to turn for good and the first flurries to fill the skies. Fall feels like a long season of waiting, waiting as the days shorten little by little, as the holidays come slowly then almost all at once. As every holiday seems to hit the shelves in the store at the same time. This almost and not yet season. Thanksgiving is almost here and not yet. Christmas is almost here and not yet.

Yet, what are we Christians to do in these almost but not yet seasons of waiting? We know that Christ has come, yet, he is coming again. We know that the victory is won, yet, one day he will come again in glory to judge both the living and the dead. What are we to do while we wait?

Ecclesiastes says that there is a time for everything, yet sometimes it feels like the only thing constant is the waiting. We wait for test results and answers, we wait for healing and

relief from grief, we wait for loved ones to be born and wait for hospice to be called. It seems there is always something to wait for. Always almost and not yet.

Over my life I have felt different seasons of waiting. I recall waiting to meet the man I would marry wondering if I'd ever get married. I recall waiting in hospitals for tests to be run and then waiting even longer for results to be relayed and praying for the worry to lift. I recall with joy waiting to meet our babies, waiting not so eagerly for those babies to hurry up and fall asleep. I recall waiting to in hospital chapels for news from surgeries to hear it went well and then waiting for recovering and restoration. I recall waiting in traffic, waiting for the power to come back on in a freak south Texas snowstorm that not only stole our heat and lights but our water and formula. I recall many seasons of waiting. As I'm sure you, dear reader probably can as well.

Fall is a season of waiting and a season that, I believe can easily remind us what we are called to do in that almost and not yet. We are called to be thankful, to remind ourselves of all the times God has been faithful, has been there with us, has provided, has answered, has upheld, has seen us through and to remind our hearts that he will do it again. It is a season of harvest, of thanksgiving, of remembering and recalling just how faithful God is all while we wait eagerly for the next season to begin.

As we wait we count all the ways that God has been faithful to us. All the ways that God shows up in our waiting, in our longing, in our

lives. Kip Fox, an LCMS song writer, penned it well in his song Let Me Count The Ways.”

“How many times Lord have I been cared for
Every step You've been with me
So many moments I have been broken
Only to find You could fix me

All of my shortfalls all of my bad calls
All of my wrongs met with mercy
I don't deserve it but You say I'm worth it
Again and again You forgive me

There is no end to the times You will rescue
One of Your own from despair
And Lord I know this 'cause I am a witness
To all of the times You've been there

Let me count the ways
Let me count the days that You have been faithful
Let me count the ways
Let me count the days that You have been faithful”

So, the best thing we can do while we wait is to count all the ways the God has been faithful. All the times that he has been there for us. Reminding our stubborn hearts that while we wait and while it seems God is slow, he is right there with us. Those times he has brought healing, those times he has brought joy, and answered prayers. Those times he has embraced you time and time again every time you fail.

So, my challenge for you this November, this season of almost and not yet is to grow in the discipline of gratitude. And to begin for the first time, or maybe begin again to count the ways that God has so richly blessed you.

As you wait at the stop light, count the ways. As you stretch and get out of bed, count the ways. As you grab your phone to listen to the latest news or scroll reels, count the ways. As you make your grocery list and bemoan the ever-increasing cost of groceries, count the ways. As you wait out one more temper tantrum or missed curfew, count the ways. As you sit in the hospital room waiting, count the ways. As you read the latest game final scores, count the ways. As you pay the bills, make the phone calls, schedule the appointments, count the ways.

The more time while you wait that you spend counting the lighter your heart will feel, the easier the weight will feel and the more you will remember just how loved and cared for you are by God. His ways are not fast, but they are sudden. His timing is not our timing, but while we wait, we can count the ways that He has been faithful. And in that attitude of gratitude, it is us who are changed for the better. Recalling that morning by morning new mercies we see, great is his faithful, even while we wait.

Resources:



As you work to grow this discipline of gratitude you may consider journaling to create a habit. Tsh Oxenreider has developed a daily gratitude journal to help her grow this habit of spending time both in the morning and at night to count all the ways God is faithful and to be thankful to God. It can be purchased on Amazon if you are interested. It is called, “First Light & Eventide: A Daily Gratitude Journal” By Tsh Oxenreider. I have recommended both her advent and Lenten devotionals before. It’s a simple journal that simply allows 3 spaces for morning gratitude’s, and a few questions to ponder and reflect on each morning and then again 3 spaces in the evening to reflect on the day and find things to be thankful for.

Lastly, music always speaks to my heart so here are a few songs to listen to while you are waiting and counting your blessings this season (you can find on any streaming service):

- Let Me Count the Ways- Kip Fox
- Great is Thy Faithfulness – Carrie Underwood & Cece Winans
- Counting Every Blessing – Rend Collective
- Counting My Blessings – Seph Schlueter
- Gratitude – I Am They feat. Cheyenne Mitchell
- Faithfully – TobyMac
- Wait For You (Psalm 130) – Ellie Holcomb



ZION
LUTHERAN CHURCH
Celebrating and Sharing Christ's Redemptive Love

Christ in Time. Christ in 3D.

Past. Present. Future.

Midweek Advent 2025

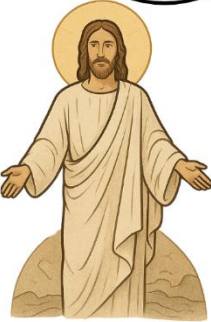
12/3, 12/10, 12/17
Service: 5:45
Meal Following



PAST



PRESENT



FUTURE



REV. DR. WALTER & ROBYN STEELE

STEELES IN MISSION

OCTOBER 2025



In September, we were privileged to participate in the Triennial International Lutheran Council convention, which met in Bohol, here in the Philippines. These meetings bring together church leaders from confessional Lutheran church bodies worldwide to learn, to fellowship, and to discuss matters that have to do with mission and church planting. While we met with many people from other counties, our primary focus was to have deep, meaningful discussions with our Filipino pastors, to understand their concerns and to partner together so we can better serve here.

The past six years in East Africa have been well-spent, helping to build up the seminary in Kenya and the fledgling school in Tanzania. That was important work. But the work here in Asia is even more critical. Over 60 percent of the world population lives in Asia. And the Lutheran Church in the Philippines sits in a strategic position, both physically and in terms of language, currently the only English-language, confessional Lutheran seminary in Asia. We are also positioned to work with the newly-formed Australian Lutheran Mission after some unfortunate developments that necessitated a split in that church body. We thank you for your commitment to pray for and to support us here.

In Christ, Walter

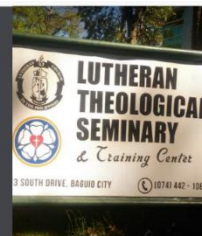
Our household goods shipment arrived in good condition from Kenya. We give thanks for excellent service by our moving companies in both countries. We have been told that our work/ resident visas should soon be issued. Please pray this happens as we cannot fly to Taiwan for an important meeting next month without this being completed. Give thanks to God that we have been preserved well and have had only minor property damage from five typhoons since we have been here. Super Typhoon Ragasa (Nando) was the largest in the world this year.





REV. DR. WALTER & ROBYN STEELE STEELES IN MISSION

OCTOBER 2025



In Asia, building deep and meaningful relationships is paramount to ministry. While we were at the International Lutheran Council meeting, I met many women from countries throughout the world. This was a real treat.

Yet even more important than that was time getting to know my coworkers and the ladies of our partner churches who do so much both publicly and behind the scenes.

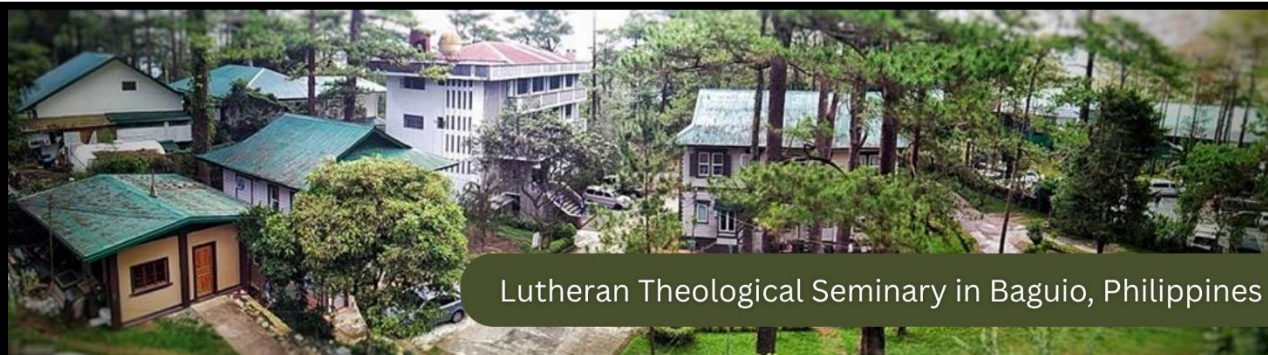
In this photo, you can see me enjoying getting to know Arlene Reyes, wife of the president of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines, and Deaconess Carol Halter, one of our longtime LCMS missionaries (who serves in Hong Kong). These times are priceless.

In Christ's care, Robyn



What is this creature? A trip to Bohol is not complete without seeing the Chocolate Hills. (Maybe we will feature them in a later newsletter.) But just as fascinating is this little fellow. The tarsier is a tiny primate that lives in the dense forests of Bohol. It is a little carnivore, which munches on insects and the occasional small lizard. They are nocturnal, so this guy was supposed to be asleep. They are also easily startled by noise and light. So we had to be quiet. Our Lord has created an amazing array of beautiful creatures and the tarsier is one of them.





Lutheran Theological Seminary in Baguio, Philippines

Mission Door Offering

11.23



Pastor Walter and Robyn
Theological Educator & Nutrition Educator



Dear Saints in Jesus,
Thank you for the generosity and care you showed us so clearly during our recent visit. We especially appreciated the Saturday meal which was timely and delicious! God bless and keep you as we continue working together for His glory in Christ.

Yours in Him,
The Ferry Family
Cassandra, Charlotte, Caitlin, Caylee,
Cheryl, Carissa, Chloe, Charles

thank you



!AMIGOS EN CRISTO and GRACIA!

News from *Las Iglesias Evangélicas Luteranas*
Amigos en Cristo in Denison and Gracia in Storm Lake
Pastor Pedro Lopez

Warmest greetings in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray the mercy and grace of God to overflow in your life.

The Bible teaches us things we can expect to come our way, and one of them is the times we are living in right now. 2 Timothy 3:1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come. Timothy and believers today are warned, with "BUT KNOW THIS," which means we are to know what we are living in and facing. Read on in that passage to see what kinds of things Paul was referring to - it's exactly what we are seeing in our society today!

Remember, when the dark gets darker, the light gets lighter! Jesus is the light of the world, and He is in His believers reflecting His light through us! That is a WOW to me! Christians are in the world but not of the world. Let us remind one another of that.

St. Paul Carroll: Our class began on September 30. On October 4, we participated with St. Paul during the Band Day parade where we took the opportunity to pass out flyers with our program information.

St. Paul Hartley: We also continue ESL class. Here, we have them on Monday and Thursday. We would like to thank Pastor Nixel and volunteers who run this without me on Mondays since I am at Faith-Deloit at the same time.

This month we are again going out and seeking people that want to hear the word of God. We are doing this by offering the English classes around the IDW. We ask that the Lord allows us to meet new people and not only help them by teaching them English, but for them to hear the word of God that we share through this program so that they can join our congregation at any of our sites.

Our schedule continues to be the same for praise, prayer, Bible study and for the Sunday worship services.

We started ESL classes in Deloit. We meet every Monday and Wednesday from 6:30 – 8:30pm. We are planning to join them on their rummage sale on October 18, so that we have yet another chance at inviting that community to our classes.

St. John-Storm Lake: We help with the swaddling clothes program they offer every second Saturday of the month. They are doing such a great job with that, and we are so glad to participate as this gives us opportunity to meet new Spanish speaking people and invite them to our church.

Prayer Requests

- Our current ministries at Grace and St. John-Storm Lake, St. Paul-Carroll, St. Paul Hartley and Amigos en Cristo-Denison, Faith in Early and Faith in Deloit.
- Cesar, a friend at our church with a personal challenge.
- Andrea, a young girl facing tough challenges in her life.
- For me that the Lord continues to bless me and give me what I need to continue his work.

Bendiciones, Pastor Lopez



Rev. Pedro Lopez, Asst. to the President
Missionary at Large,
pedro@iowadistrictwest.org,
571-606-7600



We Gather Together

Joint Thanksgiving Eve Service
at Trinity, Manilla
November 26 @ 7:00 p.m.



Zion Lutheran Church, Manning IA

ADVENT CONCERT

December 7 @ 7:00 p.m.

Featuring:
Zion's Praise Team
Woodwind Quartet (pre-concert)

Freewill offering / No tickets required
Refreshments following
All invited

Zion Fellowship Club—November 2025



Fellowship Club Highlights Psalms and Songs of THANKSGIVING will be the focus of the Fellowship Club meeting on **Monday, November 10 at 1:30 p.m.** Guests are welcome!

The Zion Fellowship Club supports missions! "Thank you" for the clothing donations which will be delivered to the Orphan Grain Train warehouse in Ida Grove on Tuesday, November 4. Warehouse volunteers gather each Tuesday to sort the donations and then prepare them for shipping to those in need around the world.

The Fellowship Club also sponsors a student in the Garuna Ministries international schools in southeast Asist. Garuna Ministries now hosts 11 schools. Through the schools the Gospel is shared with over 2400 students. An annual donation of \$360 sponsors a student for a year. Garuna also provides professional ministry training for native individuals.



Financial Secretary Notes

The leaves are falling and there is a chill in the air. The last of the crops are being harvested and I see Christmas decorations in the store. Therefore, I am thinking ahead to the year-end "to do" list. That brings me to preparing offering envelopes for the 2026 year and the 2025 year-end statements. If there are any changes in your address, please notify the office. Also, if you would like to sign up for automatic giving or make changes for the 2026 year, you can pick up forms at the church office. Automatic giving has been a good tool for many and if you have questions on how that works, please let me know.

The giving envelopes do give privacy to your giving and there are envelopes for special giving, such as Camp Okoboji, Building, Lutheran Witness, Advent and Lenten services. It also aids the money counters on Sunday mornings. I do want to give a big thank you for those who help each Sunday morning.

Most importantly, a sincere thanks to the supporters of Zion, your faithful presence, your generous support, and your willingness to serve for the mission of Zion in this community and beyond.

If you have any question or thoughts, please reach out to me or leave a message at the office.

Jean Hargens, Financial Secretary



Ladies Guild Minutes Summary

The regular meeting of the Ladies Guild was held on October 8, 2025. Pastor Conner read from Luke 17. President Nancy M called the meeting to order in the name of the triune God. The league pledge was recited. October Anniversaries and birthdays were announced. Roll call noted 14 were present. Secretary's minutes were read and approved.

Financial report noted that \$491.01 was collected during the Noisy Offering this past Sunday. Harold Jorgensen's family donated \$100.00 to the kitchen for helping serve the funeral. The committee will be donating 2 quilts to the Preschool raffle, and there are two quilts being donated to the Hartwig family. Quilting has restarted for the fall.

Old Business: Fall zone rally was held last weekend in Carroll. Becki Ehlers attended. Discussion on having an evening meeting for working woman who may be interested in joining the guild. Tabled until further interest in evening meeting noted. Enclosed trailer is in parking lot for clothing to be dropped off for Orphan Grain Train.

New Business: We discussed the idea of having a catered meal, with funds going toward the help expense of the roof bill. Tabled until further information available. Meeting adjourned after table prayer and Lord's prayer recited.

Secretary, Gloria Ewoldt



Redeeming Grace Retreat



Seeking peace and healing after abortion?

The Redeeming Grace Retreat, held **November 13–16, 2025, in St. Charles, Iowa**, offers a confidential, Christ-centered experience for women seeking hope, forgiveness, and emotional healing after abortion.

Learn more at word-ofhope.org/rgr.

RETREAT PARTNERS



LUTHERANS
FOR LIFE



Lutheran
Family Service





Mckenna B., Ben R., Isaac B., Jack S., and Karlee Arp represent Zion in Manning Rotary's Pack the Pantry at Fareway in Carroll .



Zion preschoolers, led by DCE Kathryn, share their songs with the congregation.



Zion celebrates Emerson's Baptism with the Havick family.

Guests watch with delight as a child attempts to catch a flying pancake at our preschool's pancake breakfast.



Members of Zion peacefully gather in a life chain along Hwy 141 to pray for the end of abortion.



Zion ladies gather worshipers' noisy offering on LWML Sunday.

Zion 3rd graders receive their Bibles in worship.

Members of Zion volunteer with C3 to raise funds for Wolfpack for Hunger.



Upcoming Events @ ZION & TRINITY

Please Note! All times and events are subject to change

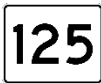


Bible Study

**Sunday mornings @ Zion following worship
(AI & the Need for Real Wisdom)**



November 1 & 2 All Saints' Day Celebrations at Trinity and Zion



November 9

Zion 125th Celebration, potluck after Sunday School



November 20

Afternoon Communion Service at Zion (1:30 p.m.)



November 26

**Joint Thanksgiving Eve Service
7:00 p.m. at Trinity, Manilla**



December 3, 10, 17 Midweek Advent Services
Zion: 5:45 w/ meal following
Trinity: 5:30 meal, 6:30 service



December 7

Advent Concert
6:30 Woodwind Quartet
7:00 Concert



December 14

Zion Voters' Meeting
After worship



December 14

Children's Christmas Programs

November Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion & Trinity

Birthdays (T = Trinity)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Beth Mundt
Joy Umland | 17. Macie Doyel
Shelly Gruhn
Sandra Vahl |
| 2 Dawn Lorenzen (T) | 18. Beverly Grundmeier |
| 3 Taylor Beckendorf
Duane Boell (T)
Doug Grage (T) | 19. Martin Bornhoft (T)
Ryan Doyel
Mark Kucik
Vera Vollstedt (T) |
| 4 Caleb Alexander
Kori Beckendorf
Mason Benton
Charles Hickman | 20. Becky Eischeid
Barbara Gore
Cynthia Leslie |
| 5 Joe Riesberg | 22. Tyler Heaton
Matthew Rosener
Thomas Walters |
| 6 Nicholas Birks (T)
Melanie Wardrip | 23. Kayla Schwery |
| 7 Samantha Doyel
Levi Lapel | 24. Garrett Blackford
Allen Ehlers
Kelly Page |
| 8 Ken Grimm
Cody Jimmerson | 25. Hallee Halbur
Luann Langel
Amber Neumann |
| 9 Rick Lohrmann
Kenneth Stripling | 26. Nancy Baack
Nicholas Diersen |
| 10 Jean Kusel
Jeanette Lerssen | 27. Sandy Grage (T)
Sheila Simonsen (T)
Ryan Willison |
| 11 Kysen Folk
Piper Mundt
Debbie Musfeldt
Tammy Winter | 28. Diane Genzen
Paisley Lorenzen
Jean Stadlander |
| 12. Levi Kirsch (T)
John Lorenzen
Akeo Maynard
Dawson Mundt
Kyle Vetter (T) | 29. Daniel Behrens
Bohde Blunk (T) |
| 13. Jacob Dreier | |
| 14. Chase Gaskill (T)
Bridget Gore | |
| 16. James Asmus
Rachel Keely
Sam Musfeldt
Megan Riesselman
Paula Vogel | |

***If we missed or
misspelled your
name, please inform***

Anniversaries

11. Ken & Rhonda Grimm
14. JR & Kristen Halbur
Elissa & Joe Riesberg
16. Allen & Becky Ehlers
17. John & Kathryn Schneider
19. Katie & Kyle Cornelius
Brett & Diana Eddy
24. John & Nancy Opperman
26. Ken & Becky Eischeid
Stacie & Nels Nelson
Lucas & Andrea Schwery

Official Acts

Baptism:

Emerson Jean Havick, daughter of Doug & Kara Havick,
October 26, 2025, Pastor Jonathan Conner

Marriage:

Will Jorgensen and Miranda Benton; October 4, 2025; Pastor
Robert Riggert

In Our Prayers

Bruce Rutz, Steve Rutz, Athena Bess, Kau Meyer, Jim
Deevers, Rick Spack, Sherri Steffes, Judy Reinke (Ernie's
sister-in-law), Karen Vollstedt, Stacey Rolenz, Ashley Myers
(daughters of Shelly Helmich), Gene Mahnke, Gary & Joyce
Schroeder, Martin Wanninger, Jon Riggert, Bev Grundmeier,
Darlene Vollstedt, Keith Benna