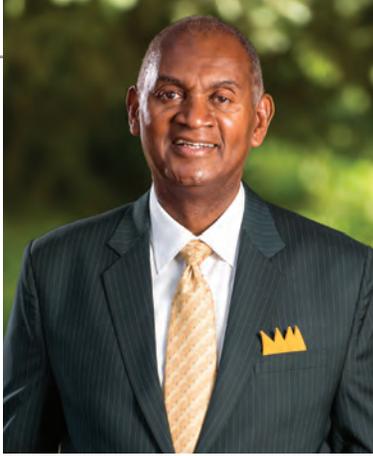


# PACIFIC

FRESNO PACIFIC UNIVERSITY VOL. 33, NO. 1

## Hearts for Mission

Alumni with a Mission



president's message

## ALUMNI WITH A MISSION: THE NEED IS THE CALL

**“Over the past 75 years the institution that is today Fresno Pacific University, including Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, has been committed to helping students discern their gifts for service to match them with the needs of others..”**

— Joseph Jones, Ph.D.

We are living in a world with unprecedented occurrences. Widespread poverty, famine, war, terrorism, destruction and environmental anomalies have become the norm. COVID-19 has awakened so many of us to how connected we are through health, well-being, economics and physical survival. Before the virus we were aware of these disruptions across our world, but they did not become relevant until they stopped at our doors. As a Christian community we assumed we had a global worldview; we thought we saw but did not see until we became personally impacted.

I have always been impressed by the good Samaritan parable of Jesus. Three individuals saw a need, two who were very religious, one who was considered a second-class citizen of low status. All had the ability to assist someone Jesus calls a neighbor, but only one could see beyond his comfort zone. You might say he had a Christ-centered worldview.

Over the past 75 years the institution that is today Fresno Pacific University, including Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, has nurtured students in a Kingdom worldview which reaches beyond the borders of their existence to discern service to their neighbors. Even in a time when their own needs were great their hearts were set afire to

the needs of others. Some students were awakened through foreign students or former missionaries; many were inspired through participation in mission.

These opportunities set fire in their hearts, brought light into their eyes and removed scales of complacency concerning the needs of others. Jesus said: “If anyone would follow me, they must deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow me.” Following entailed seeing where Jesus would go. Sometimes that is just around the corner to a neighbor’s home, or other times around the world.

Jesus commanded his disciples to go into the world and preach the Good News. When we discover the Good News, we cannot help but find ways to communicate it. The more treasured the news, the more compelled we are to share. Seeing all the devastation through the lenses of COVID-19, we can all agree on the greater need for the Good News of Jesus Christ, where we are and abroad. This issue features those who accepted a vision beyond themselves; a global vision to share Good News in places of strife and devastation.

It is my hope that as you read these stories of alumni that you are encouraged by the Samaritan’s spirit. Many will ignore or reason away their lack of sight—like the Levite or the priest in Jesus’ story. But these FPU and seminary graduates followed the Samaritan’s response: others’ need became their call. 



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Fresno Pacific University develops students for leadership and service through excellence in Christian higher education.



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Pacific is sent to alumni and friends of Fresno Pacific University and to members of the Pacific District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches.



## New BSN program expands pipeline for Valley nurses

**A new undergraduate program adds a four-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing to the existing nursing programs at Fresno Pacific University.**

Preparatory classes for the BSN begin in the fall of 2020 for freshmen entering FPU. Applications to and selection for the nursing cohort will occur next year, in fall 2021, with preference given to FPU pre-nursing students. "The entry-level BSN gives the fullest FPU educational experience to the professional nurse," said Karen Cianci, Ph.D., dean of the School of Natural Sciences.

### **Course highlights include:**

- ▲ Small groups of students progress through the program together for mutual support
- ▲ Innovative curriculum taught by supportive, experienced faculty
- ▲ An emphasis on wellness, health promotion and evidence-based practice
- ▲ Opportunities to train at some of the best hospitals in the San Joaquin Valley
- ▲ Personalized faculty advising
- ▲ Courses that integrate faith and science
- ▲ A focus on human and spiritual aspects of nursing, as well as technical skills

The university introduced an RN to BSN program in 2009 for registered nurses wishing to complete their bachelor's degree. An MSN was accredited in 2014 to prepare nurses for higher levels of care and responsibility. In 2017 FPU and Madera Community Hospital entered into an academic-clinical partnership, the Family Nurse Practitioner Partnered Residency Education Program (FNP PREP). "The MSN-FNP PREP program with Madera Community Hospital is providing



excellent clinical training and enhancing our service to the Valley,” Cianci said.

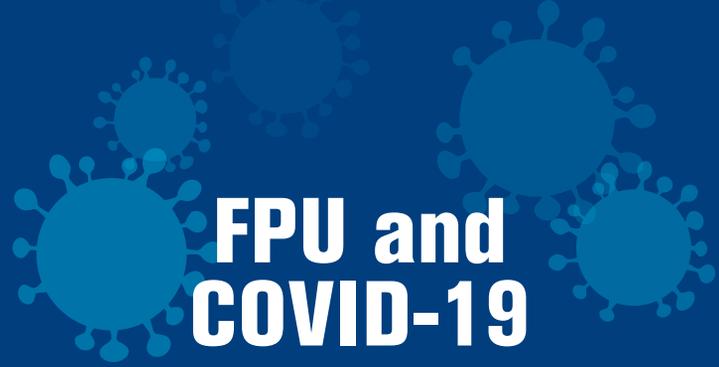
FPU’s partnership with Madera Community Hospital is unique, offering students a “residency” through MCH and its rural health care clinics and their affiliated and employed group of providers. “We are so proud to have MCH doctors educate and mentor our nursing students. Their knowledge is invaluable in preparing our candidates to respond to the challenges as nurses take on larger roles in people’s care, especially here in our Valley,” said Stacy Wise, DNP, RN, FNP-C, chair of the nursing department and director of the BSN program.

Nurses are in short supply in the region, especially in smaller rural communities where families may wait months for even basic care. “In the Central Valley, rapid population growth is outstripping RN education capacity—there are simply not enough nursing schools in the region to match current or future needs,” according to the Healthforce Center at the University of California at San Francisco.

FPU’s BSN program goes beyond standard nursing education to equip students with values and skills in leadership and service. Graduates will learn to provide holistic health care in compassionate and culturally sensitive ways. The strong liberal arts foundation helps develop social responsibility as well as skills in communication, conflict resolution and problem-solving. “While the course is rigorous, students will be supported in the classroom, the nursing lab and in clinical settings,” Wise said.

Graduates will be eligible for the National Council Licensing Examination (NCLEX) to be licensed as a registered nurse (RN) and meet California Board of Registered Nurses (BRN) requirements to apply for the Public Health Nurse certification. In addition to immediate employment in direct patient care, education and administration in hospitals, clinics and public health agencies, those who complete the BSN degree will have the educational foundation for entry into FPU’s MSN FNP-PREP program.

More about all FPU nursing programs, including how to apply, at [fpu.edu/nursing](https://fpu.edu/nursing). Check out the video at [fpu.edu/331-nursing](https://fpu.edu/331-nursing). 



# FPU and COVID-19

During the rapidly changing COVID-19 situation, Fresno Pacific has been protecting students, faculty, administrators and staff. Steps taken as of mid-semester include:



Moved all instruction online, canceling face-to-face classes



Kept residence halls and dining open for students who need them



Implemented social distancing and remote work for employees



May commencement rescheduled to December

“Our actions are being taken with serious deliberation based on the latest information and with concern for the FPU community,” said President Joseph Jones, Ph.D. “Through it all we continue to find our strength in Christ, our foundation.”

More at  
[fpu.edu/coronavirus](https://fpu.edu/coronavirus)

# Mission-Minded DNA



By Wayne Steffen

DNA is the blueprint for each living creature, instructing development, functioning and growth.

Mission is that basic to the Mennonite Brethren (MB), the denomination with which Fresno Pacific University and Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary are affiliated. "Mission has been part of our DNA from the beginning," says Darren Duerksen, Ph.D., FPU associate professor of intercultural and religious studies. "There was a desire to share the love of Christ with others."

Valerie Rempel, Ph.D., vice president and dean of FPBS, hops to her bookshelf for historical evidence. "The original charter for the Mennonite Brethren in the U.S. is as a mission organization. MBs are a renewal movement," she says.

Formed from a group of Mennonites in Ukraine, MBs were influenced by Pietism, a movement combining biblical doctrine with individual piety and living a vigorous Christian life. They focused on personal transformation through spiritual rebirth and renewal.

Nineteenth-century Mennonites in the Russian Empire lived in colonies. MBs thought the governance practices in the colonies had come to resemble the mix of church and state Mennonites and other Anabaptist groups opposed, and that they had lost a sense of

spiritual vitality. "The founding of the Mennonite Brethren was a kind of reaction to staid practices of the Mennonite church," Rempel says.

MBs wanted to recapture the experience of faith and being with Jesus. Anyone with this kind of active faith couldn't help but spread that faith to others. "Mission is in MBs' DNA because they're conversionist," she says.

Forbidden by the Czars to proselytize in Russia, MBs sent missionaries to India even before coming to North America in the 1870s and 1880s. "Mission is important because that's the mandate Jesus gave us in Matthew 28," says Galen Wiest, mission mobilizer for Multiply, the church-planting mission organization operated by MBs in the United States and Canada.

As the two entwined strands in the double helix of the MB DNA, mission and evangelism were both present at the creation in 1944 and 1955, respectively, of Pacific Bible Institute and Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, which would become FPU and FPBS.

Classes on missions and mission work were required at PBI. The 1950 catalog states: "The Missionary Cause must have priority in the program of instruction in a Bible Institute." Ministry programs, including mission, were the reason the seminary was built, Rempel says.



Educational changes over the decades have addressed new realities in the church and increased understandings of how to make mission more effective. Trends have included a focus on church planting, short-term experiences and a look at the roles of culture and mission.

Today's intercultural studies program at FPU carries forward the ideals of the former mission major by bringing in cultural anthropology, political science, sociology and religious studies. "That signaled an affirmation of the desire of mission. It also signaled a trend that had been happening to mission, to have a wider set of disciplines informing that work," says Duerksen, himself an MB missionary to India for six years.

This wider set of disciplines helps the church expand its vision beyond the focus of past North American missions, according to Wiest. "We've moved more toward making disciples. The goal is to put on the character of Jesus," he says.

Discipleship through planting churches is the reason MB Missions became Multiply in 2019. "We're in a new time for the church. We're trying to create multiplying church-planting movements," Wiest says.



The mission field moves closer to home as local culture becomes more international. California's Central Valley has immigrants and refugees from Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, East Africa and India. "The United States has always been multicultural and is becoming ever more multicultural. Many in our churches are becoming more aware and comfortable with that, and many even enjoy it," Duerksen says.

The future of international mission, meanwhile, is in the hard-to-get places, more likely to be dangerous for North Americans and Europeans as well as Christians in general. "The last places where the unchurched people are, those are the most difficult," Wiest says.

Multiply increasingly works with international MB conferences. "The Southern Hemisphere is starting to engage in a new way with missions. One of the fastest-growing churches today is in Iran," he says.

Across the street or around the world, there is still plenty to do in mission, and the church, university and seminary all have a role. "God isn't finished with the North American church in mission. Part of my challenge to the younger generation is don't look away," Wiest says.

The DNA is still vibrant. "The mission spirit is alive and well," Rempel says. 

## Jesus commanded his disciples to, “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

What does this mean in an American church that, by many accounts, is losing interest in traditional missions?

In its 2019 “Decade in Review,” the Gallup Organization found church attendance at record lows and the number of Americans claiming no religion doubling over the last 20 years. Evangelical Christian polling firm Barna Research found that although roughly six in 10 Generation Z’ers (those born between 1999 and 2015) identify as Christians, only one in 11 is an “engaged Christian.”

While the need for missionaries is greater than ever, so are the challenges of preparing the called.

## Money and security

Money is one challenge, especially for new college graduates. Christian university graduates owe a share of Americans’ \$1.5 trillion in student debt, so foreign mission after graduation may be impossible.

In addition, parents aren’t lining up to send their children into potentially dangerous countries to do God’s work, according to Galen Wiest, mission mobilizer for Multiply, the Mennonite Brethren (MB) church-planting mission organization. Parents often also doubt a degree in theology or religious studies will lead to a financially sustaining career.

Valerie Rempel, vice president and dean of Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, notes more students enter the mission field through vocations such as business,

medicine or education. “There continue to be parts of the world where missionaries by title aren’t welcome,” she says.

There’s also a shift away from evangelizing on street corners, and towards being resources to the local church and church leaders overseas, Rempel says. Here professionals such as accountants or graphic designers find their place.

Declining enrollment in ministry-related programs does not mean young people have less faith, says Darren Duerksen, Ph.D., FPU associate professor of intercultural and religious studies. Scholarships are available for students interested in cross-cultural ministry, and his program welcomes double majors, so those studying other fields can serve, either directly or, like Paul, as a “tentmaker,” whose profession

*By Amy D. Fienen*

# preparing for MISSION

provided an income while he shared his faith. "I don't think it's because Christian students aren't interested in living out their faith through work, but the path they want to take to do so is less through vocational ministry," Duerksen says.

## Broadening missions' meaning

The seminary teaches students all believers are called to be missionaries, Rempel says. "We need to broaden our sense of what mission work is and how we live with our neighbors and interact with those in the world," she says. "We're representing the Christian community whether at home or abroad."

This outlook changes mission courses, according to Mark Baker, Ph.D., FPBS professor of mission and theology. "Traditional topics—evangelism and church planting, for instance—are still taught, but the theme and skills of collaboration in mission are woven through the program," he says. "FPU students also study how to contextualize theology—that is, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit bring the Bible and the cultural context into the conversation with each other."

FPU students and alumni have long been a welcome part of Multiply, in short-term programs as well as long-term service, Wiest says. "They have been excited to come and grow in their faith."

Multiply is "helping disciples multiply disciples" in 65 countries around the world. Wiest has seen a shift over the past 10 years. In the past, a missionary would often be the lead church planter who, after training national leaders, would move on to plant another church. Today's strategy is for missionaries to work alongside



a national leader who is planting a network of churches. “While the work is still making disciples and training leaders, it is in a more supportive role,” Wiest says.

Much responsibility for the increasing challenge in finding long-term missionaries lies with the local church, Wiest says. “The church is grappling with how to train people at the grassroots level to share their faith in a way that is relevant to their community,” he says. “We need to look at how we’re training our next generation of leaders, and not just academically. We need people who know how to model a dynamic relationship with Christ to their community.”

MBs are in a new time, Wiest says. “The churches are coming together to build a pipeline to develop leaders starting when they are young.”

## Pathways of preparation

Multiply trains candidates as disciples and missional leaders. The first three years of a missionary’s 10-year commitment are spent learning the language and culture of the people to whom they will minister. This is often the most difficult preparation, Wiest says. “It requires a lot of dying to one’s personal desires and comforts.”

Mission requires separation from family and friends, learning a new way of life and sacrificing for the people being served. Wiest says the American church has created a consumeristic view of Christianity. “I believe that before we can take the message of salvation to the world, we must adopt a servant mentality at home and foster a culture of genuine, biblical community,” he says.

As the philosophy of reaching people from different cultures changes, so does the educational approach. Today’s goal is for mission workers to distinguish the Gospel from their own culture and lifestyle and work with local Christians. FPU prepares students for several mission pathways: partnering with Multiply, Christian relief organizations and supporting homeless, refugee or anti-human trafficking programs through local nonprofits.

The seminary’s Baker has witnessed the shift firsthand. From



1979 to 1998, he spent 10 years as a missionary in Honduras, and continues to visit Latin America each summer. He says rather than missionaries entering communities with a “we’re in charge” mentality, “the current approach is more about engaging in conversation and learning from each other and working together in God’s mission,” he says.

Intercultural studies majors participate in a cross-cultural trip, ideally abroad, and internship, FPU’s Duerksen says. Even short-term experiences promote a more loving and welcoming attitude towards those from other cultures—and may provide insight into God’s call over a lifetime. “Experiential learning through study abroad and mission trips is a very important component into an ongoing journey of preparation for service,” he says.

## Rewards remain

Having spent six years as a missionary to India with Multiply, Duerksen is passionate about teaching students to love and accept people from other faiths. Those entering new cultures should not go with a spirit of fear, but with a focus on loving people and representing Christ. “We teach students that you’ve got to be willing to listen to and respect what others believe if you want them to listen to and respect what you believe,” he says.

Wiest says that while a biblical explanation of who Jesus is will always be important, there’s a movement away from an intellectual understanding of religion and towards a daily practice of faith. “It’s not about creating a religious experience anymore, because people don’t want religion,” he says. “They want a personal faith.”

For those who heed God’s calling, the reward is unmatched. “This is the most incredible time in history to be involved in missions,” Wiest says. “We’re seeing so many people coming to Christ and having their lives forever changed.” 

# New Field Same Mission

By Amy D. Fienen

**Alex Wilson (BA '15)** hated church growing up. Seeing God as distant, he thought he'd never make it into Heaven. This realization that traditional church doesn't work for everyone led him to take the message of salvation to where young people spend their time: the internet.

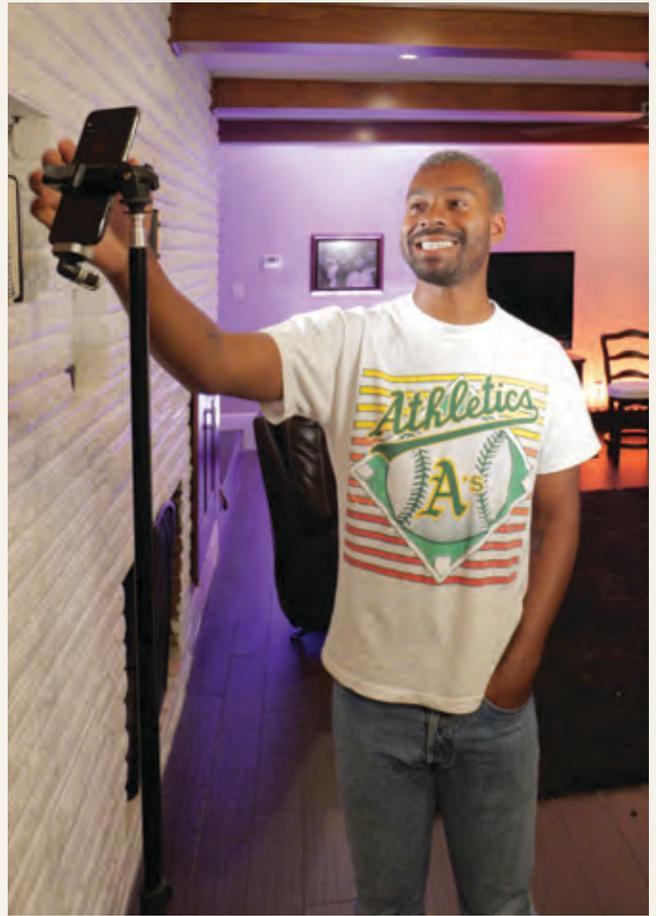
The son of **Angulus Wilson (BA '89)**, former FPU university pastor and chief diversity officer, Alex says the childhood time he spent at Billy Graham crusades when his father worked for Graham still affects his view of ministry. Alex likes to think of himself as the digital version of the iconic evangelist.

Wilson didn't grow up with a desire to follow in his father's footsteps, but a major heart shift led the psychology graduate to youth ministry. At a large Fresno church, he struggled with how disconnected the kids in his youth group were.

"I'd spend all week getting ready for one hour of ministry, and the kids would spend that whole time on their phones," he says. To meet them where they are, Wilson started #10secondsermons, brief messages designed to minister to kids while they scrolled through social media.

Alex and his wife, Lokelani, knew they wanted to minister in Hawaii. At a church on the island of Kauai, he found himself experiencing the same frustrations he'd had in Fresno, and felt called to reach unchurched youth through videos. In 2018, he resigned from his youth pastor position to focus on this new venture, @instachurchlive.

Every Sunday at 8:08 a.m. Hawaiian time, the Wilsons stream a live 20 to 30-minute church service from their home. With Alex on guitar, they follow a worship song with a sermon. Their three young boys sometimes wander in and out. During the week, Alex and Lokelani produce short videos to give people with busy schedules time with the Lord. They have amassed over 800,000 followers on TikTok and more than 27,000 on Instagram.



"We have so many followers and we know we're close to something big," Wilson says. "God has shown me that we're doing what we're supposed to be doing."

Traditional missionaries get financial support from churches, but Wilson says he's never been invited to share or fundraise at a traditional church, and has had pastors tell him what he's doing isn't biblical because it doesn't encourage a sense of community.

On the other hand, Valerie Rempel, Ph.D., vice president and dean of Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, called Wilson part of a "sea change" for the church in creating online connections. "Older generations are still struggling with that reality. He's witnessing in the digital world," she says. "It is so in keeping with the evangelical tradition, especially the more conservative and Pentecostal streams which have routinely been among the first to embrace technology as a means of mission."

For his part, Wilson says he encourages followers to plug in to a local church. For those who haven't, @instachurchlive is filling a void. More about Wilson at [alexdiowilson.com](http://alexdiowilson.com). 

# MORE THAN a job

By Doug Hoagland



## Gunfire erupted in Southeast Fresno one fall night in 2006 killing two people.

**Zachary Darrah (BA '07)** heard the shots and saw the murder scene from his front door.

Darrah had moved to the apartment complex out of a sense of mission. "I needed to live in a neighborhood where there were brokenness and struggles. The lowest of society were the most important people to Jesus, and I believed they should be to me, too," he says.

That belief continued to guide Darrah after graduation. "Our lives as followers of Christ must have intentionality, and that impacts what we choose to do professionally," he says. Today, Darrah is chief executive officer at Poverello House, a nonprofit in downtown Fresno that cares for the homeless. He embodies a principle that many FPU graduates live out daily: Work is more than chasing a paycheck. It's a mission to advance the Kingdom of God.

Vocation as mission has many expressions among FPU graduates. It upends the typical boss-employee relationship in one construction firm. It makes becoming a doctor a way to serve forgotten people. It leads to facing dark urban realities.

These choices are rooted in the *Fresno Pacific Idea*, says Ron Herms, Ph.D., dean of the School of Humanities, Religion & Social Sciences. "We pray and work toward outcomes where our graduates will see their vocations as a means for God to bring justice and peace to the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized."

FPU helps students catch a vision of a life dedicated to mission through senior projects, practicums and internships, Herms says. "Sometimes, a seed is planted here that blossoms after graduation in ways that could

**“I needed to live in a neighborhood where there were brokenness and struggles.”**

Zachary Darrah (BA '07)

not have been imagined when a person was a student.”

Such work is part of FPU’s mission, often expressed in the tradition of the university’s Anabaptist heritage, Herms says. “It is very much centered on Jesus’ vision of God’s Kingdom breaking into the world. It’s less in the things we say and more in the day-to-day commitments we make, how we love our neighbors and how we pursue justice.”

### Dwelling in this land

Psalm 37—“Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness (NASB).”—captures the idea that mission is not just overseas, says Valerie Rempel, Ph.D., vice president and dean of Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary. “It’s the sense of enriching the place you live,” she says. “And if one takes seriously being a follower of Jesus, it shapes the way you live and seek to do your job.”

“Mission is about relationships no matter what industry I’m in.”

*Nick Chandler (MA '18)*

Seminary graduate **Nick Chandler (MA '18)** found opportunities in building custom homes and other construction work. “Fresno Pacific has played a significant role in how I now understand mission,” he says. “It’s really how I’m in relationship with people every day and how I’m demonstrating God’s love and care for people. Mission is about relationships no matter what industry I’m in.”

Chandler is a project manager for Fresno’s Kazarian Custom Homes owned by Ralem Kazarian. “We aim to reflect the love of Jesus with all the people we interact with—whether they’re a million-dollar client or the minimum-wage worker for one of our subcontractors who’s cleaning up the trash on our site,” Chandler says. They first look for employees among people rehabilitating their lives at faith-based organizations. “My big thing is to get other managers to honor and support the guys we hire as incredibly valuable,” he





says. The goal: avoid the dynamic in which lower-level workers get little respect or money. The company pays its construction workers more than other businesses its size, even if that means less profit, according to Chandler. “The idea is that these are people before they’re employees, and our goal is to honor that part of them first.”

### **Mission driven**

Pointing students toward a mission-oriented life, no matter the career, is the most important aspect of education, says Karen Cianci, Ph.D., dean of the School of Natural Sciences. “It’s our mission that gives us the focus to persist in pursuing a productive life in the truest sense—benefitting mankind, the earth and God.” This generation of students is particularly receptive to this principle because it provides an anchor as rapidly evolving technologies alter—or even eliminate—careers. “It always comes back to this question: what is the ultimate mission that life is calling you to?” Cianci says.

For example, science students might define their mission as earth care, leading to opportunities to share their faith with other environmentalists who aren’t Christians. “It’s not sitting down to lead a Bible study on science and religion with the friends you make along the way. It’s demonstrating your freedom to speak about Jesus in the context of science,” Cianci says.

Last summer, **Sara Gurulé (BA ’19)** deepened her sense of mission as an intern at the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition, a Fresno-based nonprofit dedicated to improving the nation’s most polluted air basin. “I learned how connected we are to space and place,” Gurulé says. Poor communities often suffer the most in polluted environments, and ministry means challenging the status quo, she says. “You can’t proclaim the Gospel without meeting certain physical needs. Salvation is not just an individual experience. It is pursuing righteousness and justice.”

In spring 2020, Gurulé worked at FPU as the College Hour coordinator while also finishing a residential leadership program at The Pink House, started by Randy White, D.Min., executive director of the Center for Community Transformation, part of the seminary. Gurulé lived with other young adults in downtown Fresno to learn about Christian community, serve in ministries (she tutors children from Syria) and study urban issues such as human trafficking. “The things we see on a daily basis break our hearts,” Gurulé says. “And I ask myself many questions: How can I meet my brothers’ and sisters’ needs? In what ways do I have power and privilege that I can use to forward

the kingdom of God?" The answers must center on relationships because "God through Christ has reconciled all relationships," she adds.

Gurulé, who hopes to attend seminary and then teach or work in counseling, says one truth about vocation as mission is important to remember: "I'm not the one doing the work. I'm the one the work is being done through."



### Becoming problem solvers

Some disciplines have mission at their core. "We say teaching is a call to redemptive service," says Gary Gramenz, Ph.D., dean of the School of Education. "It's a mission, and it's critical for teachers to have that sense of their work. What keeps them engaged and supported during difficult times is the knowledge that their work changes people and society."

But that doesn't make any easier the challenges FPU graduates will find in their professional lives. It's vital that they not run away from difficult issues, says Dale Scully, vice president of campus life. "We want to educate our students to be problem solvers who are mission driven

and not just consumers who just want a better job and bigger paycheck."

FPU professors present such principles so students can better shape their futures. "They show you how your career—and why you want to do it—should matter," says **Reyna Benitez (BS '16)**. "It motivated me to think how I want to live my life, who I want to impact and how I want to be seen." Benitez, who coordinates science labs at FPU, plans to become a family practice physician. "I want to help people learn how to take care of themselves. When you give people those tools, you serve them in the best way," she says.

Benitez wants to provide medical care to farmworkers in the Fresno area. "If service is your goal, this Valley is the perfect place. There are so many opportunities," she says. Benitez also works part time at Adventist Health Reedley as a scribe, taking notes as emergency room doctors consult with patients and translating when patients speak only Spanish.

### Building relationships

Darrah at Poverello House knew he needed to have a mission for God. "Everything I did had to have purpose, and that purpose had to be centered in who I am as a follower of Christ," he says. He worked with low-income families, refugees and former gang members at several nonprofits and a government agency, doubling for a time as a church pastor in Madera. "There is the preaching of the Gospel and the action of the Gospel," Darrah says. "There's power in preaching, but people need to see the Gospel in action for it to make sense. Both are necessary to advance the Kingdom of God."

Mission for Darrah has always meant building relationships. One evening soon after starting at Poverello House, he moved through the dining room as homeless men and women enjoyed a special dinner—a tradition called "Papa Mike's Cafe" started by the late Mike McGarvin, Poverello's founder. "Hi, my name is Zack. I'm pretty new around here. Tell me, how was your experience tonight?" Darrah said to folks. Many indicated they enjoyed the meal, and one woman left a heartfelt note. It read: "Thank you for helping me feel like a normal person for one night."

Darrah ended the evening grateful his mission is at the heart of his work. "This is the place I want to be because these are the people Jesus would be with, and that's how he would want people to feel." 🏠

By Cyndee Fontana-Ott

# alumni serve EVERYWHERE

Through the decades from Thailand to the Czech Republic  
and Portugal to the Congo



**GUATEMALA**

By age 14, **Emily Mooney (BA '16)** had decided that she never wanted to become a missionary.

She'd listened to missionaries speak at her church many times and didn't think that was her path. Then her mother led a youth trip to Guatemala and brought along her teenage daughter.

"I was hooked," Mooney says via email from Guatemala. "I knew by that point that God was working on my heart, but did not yet realize that it was for fulltime missions.

"I went back every year after that, and after I graduated high school I spent a full summer interning with BMI (Bethel Ministries International) down here in Guatemala. It was after that summer that I realized this was what I wanted to do with my life...I just needed to finish college first."

For the past three years, Mooney, along with her family, has lived and served in Chimaltenango, Guatemala, with BMI. The organization distributes wheelchairs, builds houses, supplies clothing and food, offers education and shares the Gospel.



# THAILAND

### Karen and Ricky Sanchez

For many, that calling came early. **Karen Sanchez (SEM '07, BA '89)**, who serves with husband **Ricky (SEM '98, BA '93)** in Thailand, heard it at age 15. The couple have been missionaries since 1994.

With Multiply (formerly Mennonite Brethren Missions), they have been church planters, evangelists and much more since 1995. Karen founded and directs an orphanage for HIV-positive children and also runs Project Standing Strong for mothers coming out of the sex trade with their children. Ricky is global sports ministry director and president of the Thailand MB Foundation.

Karen has worked closely with the government in opening homes for orphans and mothers, and many groups have visited to see their work. She has seen babies and a teenage boy healed from HIV.

“We are quick to give glory to God and talk about the love of the father and how that changes a child’s future and loneliness,” she says via email from Thailand. “I feel like the challenges are very heavy and hard, but the rewards are higher and greater than anything I could have imagined. The challenges are working in another culture as a guest and learner, and wanting to honor the nationals we work with knowing they are the key to the church taking root here and growing.”

Mooney is one of many missionaries with roots in Fresno Pacific University or Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary (formerly Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary). Their service spans decades and countries from Thailand to the Czech Republic and from Portugal to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Missionaries abroad have helped set up hospital pharmacies, planted churches, constructed houses, taught Sunday school, founded orphanages and more. The challenges are many—fundraising, finding acceptance in new worlds and learning to navigate new languages and cultures, to name a few—yet they say the rewards are just as great.

“Seeing the excitement on a child’s face when they see their brand new bed and the even greater smile of relief on a mother’s face as she sees the new roof that will keep them protected from the elements,” Mooney says, “or the beauty of seeing a person realize that God truly loves them and deciding to grab hold of that and give their life to him—these are the incredible rewards that I experience time and again here, all because I answered God’s call on my life.”



# CONGO

## Sam and Marvis Bergen

Times have not changed the basic challenges and rewards of mission. **Sam Bergen (SEM '65-67)** grew up in the Dinuba area in the 1930s and '40s and knew God at a young age. In elementary school, he heard the story of Samuel and how he was called but didn't at first recognize the Lord.

Sam wondered whether he would know; by age 13, he felt led to dedicate his life to God. He hung a picture of Jesus on his bedroom wall with the quote: "Only one life, 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last."

At first, Sam thought he might become a farmer, engineer or missionary, but the Korean War presented another option. As a conscientious objector, he served in the medical corps and developed an interest in that field, later graduating from the University of the Pacific with a pharmacy degree.

By then, he was married and "missions were always in our conversation," says his wife, Marvis. A conference and seminary banquet affirmed that direction and, after two years of preparation at the seminary—with Sam taking classes and Marvis auditing—they began a mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Beginning in 1968, the Bergens served 10 years (in addition to a year in Belgium learning French), the first three as a missionary pharmacist with MB Missions. Sam spent his last seven years setting up and running the pharmacy at the hospital in the capital of Kinshasa on behalf of the government. Before that, he says,

the 1,800-bed hospital (then known as Mama Yemo Hospital) was seen as a place where people came to die.

When the couple and their two sons returned home, Sam went to work for Kaweah Delta Hospital in Visalia, retiring in 2005. He often prayed with and counseled people who knew about his background and sought his help.

"My missionary work did not end because I came back to the states," says Sam, who now lives with Marvis at Palm Village Retirement Community, Reedley. "In fact, it enhanced it and made me have a reason and a purpose for which I was working."

## K DeMars\*

For others, working overseas is a newer experience. **K DeMars, (BA '12)** is in Central Africa with her husband and three children. They will live and work at a community center; her husband will teach English. "We hope to be salt and light to our neighbors," she says via email.

After living several childhood years in Africa, DeMars was interested in living and working abroad, particularly in Africa. She called helping other students become involved with overseas work while at FPU, "an enriching, challenging time as I learned to more closely depend on God and intentionally seek out his plans for my role on campus."

DeMars worked in Central Africa after college and now returns to a similar area and the challenge of a hot

year-round climate, speaking mainly French and Arabic and living in a different culture. “The joys will be learning to trust God deeper, learning to see him in a new beautiful culture, drawing closer to God and watching him work,” she says.

### Rudy Roberts

DeMars and other missionaries credit the university and seminary with helping prepare them. **Rudy Roberts (MA '08, BA '91)**, founder of the nonprofit BULA, says the university affirmed her gifts and the missionary path.

“I already had a heart for that,” says Roberts, who grew up in a conservative Christian church. “I think Fresno Pacific really opened my eyes to all the different ways that God could use me and that I wasn’t limited by gender. That was huge.”

Now married with two adult daughters, Roberts felt God’s call to fulltime ministry as a teenager and took her



## SOUTH AMERICA

first missionary trip in eighth grade. Later, she entered youth ministry and led her first mission in the early 1990s.

Through Visalia Methodist Church, Roberts began to build a large mission program that served in places like Mexico, Honduras and Romania. They would build classrooms and clinics—or whatever was needed—run camps for children and teach Bible school, for example.

BULA started leading teams on international mission trips about 10 years ago. Roberts draws on relationships with partners and fellow alumni—Karen and Ricky Sanchez, for example—to help guide the nonprofit’s work. She balances her time between that work and teaching at FPU. Roberts’ husband, Clay, and their children have also been on many trips. The rewards of mission are immense—“it keeps me very grounded in my relationship with God,” she says.

Roberts sees many people who have little, or nothing, but their trust in God. “It speaks to me and it keeps my feet firmly planted on the ground,” she says. “When I come back here, I see this through a different lens than I would if I just lived here all the time.”

\*Name altered for security purposes.

# CZECH REPUBLIC



## Ronny and Lorelei Macomber

Part of the missionary's life abroad is building support for the work and then adjusting to a new world and culture. Those can be among the most daunting challenges.

Ronny and **Lorelei (Swanson BA '00) Macomber**, most recently in the Czech Republic at the Christian International School of Prague, devoted more than a year to raising money for expenses.

"It is difficult work asking everyone you know to financially partner with your mission," says Lorelei, via email. "As far as field-related challenges, the greatest... were cultural and linguistic. It is difficult getting things done in a place where the systems are different and those in the field around you are quite busy trying to keep up with the demands of being in a world of different systems themselves."

For example, it took nearly three months for the Macomers to figure out where to buy backpacks. Such challenges are offset by the grace of the work itself.

"The biggest reward from my work was teaching the students from the Bible daily," she says. "I saw students' eagerness to learn Bible teaching and I saw their

spiritual growth, but it wasn't just that. It fed me just as much or more than it did them to thoroughly read, dissect and meditate on God's word each day.

"It made me feel his presence, filled me with joy and gave me strength. Though serving overseas came with its challenges, these rewards far outweighed them for me."

## Otto and Marjorie Ekk

Sometimes, unexpected challenges drive new approaches. **Otto (SEM '88)** and Marjorie **Ekk**, most recently serving in Portugal, had to adjust to the pace of the country and difficulties of church-planting when they arrived in 1989.

Both were inclined to cross-cultural service as youngsters. As a couple, they went to Brazil—where Otto was born and lived until age 14—for several years after college to perform youth work in a German-speaking colony. It was a life-changing experience that helped set them on a missionary path.

After Otto graduated from the seminary, where Marjorie had taken a few classes, the couple headed to Portugal. There, they found that it could take many years for someone to accept God in their lives.

"We count people one by one," Otto says. They made connections through Bible study, play dates with their three children, coffee with friends, soccer games, birthday parties and waiting in line. Otto founded a soccer club—which still exists—before the first church was planted.

They never wavered from the challenge. "If God is really calling us to Portugal, a church will rise," Otto says. "And it did."

Ultimately, the couple started more than a few small churches, but a new challenge emerged in the country's



## LEARN MORE

See more about the Macomers' work at [fpu.edu/macomers](http://fpu.edu/macomers) and [fpu.edu/macomers-discipline](http://fpu.edu/macomers-discipline)

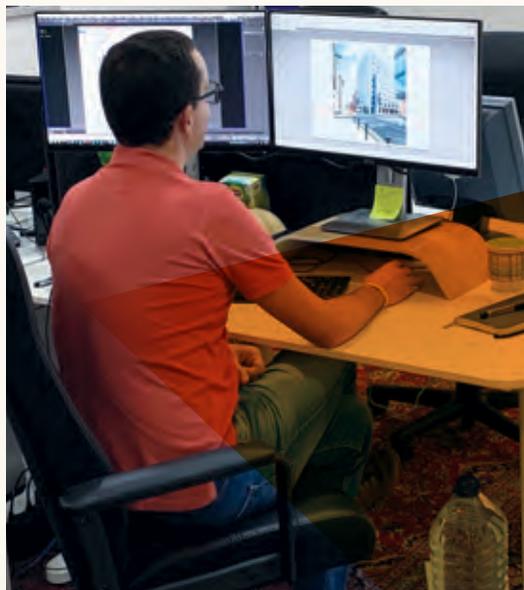
financial crisis about 10 years ago. People began losing their jobs and moving away to find work in other areas and countries.

The Ekks looked for a way to serve church members and the community. The answer was a secondhand store that provides a job for a pastor's wife, a place to buy necessities with dignity and the opportunity for the community to connect with church members.

"We're trying to meet the needs of the whole person," Marjorie says. At the store, "they also receive friendship and a listening ear."

More recently, they helped find a cowork space that connects entrepreneurs with experienced businesspeople like Otto, who worked many years for a Fowler (CA) farm equipment manufacturer. Some clients also connect to the church.

"When you get up in the morning, you have to have a goal—you have to have a focus," he says. "At the same time, it's amazing that the goal will shift as the day—the month or the year—goes on."



The decades of missionary work "definitely opened up our world," says Marjorie, whose mother always thought her daughter would be the missionary in the family. "It opens your eyes and pushes your theology and pushes the way you think of family, of church, of relationships."

From Guatemala, Emily Mooney echoed that point and the meaning that missionary service has brought to her life. "While this work is never easy, and some days are downright difficult, I know without a shadow of a doubt that I am

in God's will and in his hands—and that is what has enriched my life the most," she says. 

# PORTUGAL





# Winning MORE THAN a Game

By Doug Hoagland

**Samantha Witt (BA '20)** spent four years playing water polo for Fresno Pacific University, and now she wants to spend a lifetime serving as a missionary.

Witt went to the African nation of Malawi in 2017 on a short-term mission. She taught Bible lessons to children and befriended traumatized adults in a crowded refugee camp. "Hearing what they'd been through shattered my heart," Witt says. "Knowing I could be a listening ear for them and bring some hope reinforced what I want to do with my life."

Witt and other FPU student-athletes see a world in need, and they step into the gap because of their

faith. Some envision careers in which they can influence people for God in the classroom or medical office. Some want to be full-time missionaries. They all encounter professors, mentors and peers at FPU who support their desire to evangelize—sometimes with words, other times with actions.

## RELYING ON GOD

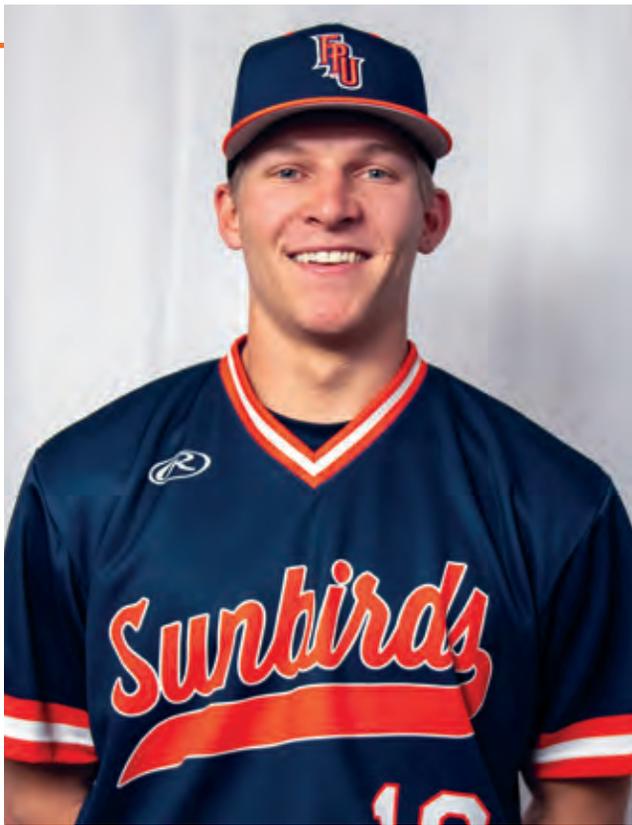
**Michael Warkentin (BS '20)** went to Guatemala with his church, Reedley Mennonite Brethren, in high school, and he connected with village children through sports—an experience that influenced him to become a physical education teacher. He played baseball for FPU and served as vice president of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee. "I know that God wants me to help further his kingdom," he says. "I've always felt my purpose is to reach the people I meet through sports."

Warkentin saw his faith strengthened during a sports-oriented mission trip to Colorado in 2019. An Athletes in Action training camp tested his stamina with physical challenges that seemed overwhelming. "I had to find ways to rely on God like I never had before," Warkentin says. "There were times when I thought I couldn't keep going. Then I prayed and realized that when I think that, God allows me to go on." Warkentin plans to intern at one of the training camps this summer.

His FPU teammate—sophomore Jack Foote—will travel to Alaska this summer to play on an Athletes in Action team. Besides competing in 40 to 50 games, Foote and others will participate in daily Bible studies and community service projects. "I know the baseball will be fun, but the learning will help me grow as a Christian," Foote says.

Foote, who's from Lemoore, hopes to become a nurse practitioner and integrate his faith into his profession. "If





you make your work your mission, you're serving those around you and serving the Lord. That's why you were put on earth," he says.

## LOSING HER HOME

Witt started thinking of traveling the world when she listened to the stories of her father, a former Marine. His journeys captivated his youngest daughter, and she twice went to Costa Rica on mission trips while in high school near San Diego. "I learned on those trips how universal God's love is, and how God can use you in different countries," Witt says.

After she came to FPU, she began working at Fresno Interdenominational Refugees Ministries (FIRM) where she heard the stories of Hmong, Lao and Syrian refugees. Serving people from around world focused Witt on becoming a missionary. She has particular empathy for displaced persons because of her family's experience during the recession of 2007-09. In seventh grade, Witt arrived home one day to find a foreclosure notice on her family's house. Job loss made it impossible for her parents to pay their mortgage, and the family had to briefly live apart after they lost their home. Witt stresses that her story pales in comparison to what refugees of war and oppression have suffered but adds: "It made me who I am."

Her family eventually regained its economic footing, and Witt found courage to talk about that dark time—and God's provision—in her testimony. She did so on the Malawi trip, which was sponsored by MB Mission (now known as Multiply). Witt forged a memorable connection in Malawi with an 8-year-old girl in a white dress with red polka dots who initially held back among the many children. "People can feel so unnoticed when they're in a refugee camp. There are so many people, and everyone fends for themselves," Witt says. She kept reaching out, and the girl eventually responded with hugs. "She was the hardest good-bye when I left."

## SCARY AND EXCITING

In 2018, Witt again went overseas, this time to Israel on an FPU study abroad trip. At the Golan Heights, she looked into Syria, which deepened her connection to the Syrian children she helps tutor in Fresno.

Witt appreciates the travel and service opportunities she's had at FPU, as well as leadership opportunities. She served as president of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee in 2019-20. She's also grateful for mentors who have encouraged her desire to be a missionary: Darren Duerksen, Ph.D., associate professor and program director of intercultural and religious studies; Ken Martens Friesen, Ph.D., associate professor of political science; and Brian Davis, associate pastor of spiritual formation. "They have taught me so much about the world and my place in God's plan," she says.

Wherever Witt goes as a missionary, she will go with her husband. She and Seth Jordan, a student at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, plan to marry two weeks after her graduation this May. "We're open to where God calls us," she says. "It's a process of learning to listen and be led by the spirit. It can be scary at times, but also exciting." 🏠



IN STEP WITH  
THE SUNBIRDS  
[fpuathletics.com](http://fpuathletics.com)



## LIVES TRANSFORMED

### SHERI TOS (BA '11)

## Life According to God's Plan



**Sheri Tos (BA '11)** thought she couldn't fit family, church and business into her new life—until God wove the three into one way to make a difference.

Back in Wisconsin, Sheri had a career as a regional branch manager, was getting an education at Milwaukee's Alverno College and, after a shaky start, found faith. Feeling empty in her early 30s, Sheri “cried to the Lord and he brought me back to his house.”

Into this life came Jeff Tos, partner in Tos Farms, a century-old Valley agribusiness. The distance was daunting, “but he pursued.” The two married in 2010. “The farm wasn't moving so I had to.”

Once in Hanford, Sheri found FPU's degree completion program. “I was so excited! The emphasis on Christian education surpassed what I was currently in.”

Faculty Rodney Frese and Brice Yocum encouraged Sheri to center on service. “I learned that I can make things happen.”

Many graduates call commencement a miracle. Sheri had an additional blessing. “When I met Jeff I told him I couldn't have children. When I received my degree I was pregnant with identical twin boys.”

Motherhood pushed business aside, but Sheri saw needs. Her youth ministry embraced special needs children, one of whom displayed uncontrollable and dangerous behaviors. In her frustration, Sheri sympathized with the family. “They must feel so judged and exhausted!”

When the children were asked to write three questions they would ask Jesus face to face, “this boy's answer broke my heart.”

Then God brought Sheri's life—motherhood, church, business—together in Sensory Rock Play Gym & Therapy, 240 N. Irwin St., Hanford. Children 10 and younger of all abilities enjoy rock walls, a zip line, themed playsets and developmental programs.

“I saw how to help kids and I thought, this is it! This is what my business needs to be.” 🏠



### EDITOR'S NOTE

Do you know a student who has been transformed at FPU? Contact Wayne Steffen at [wsteffen@fresno.edu](mailto:wsteffen@fresno.edu)

# 1946-1960

## FROM THE ARCHIVES: MISSION PRAYER BANDS

By Kevin Enns-Rempel, Director, Hiebert Library

During the 1940s and 1950s, the "Mission Prayer Bands" were one of the most tangible expressions of mission-mindedness among Pacific Bible Institute students. This program was established in 1946 in order "to pray for mission work around the world and to foster the missionary spirit in our own hearts." The entire student body was divided into groups (or "prayer bands"), each focused on a geographic region where Mennonite Brethren missionaries served. These groups met weekly to pray for missionaries in their region, and once a month one band organized a "mission rally."

The number of bands fluctuated from four to as many as eight, and the vast majority of students participated in their activities. The school yearbook, *The Portal*, usually printed at least three pages of photos and text about the bands each year. The 1953-1954 *Portal* devoted 12 pages.

The mission rallies were undoubtedly the high point of the prayer bands' activities. These rallies, attended by all students and open to the public, generally consisted of special music, a dinner menu including a dish that at least vaguely resembled the food of the featured region and a guest missionary speaker. The members of the prayer band decorated the auditorium to evoke images of the mission fields. The Africa rally of 1950, for example, included what the *P.B.I. Messenger* described as "a large steaming caldron, two live parrots, native music, artificial palm trees, huts, monkeys and a table of African curios [that] seemed to bring Africa right into the room." Prayer band members sometimes dressed in regional costume

in an attempt to heighten the effect. From the perspective of the 21st century, these rallies often practiced troubling forms of cultural appropriation, but they sincerely expressed the desire of students to promote the work of Christian missions in those countries.

The prayer bands remained a vital part of PBI student life throughout the 1950s but seem to have faded away at about the time that PBI was transformed into Pacific College. They are mentioned for the last time in the *P.B.I. Messenger* in late 1959 and

featured in *The Portal* a final time in 1960. 

## From the Archives...

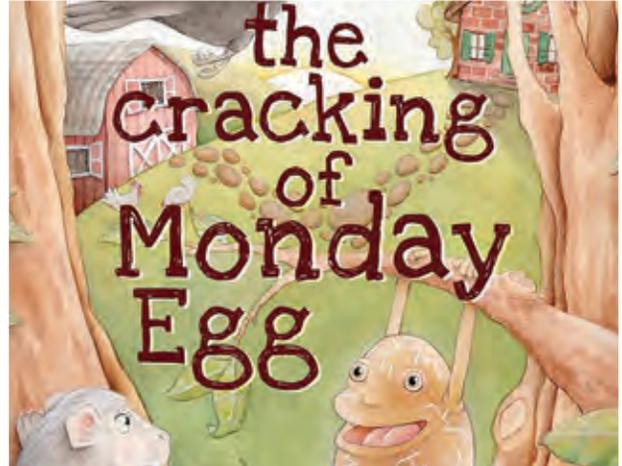


# IN TOUCH WITH ALUMNI



## »» RADIO PLAY RAISES FUNDS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES

**Max (MA '17)** and **Brianne (Vogt TC '09, BA '07) Debbas** directed and starred in, *A Christmas Carol: A Live Radio Play*, in order to raise funds for the Syrian refugee crisis. The production was set in a 1940s style radio/recording studio where six actors portrayed around 60 different characters and performed all the live sound effects. Proceeds went to Refugee Response, an organization assisting Syrian refugees.



## »» CHILDRENS' BOOK AIMS TO HELP CHILDREN HEAL

**Benjamin Thomas Higgins (BA '00)** published the children's book *The Cracking of Monday Egg*, November 1, 2019, with Ambassador International, which calls the book an entertaining story full of Biblical principles and parallels. Benjamin, known as "B.T.," says the story "will have succeeded if the image of the cracking egg becomes synonymous, in the readers mind, with successfully healing from real life trials." He grew up in Twain Harte, CA. He, wife Michelle, and their four children live in Anchorage, AK.

## GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Zach Bartley (BS '18)** was promoted to shipping manager at Gerawan Farms, with locations in Fresno, Reedley, Kerman and Sanger, CA.

**Aaron Chambers (BA '18)** is an associate accountant at Boos & Associates, Fresno.

**Taylor Moore (MA '18, BA '16)** is an accountant auditor for the County of Tulare.

**Karen Vargas (BA '18)** and **Jorg Letkemann (BA '18)** got engaged. Karen is a community outreach representative at MedZed, a national telehealth company.

**Steven Kauffman (BA '17)** is a social sciences teacher and head water polo and swim coach for Clovis High School.

**Joy Ndombeson (FS '17)** is chief operating officer at GoDonut, a Fresno company making mobile device stands.

**Sergio Villa (BS '17)** is an account executive at Aramark Uniform Services.

**Bernadette Rodriguez (BA '15)** is a behavior analyst at the Kern Regional Center.

**Delbert Warkentin (BA '15)** was accepted into Columbia University's M.S. in Nonprofit Management program with a scholarship from the Paraguayan Government.

**Aaron Winters (BA '15)** is a quality assurance inspector at Reset Energy, an oil and gas industry equipment production company.



## » DAVILA CONTRIBUTES TO FIGHT AGAINST CANCER

**Cyndie Davila (BA '14)** is senior manager of community development for the American Cancer Society and an executive leader for the Tobacco Free Coalition of Kern County. Second only to the government in funding cancer research, the ACS also provides patient services including free wigs, rides to treatment and lodging during out-of-town treatment. The organization's work has contributed to a 27% drop in the cancer death rate in the United States. Cyndie was the subject of an article October 21, 2019, in *Bakersfield.com*. [fpu.edu/331-davila](http://fpu.edu/331-davila)

**Sergio (Estrada) Case (BA '14)** is an associate attorney at Quall Cardot LLP, a Fresno law firm.

**Stephanie (Sanchez) Ortega (BA '13)** is a senior auditor at Mechanics Bank.

**Raquel Garcia (MA '08, BA '05)** has been selected as program facilitator of Leadership Visalia for 2019. Leadership Visalia is a program administered by the Visalia Chamber of Commerce to help community leaders develop professionally, gain insight into local, county and state government and expand their leadership skills. As program facilitator, Raquel will create course content, conduct training sessions throughout the program and guide participants towards their personal leadership goals. A graduate of the 2005 class, she has contributed as a mentor, steering committee member and program coordinator over the last three years. Raquel also works as assistant director of community development at FPU's Visalia Campus. More at [fpu.edu/331-garcia](http://fpu.edu/331-garcia)

**Lorraine (Weller) Clarke (BA '06)** got her Ph.D. in Plant Biology in 2014 from the University of California, Riverside, then moved to Maryland with her husband, David Clarke. In 2016 they welcomed their first daughter, Fiona. In 2019, they bought their first house and Lorraine started teaching ecology, evolutionary biology and genetics at Prince George's Community College.

**Jennifer (Bailey) David (BA '05)** is the director of development at Society for disABILITIES, Modesto, CA.

**Stephen Tuggy (FS '02)** is a software developer at Shift3 Technologies, Fresno.

**Sean Peifer (BA '97)** is pastor at Valley Bible Church, Merced, CA.

**Bonnie (Stuart) Wheeler (BA '92)** is a science teacher at California Connections Academy. Bonnie was named 2015-2016 Teacher of the Year.

**Marta Escarcega (MA '91, BA '81)** graduated with a Doctorate in Transformational Leadership from Bakke Graduate University in December 2017. She has taught English as a second language at places including FPU. Marta has also worked as a financial professional, obtained her life insurance license and been a broker agent with World Financial Group as well as run two businesses: Escarcega Enterprise and A & M Ranch. Her volunteer work includes summer service as an intercessory missionary. She and husband Arnold celebrated 36 years of marriage, and their daughter Mary Mata works in the FPU Registrar's Office.

**Dick (BA '69) and Carol (BA' 70) Cornelsen** celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary August 2, 2019.

**Diane Hooge (FS '65)** was named 2019 Alumni of the Year during commencement at the American Baptist Seminary of the West, Berkeley, CA. She has served churches in California and Washington, been senior pastor of Judson Memorial Baptist Church in Minneapolis, MN, and area minister for Eastern Massachusetts. 



## WHAT'S GOING ON?

It's so easy to let your classmates and friends know what's happening in your life—job, marriage, children, new address and awards. [visit fpu.edu/alumniupdate](http://visit.fpu.edu/alumniupdate)

## » IN THE NEWS

**Julia (Ponce) VanCamp (BA '18)** is boy's water polo coach at Gig Harbor (WA) High School. [fpu.edu/331-vancamp](http://fpu.edu/331-vancamp)

**Meg Clark's (BA '17)** portrayal of Sally Bowles in Cabaret at Selma Arts Center made arts writer Donald Munro's top 20 cultural events for 2019. [fpu.edu/331-clark](http://fpu.edu/331-clark)

**Noemi (Vega) Quiñones (MA '17)** wrote an article, "Go and Make Disciples. But First, Stop.," posted September 27, 2019, on the *Christian Leader* magazine website. She is also an adjunct instructor at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary. [fpu.edu/331-quinones](http://fpu.edu/331-quinones)

**Mat Keplinger (MA '15)** is assistant baseball coach in pitching at the University of San Francisco. [fpu.edu/331-keplinger](http://fpu.edu/331-keplinger)

**Sienna Gonzales-Curtin (BA '14)** It's not often a team honors the opposing coach, but that's what happened in December 2019 to alumna Sienna Gonzales-Curtin, who played for Yosemite High School and now coaches for Fresno High School after her career as a Sunbird. [fpu.edu/331-curtin](http://fpu.edu/331-curtin)

**Don Kurtze (BA '09)** was named national director of originations at Liberty SBF, a small business commercial real estate lender, according to a January 2019 announcement. [fpu.edu/331-kurtze](http://fpu.edu/331-kurtze)

**Raj Sodhi-Layne (BA '08)** was named one of the top 10 professional women for 2019 by the Marjaree Mason Center, Fresno. The honor was part of the 36th Annual Top Ten Professional Women and Leading Business Awards presented in October 2019. The awards honor individuals in the Fresno County community while also raising awareness of domestic violence. Each winner is nominated by member of the community and reviewed by a committee of local people and business professionals. Raj serves as vice president and branch manager, California Bank and Trust. [fpu.edu/331-layne](http://fpu.edu/331-layne)

**Nicole Mosqueda (BA '03)**, chief administrative officer of Camarena Health, was featured in the *Madera Tribune* August 28, 2019, in an article on educational-professional partnerships to prepare Madera Unified School District students for careers. Nicole joined the FPU Board of Trustees in February 2020. [fpu.edu/331-mosqueda](http://fpu.edu/331-mosqueda)

**Allen Schwamb (BA '01)** was among 102 St. Louis-area educators to receive an Emerson's Excellence in Teaching award November 17, 2019. The awards pay tribute to area educators from kindergarten teachers to college professors for achievements and dedication to the field of education. Each honoree received

a Tiffany & Co. crystal apple box, as a symbol of their vital role in shaping students' lives. The Excellence in Teaching Awards program is sponsored annually by St. Louis-based Emerson, a diversified global manufacturer and technology leader.

**Allan Hollman (BA '90)** was named principal of Mountain Vista High School. [fpu.edu/331-hollman](http://fpu.edu/331-hollman)

**Dean Lee (BA '87), M.D., Ph.D.**, has been appointed to a new Scientific Advisory Board created by Kiadis Pharma, an international biopharmaceutical company based in Europe. The board will provide expertise and guidance to the company board regarding a variety of cancer treatments. Lee is a physician in the Division of Hematology, Oncology and BMT at Nationwide Children's Hospital and director of the Cellular Therapy and Cancer Immunology Program at Nationwide Children's Hospital and The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center. [fpu.edu/331-lee](http://fpu.edu/331-lee)

## » DEATHS

**Sam Flores (MA '17)**, 41, died September 2, 2019. The Fresno City College assistant baseball coach and Fresno Unified School District physical education teacher suffered a sudden brain aneurysm. [fpu.edu/331-flores](http://fpu.edu/331-flores)

**Joseph Feryn (AA '92)** died July 5, 2019. He taught junior high at St. Aloysius Gonzaga Catholic School and was a guidance counselor and a cross country/track coach at Gonzaga Preparatory School, both in Spokane, WA. He was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia in 2016. Survivors include wife Angie and their sons Adam and Colin, his mother Marie Zuger Feryn Blacklaw, his sister Ann Corlett and his brother Remi. [fpu.edu/331-feryn](http://fpu.edu/331-feryn)

**Lucille (Fast) Drezweicki (PBI '54)** died August 14, 2014.

**Jona Lee Feil (PBI 1952)**, 86, died August 15, 2019. Born in Hillsboro, KS, the family moved to Bakersfield, CA, when he was 13. He married Mary Lou Penner in 1955 and attended Pacific Bible Institute for one year before serving as a U.S. Army medic driver in Germany. He co-founded Abate-A-Weed, Inc., in Bakersfield, now co-operated by son Darrell. Survivors include his wife; children Wanda, Darrell and Karen; and siblings Gene Feil, **Arly Feil (former student)**, **Irene (PBI '54)** and Chet Pauls and **Luetta (BA '66 and emeritus English faculty)** and Wilbert Reimer (emeritus mathematics faculty).

**UPDATE** your info at  
[fpu.edu/alumniupdate](http://fpu.edu/alumniupdate)

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## WEDDINGS



**Alexis Quevedo-Villalobos (BA '19)** married Carlos Villalobos on November 2, 2019.



**John Samson (BA '19)** married Danae Dubberke on October 12, 2019, in Mammoth Lakes, CA.



**Joy Ndombeson (FS '17)** married Alyssa Toles on June 7, 2019.



**Michael Weathers (BA '15)** married Ebonikka Daily on November 9, 2019, at Sanger First Southern Baptist Church.



**Gabrielle Bergen (BA '12)** married Sascha Schmid in her hometown of Chico, CA, on March 23, 2019. (no photo)



**Christina Marks (BA '07)** married Tony Uria in San Diego, CA, on July 7, 2019. They live in Meridian, ID where Christina is a teacher for the West Ada School District.



**Marnie Jones (BA '06)** married **Ryan Wade (MA '16)** on September 1, 2019, at New Hope Community Church, Clovis. Marnie works at the Kingsburg Police Department and Ryan with the Clovis Police Department. They reside in Clovis.

## BIRTHS

**Alexis (Weigant) Cowdrill (BA '17)** and husband **Benjamin Cowdrill (BA '17)** announce the birth of daughter Lily Grace on July 6, 2019. She weighed 9 lbs., 4 oz.



**Iliana (Casas) Gonzales (MA '17)** and husband James Gonzales announce the birth of son Isaiah James on March 28, 2019.



**Amanda (Blackburn) O'Dell (BA '17)** and husband Christopher O'Dell announce the birth of daughter Kyla Lynn O'Dell on March 27, 2019.

**Audriana (Moody) Vargas (BA '17)** and husband Daniel announce the birth of son Malachi on August 3, 2018. He weighed 9 lbs., 10 oz and was 21.5 inches long.



**Sarah (King) Bartley (BA '14)** and husband **Zach Bartley (BA '18)** announce the birth of son Zion Malosi Bartley on Dec 10, 2019. He weighed 7 lbs., 14 oz. and was 21 inches long.



**Christine (Gregory) Pereira (BA '03)** and husband Jithin announce the birth of daughter Rosette Anne Perreira on January 19, 2019.

**Lynette (Mize) Doonan (BA '98)** and husband Michael adopted son Nathan Michael on November 1, 2019.

## DEATHS



**Louise Quiring, 92**, died December 29, 2019. She was born August 26, 1927, on a farm near Mennon, Saskatchewan, Canada, as one of seven children. Louise attended business college in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, holding various jobs there and working for the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions in Kansas before

coming to Fresno to work at Pacific College in 1968. Her assignments in more than 30 years at Fresno Pacific included assisting Peter Funk, director of development; Jerry Winkleman, academic vice president; and Howard Loewen, provost. After retirement she worked for the School of Education. Louise attended Butler Church since arriving in Fresno, serving in many capacities. Survivors include sisters Esther "Viola" Neufeld and Sophie Helen Esau and brother Arthur "Art" John Quiring.

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By Doug Hoagland



## Getting God on Video

**Riley Endicott (BA '14)** has traveled the world putting the work of God on video. Filmmaking with a Christian mission has led him to Lebanon, Guinea-Bissau in Africa, and most recently the Democratic Republic of the Congo. His focus: producing short documentaries about faith-based projects bringing hope and help to people in need of both.

"These videos are my way to live out a Christian's mission to build the kingdom of God," Endicott says. "Getting these opportunities to use my tools and talents excites me." Fresno Pacific University gave Endicott a deep knowledge of scripture as a biblical studies major. "I learned the kingdom of God is present now, and our mission is to spread the gospel and make disciples," he says. A communications minor allowed him to build skills as a budding filmmaker. Combining these two fields of study is powerful, he says: "A documentary can change a person's world view and help them to better love their neighbors."

### People in need

Endicott, 28, moved from Fresno to Tacoma, WA, in 2017. He works as video producer for Life Center, a church in Tacoma, and he also runs his own business, Riley Endicott Films. Last year in the Congo, Endicott filmed efforts to build a badly-needed medical clinic. Fredy Tshibanda—who's from the Congo and now lives in Fresno—is leading the clinic project through his nonprofit, United for the Future. Locally, his organization works to provide mentors for students in the Fresno Unified School District.

People in the Congo don't have access to medical care, and one out of seven children dies before age 5, Tshibanda says. He needs \$200,000 to build the clinic and earlier this year had collected about \$63,000, an accomplishment he credits to Endicott's film. "Riley was so gracious to leave his current engagements at the last minute and take a difficult mission trip to the Congo in order to convey so eloquently a message of sharing hope.

**“My primary identity is a Jesus follower, and I'm also passionate about filmmaking,” he says. “Hopefully, I can make a difference in a small way for the Gospel.”**

Many people responded to support the construction of the clinic to save the lives of people that God loves and wants to use,” Tshibanda says. Traveling to the Congo led Endicott far beyond his comfort zone. “I got sick at one point, but I see the value of telling these stories, and I'm willing to take the risk and answer that call,” he says.

In previous travels, Endicott filmed videos in Lebanon about Youth for Christ and the Syrian refugee crisis. In Guinea-Bissau, he produced a film about West African Vocational Schools, a Christian nonprofit based in Fresno.

Endicott hopes to continue making mission-oriented films. “My primary identity is a Jesus follower, and I'm also passionate about filmmaking,” he says. “Hopefully, I can make a difference in a small way for the Gospel.” 



### LEARN MORE

Look for Riley's video in the May Alumni eNews at [fresno.edu/riley](https://fresno.edu/riley)



## New Outstanding Graduate Awards Honor the Best of Fresno Pacific University and Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary

**An award for new graduates goes beyond a plaque  
to invite honorees to lifelong engagement.**

The Outstanding Graduate Awards—started in May 2020—recognize students who exemplify the best of Fresno Pacific University and Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary and who show the potential to be ambassadors for the university.



continued

# FPU's 2020 Outstanding Graduates

**The dean of each school and the seminary selects two outstanding graduates for both the fall and spring semesters for academic achievement, Christian character, leadership potential, service to others and their embodiment of the *Fresno Pacific Idea*.**

## QUALIFICATIONS

- ◆ **Academic achievement**  
A minimum 3.5 GPA.
- ◆ **Christian character**  
Demonstrate the fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.
- ◆ **Leadership potential**  
Lead in the classroom, extra-curricular and community/church activities.
- ◆ **Service**  
Help, minister or serve others or the community.
- ◆ **Embody the ideals of the *Fresno Pacific Idea***  
Christian higher education, cultural diversity, peacemaking, justice and reconciliation.

## School of Humanities, Religion & Social Sciences



### **Nzashi Seya Lumeya M.A. in Peace Studies**

Seya has deepened his Christian commitment and character in both his studies and his restorative justice work. When the Center for Peacemaking was without a permanent director, Seya ensured all programs operated smoothly and continued to develop relationships with other leaders.



### **Samantha Witt | B.A. in Biblical and Religious Studies**

Samantha demonstrates her prophetic Christian faith as president of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, and by serving Syrian Muslim refugees via Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministry and Neighborly Faith, a Christian organization committed to improving Christian-Muslim relations.

## School of Natural Sciences



### **Catherine Jalomo B.S. in Chemistry**

A Paragon Scholar, Catherine majored in chemistry and has been accepted with full funding to Ph.D. studies. She is a Hispanic first-generation college student who is highly engaged in campus service.



### **Kelsey Lowrey | B.A. in Math**

Kelsey's leadership and service experience includes being president of the FPU Student Government Association. Very involved with her Mexican heritage, she plans to teach and get a Ph.D. in mathematics.

## **School of Business**



### **Jenny Godinez | MBA**

Jenny is a bright student who is working with her husband to one day own their own lawn service business. She always has a positive attitude and is not afraid to ask questions from an appreciative perspective.



### **Adam Sabourin | M.A. in Leadership Studies**

Adam is a military veteran studying at the Visalia campus. He manages an irrigation company and operates Vets With Wings, a nonprofit that empowers veterans struggling with combat-related conditions. [vetswithwings.com](http://vetswithwings.com)

## **School of Education**



### **Riley Fox | M.A. in Special Education**

After Riley graduated in 2013 with her B.A. in Liberal Studies, she completed a mild/moderate education specialist credential and now works as an education specialist at Aspen Valley Prep Academy, a Fresno charter school.



### **Nelson Vasquez | M.A. in School Counseling**

Nelson combines a kind and even temperament with a hunger for knowledge. He has devoted additional time at his fieldwork site to learn about career technical education, financial aid, college admissions, academic planning and student success.

## **Seminary**



### **Karina Hernandez M.A. in Marriage and Family Therapy**

Karina is an insightful clinician with an intuitive awareness of others' needs. Self-motivated and courageous, she has a strong desire to learn and to apply her learning to her profession. Karina has impressive Scriptural knowledge and sees counseling as a ministry.



### **Brad Isaak | M.Div.**

Brad has shown his belief in interdisciplinary learning by taking courses from many areas of the seminary. As youth/small group pastor at Prodigal Church, Fresno, he combines his intellect with a desire to help contemporary, secular people find Jesus. 



## FPU Foundation Welcomes Steven Redekop

Born and raised in Saskatoon, BC, **Steven Redekop (BA '05)** is no stranger to Fresno Pacific University, but his role as director of foundation development will be new territory. Redekop earned his B.A. in Business Administration, and his job in the FPU Business Office was more than on-the-job training. "Working in the business office while a full-time student was formative," Redekop says. "It was during my tenure I was introduced to Dr. Arthur Wiebe, whom I would go on to work for at Wiebe, Carlson & Associates."

Upon graduation, Redekop became national sales manager for Wiebe, Carlson & Associates, Fresno, coordinating sales and maintaining financial records. Redekop earned his Master of Divinity from Multnomah Biblical Seminary in 2015, then served as associate pastor of Bethany Church, a Fresno Mennonite Brethren congregation. "As a student, Fresno Pacific University allowed me to both explore and prepare for this calling," he says.

Coming back to FPU is a new chapter in that calling. "I am equally excited about the work of the foundation and its impact and Gospel witness through supporting Christian higher education and engaging individuals and businesses," he says.

In his new role, Redekop oversees the annual marketing plan, which will include the university's workforce training and education initiatives, student internship and employment opportunities, and business succession planning. He will also be involved in developing new planned gift opportunities and administering existing trusts.

Redekop and his wife, Jennifer (Prieb) Redekop, a part-time registered nurse at Clovis Community Hospital, live in Clovis with their three daughters. 🏠



## 2021 Alumni and Friends Trip to Europe

Spend 11 days touring the rich historical and cultural sites of Vienna, Prague and Budapest with Stephen Varvis, Ph.D., professor of history.

There is also an optional three-day extension to Salzburg, Austria.

**Dates will be mid-June to early July.**

More information at [fpu.edu/alumnitour](http://fpu.edu/alumnitour)



We are grateful to our **Legacy Partner**

for their contributions and commitment to Fresno Pacific University



# TAXES, IRAs & YOU

## What is new for 2020?

For distributions required to be made after December 31, 2019, the age for beginning mandatory distributions is changed to age 72 for IRA owners reaching age 70½ after December 31, 2019. The required beginning date for IRA owners who haven't reached age 70½ by the end of 2019 is April 1st of the year following the year of the owner's 72nd birthday.

### Consider an IRA Charitable Rollover

If you are required to take an annual Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), the IRS will allow you to use your RMD to fund your charitable contributions and avoid paying income tax on the distribution.



**You request your IRA plan administrator to transfer your 2020 IRA RMD funds directly to Fresno Pacific University and notify the Advancement Office of your intent.**



**The IRA administrator transfers funds directly to FPU.**



**This “qualified charitable distribution” is excluded from your adjusted gross income.**



**2020 Maximum Charitable Rollover Limit is \$100,000.**



FRESNO PACIFIC  
UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION

**For more information on IRA charitable rollover** through Fresno Pacific University, contact Donald Griffith or Mark Deffenbacher:

[donald.griffith@fresno.edu](mailto:donald.griffith@fresno.edu) | 559-453-3485

[mark.deffenbacher@fresno.edu](mailto:mark.deffenbacher@fresno.edu) | 559-453-2239



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If your son or daughter no longer maintains a permanent address at your home, please notify the alumni office of their new mailing address by calling 559-453-2236 or emailing [alumni@fresno.edu](mailto:alumni@fresno.edu). Thank you.



# You are invited to FPU's **GATHER 2020**

An annual event connecting the university with our community.  
Mark your calendar now and look for further updates.

**\*Thursday-Saturday, October 1-3, 2020**  
**Fresno Pacific University Main Campus**

## **Thursday, October 1, 2020**

- ▲ Preview Day for high school students
- ▲ Fall Kick-Off Worship Event
- ▲ Dinner on the Campus Green and family friendly activities

## **Friday, October 2, 2020**

- ▲ President's Circle Dinner (donor event by invitation only)
- ▲ Trivia Night—test your knowledge

## **Saturday, October 3, 2020**

- ▲ Decades Reunions and lunch—gather with other grads from your decade
- ▲ Chalk Talks with some of your favorite professors
- ▲ Sunbird Women's Volleyball game vs. Academy of Art
- ▲ Dinner on the Diamond – Sunbird Baseball fundraiser

Find more information at  
[\*\*fpu.edu/gather2020\*\*](http://fpu.edu/gather2020)

*\*Dates subject to change*