

# PACIFIC

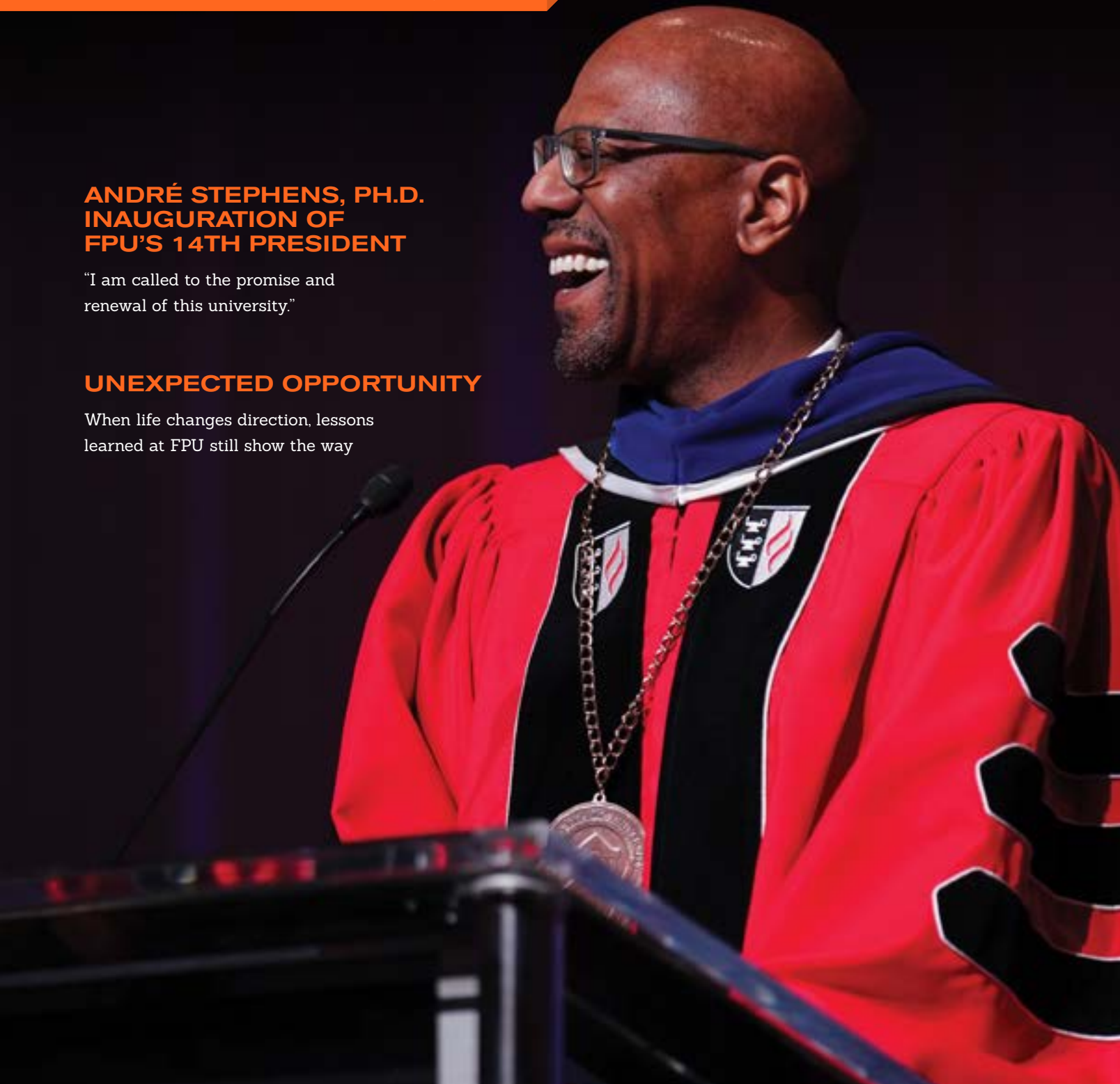
FRESNO PACIFIC UNIVERSITY | VOL. 36, NO. 1

## ANDRÉ STEPHENS, PH.D. INAUGURATION OF FPU'S 14TH PRESIDENT

"I am called to the promise and  
renewal of this university."

## UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITY

When life changes direction, lessons  
learned at FPU still show the way





president's message

FRESNO PACIFIC UNIVERSITY INVESTS IN STUDENTS

“ Graduating students who can think critically, engage winsomely and live selflessly as they meaningfully contribute to their community and society is a win both for students and families”

— André Stephens, Ph.D.

As I near the end of my first year as president of this great institution, I am grateful to serve Fresno Pacific University. Amidst the challenges, I am hopeful. Many positive changes are contributing to our short- and long-term success. I would rather be at FPU than any other college in America. We are emerging stronger and more focused on mission.

I often say college is not primarily a financial investment (although it may feel that way), but a missional one. Mission is about teaching and learning, which happens primarily through relationship.

It is embodied in faculty, staff and students. Mission is about who students become versus what they go on to do. As traditional undergraduate students transition to college and adults return, the temptation would be to focus on job outcomes,

but more than job preparation makes college worthwhile!

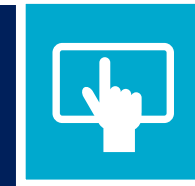
Many students wrestle with, “Who am I?” “What is my purpose?” “Who do I want to become?” “Why am I in college?” and “What sort of world do I want to help create?” Fresno Pacific plays a unique role in enhancing students’ spiritual lives. Our esteemed faculty and caring staff create activities that develop the whole person. Indeed, one of our primary goals is to increase the flourishing of our students.

Research shows that while in college, students become more caring, more tolerant, more connected with others and more engaged in the journey to know self and pursue truth. Spiritual growth (broadly defined) also enhances academic performance, psychological well-being, leadership development and satisfaction with college.

Graduating students who can think critically, engage winsomely and live selflessly as they meaningfully contribute to their community and society is a win both for students and families.

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FPU signs enrollment agreements with area high schools

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



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PRESIDENT André Stephens, Ph.D.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS Becky Bradley
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Wayne Steffen

DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI DEVELOPMENT Ali Sena
CREATIVE DIRECTOR Niki DeLaBarre
GRAPHIC DESIGNERS Niki DeLaBarre, Jared Phillips

PHOTOGRAPHER Cary Edmondson
Information: 559-453-2000
Alumni: 559-453-2236
Advancement: 559-453-2251



Pacific is sent to alumni and friends of Fresno Pacific University.





# Man with a Mission: President André Stephens uses inauguration to set a direction for FPU

“I am called to the promise and renewal of this university,” André Stephens, Ph.D., said during his inauguration as 14<sup>th</sup> President on March 31, 2023, in the Special Events Center.

In his address, Stephens recognized those who brought FPU this far, then called for a look to the future. “One of my prayers for FPU is that our imagination for the future would be greater than our memory of the past. Not that we ignore or minimize the past, but that we, collectively, would have confidence in our God who is doing something new.”

The day marked one year since Stephens submitted his letter of interest to the presidential search committee. “In that letter, I shared that I still believe in the power of Christian higher education,” he said.

The work is to help students develop their faith and intellect. “I have many hopes and dreams for FPU, but they pale in comparison to the one singular vision that I have. That is, we would participate with God by the work of the Holy

Spirit, in forming and transforming hearts,” Stephens said.

The issues of the world are issues of the heart. “We need more kind people. People who have big hearts, not just big heads,” he said.

Stephens’ vision is found in Anabaptist distinctives—Jesus is the center of our faith; community is the center of our lives; reconciliation is the center of our work—and will be evidenced in the lives of students.

Negative views about the current generation are false, Stephens said. “These students are the most transformative, powerful, catalytic generation that we have seen in a long time.”

Becoming president culminates Stephens’ 30 years in Christian higher education, most recently as Biola University vice president for student development. He and First Lady Beth Stephens have three children.

A picnic on the Campus Green followed the ceremony before Stephens threw the opening pitch in a baseball game against Hawaii Pacific University. 🏠



**Clockwise from top:** Presidents gather (from left): David Janzen, Ph.D., president, Tabor College; Barry H. Corey, Ph.D., president, Biola University; Adam Morris, Ph.D., president, Azusa Pacific University; Michael J. Beals, president, Vanguard University; André Stephens, Ph.D., president, FPU; Shirley Hoogstra, J.D., president, Council for Christian Colleges & Universities; Pete Menjares, Ph.D., interim president, Seattle Pacific University, former president, FPU; Michael Thomas, Ph.D., president, Concordia University, Irvine; Angie Richey, Ph.D., president, Life Pacific University.

First Lady Beth Stephens with Victoria, Jason and Micah Stephens.

Laura Tekunoff, president, Staff Executive, presents Stephens with a welcoming quilt.

Joshua Wilson, J.D., chair of the FPU Board of Trustees, swears Stephens in as president.



**READ MORE**

Read more on inauguration and see the full ceremony at [fpu.edu/inauguration](https://fpu.edu/inauguration)



# Stephens optimistic as FPU restructures for success

By Wayne Steffen

Fresno Pacific University is restructuring student care and recruitment as well as business practices in the face of serious enrollment and revenue declines. These actions will strengthen the university's economic position and its mission to develop students for leadership and service through excellence in Christian higher education.

## Where we find ourselves

Fall 2022 enrollment was 3,029 traditional undergraduate, bachelor's degree completion, graduate and Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary students, a 14% decrease from last year. This lowered tuition revenue, FPU's major source of income, resulted in a projected deficit of \$7.4 million for 2022-23.



## LEARN MORE

Read a more detailed statement at [fpu.edu/optimism](https://fpu.edu/optimism)

**“We have seen significant efforts from many...that truly paid off.”**

– President André Stephens

FPU's challenges are faced by many other colleges and universities: smaller numbers of traditional-aged students, economic insecurity, lingering pandemic effects and doubt by some about the value of a degree. Enrollment in bachelor's degree completion programs, FPU's largest student group, has also been affected by declining community college enrollment.

While many decisions have been difficult, there is already cause for optimism.

## Positive trends

- ◆ Spring 2023 enrollment saw only a 3% decline between the fall and spring semesters, well below the previous two years.
- ◆ Traditional undergraduate applications for fall 2023 are up 78%.
- ◆ To help ensure current students graduate, FPU created the position of chief retention officer, appointing Kerry Sue Brown, director of student success services.
- ◆ End-of-year giving was up 32% over last year.
- ◆ The university is working with outside professionals in enrollment, financial aid and advancement.

“We have seen significant efforts from many program directors, faculty and graduate recruiters that truly paid off,” said President André Stephens, Ph.D. “We will continue to work strategically with internal and external partners to develop and implement a financially viable roadmap for our future.”

## Faculty and staff positions

The process of eliminating positions announced in fall 2022 has been completed. Decisions were guided by enrollment; costs in relation to revenues; the need for general education faculty; positions critical to recent and future investments, core to the university's religious mission or with a high potential for growth; and national, state and regional data. With these considerations in mind, several areas were exempted from faculty layoffs: Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, undergraduate biblical studies, the School of Natural Sciences and the Visual and Performing Arts Division.

- ◆ Eight longtime faculty chose to participate in a Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program.
- ◆ Eight vacant faculty positions will not be filled at this time.
- ◆ Five other faculty positions were discontinued.
- ◆ No majors were eliminated.
- ◆ The M.A. in Peacemaking and Conflict Studies program will continue as it has since its reorganization in 2020, as an individualized major and as a minor. The two full-time faculty positions were among those eliminated and courses will be taught by faculty from a variety of relevant areas.
- ◆ Recruitment will continue for open faculty positions in biology, business-accounting, chemistry, computer science, physics, nursing, mathematics, media studies and criminology.
- ◆ Affected faculty have been informed their contracts will not be renewed after June 30, 2023.
- ◆ Sixteen staff positions were eliminated through attrition and reorganization.

This is a stressful time, Stephens acknowledged, but these changes put the university on a good track.

“I came to FPU because I believe in the power of education, specifically Christian higher education, to form and transform the lives of individuals who attend our institution,” he said. “Amidst all that is happening, we serve a God who is bigger, better and stronger than our circumstances—may we live in the confidence of that truth!” 🏠





# EDUCATION JUST BEGINNING

**Joel Hignojoz learned there's  
always room to grow** *By Cyndee Fontana-Ott*

**“Just because  
things didn’t  
go the way you  
planned doesn’t  
mean that things  
won’t go well.”**

*– Joel Hignojoz*



## WANT MORE

See the June Alumni Enews for  
**Aaron Henderson's (BA '08)** story  
of unexpected opportunity.

**Joel Hignojoz (BA '17)** began dreaming of becoming a teacher in middle school.

His sixth-grade teacher was inspiring in the way she loved, nurtured and focused on each classmate. “Sometimes, a teacher can make a difference,” he says. “I wanted to have that kind of positive impact on students.”

So Hignojoz studied history—his father’s favorite subject—at Fresno Pacific University. He earned a bachelor’s degree and plotted a career as a middle or high school history teacher.

Then, just as he prepared for graduate studies, Hignojoz blossomed in a temporary job at O’Neill Vintners & Distillers while, as a substitute teacher, he found that something was missing.

He loved working with students and being in the classroom, but “I just felt like maybe this isn’t something that I wanted to do for the rest of my life.”

So today, Hignojoz isn’t a classroom teacher—but he is teaching. At Tetra Pak, a global food processing and packaging solutions company with

a location in Denton, TX, he works as a world class manufacturing and engineering analyst and education and training leader. “I wanted to be a teacher and I ended up doing something completely different, and I’m happy with it,” he says.

The career switch has been smoothed by the lessons, tools and skills Hignojoz absorbed at Fresno Pacific. His academic foundation in history, including research and analytical skills, translates well in his new job—as does the university’s fundamental encouragement to continue learning and growing as a student, teacher and person.

## A NEVER-ENDING EDUCATION

“I like to say that getting a degree doesn’t mean that your education has finished,” Hignojoz, 32, says in a signature Texas drawl. “I believe getting a degree means that your education is just beginning. I’m still a student

in the position that I have today. There's always room to grow and I'm always learning something."

Still, this wasn't the career path he first envisioned as a boy growing up in Visalia. The oldest of four children, Hignojoz mostly attended public schools and enjoyed sports and martial arts. Though there were challenges to overcome in childhood, he was happy spending time with his siblings and friends.

Following the family's musical DNA, Hignojoz started playing the saxophone at age 9. He added the guitar, drums, clarinet and more over the years.

Directly out of high school, Hignojoz attended community college in Visalia but didn't make much academic headway. He dropped out to start a pool service and repair business, yet never gave up on teaching.

Eventually, following the advice of a mentor he met while studying at Reedley College, Hignojoz decided to enroll at Fresno Pacific to pursue a history degree and teaching credential.

"I definitely made the right decision," says the devout Hignojoz. "Not only was it a Christian university, the style of teaching at Fresno Pacific

was just phenomenal...it gave me the skills and tools needed to be successful."

He applied the lessons first in the temporary job he took to earn money for the credential program. Hignojoz's initial task at the Parlier winery was applying labels to bottles. Soon, he was learning other jobs "on the fly" and progressing from operating a case packer to inventory control specialist.

## SET BACK AND RESET

Though Hignojoz planned to leave for the credential program, a personal setback prompted another delay. He continued at the

winery as a process specialist helping to create standard operating procedures and efficiencies in the bottling area.

Hignojoz also set himself up as a substitute teacher. At

first, he loved spending time in the classroom and working with students. But after a while, he wasn't sure whether teaching was his true calling.

Disappointed, he confided those feelings to his father, Joel Sr., who offered this advice: "If you feel just an ounce of doubt in your heart about

what you're supposed to do, then just don't do it because that could eventually snowball into something bigger.

"Maybe teaching in the classroom isn't for you, but that doesn't mean teaching only happens in the classroom. I bet you can still find a way to do it in some other way."

Those words resonated with Hignojoz, especially when his father passed away a few weeks later in 2020. It was even harder then to think about a graduate program.

So Hignojoz took another job to better support his family, which by then included his wife, Amelia, his brother and a struggling friend. But the job and its long, stressful hours weren't a good fit and, to boot, the family was facing the prospect of moving or paying a lot more in rent.

## A PRAYER ANSWERED

Hignojoz prayed for help and guidance. Then Tetra Pak reached out after seeing his professional profile online, triggering a series of interviews and tests that culminated in a job offer.

He happily accepted in May 2022; it was a special blessing that the post was in Denton, Texas. Though Hignojoz grew up in Visalia, he always considered Texas as home because of the family's deep southern roots and frequent visits.

"On my father's side, I am a 12th generation Texan" he says. "I grew up thinking I was from Texas, that's just the family culture."

He's also content to have released that traditional teaching dream, and believes his university education provided the strong, successful foundation necessary for a new career course. "Fresno Pacific was good preparation for where I am," Hignojoz says. "Professors challenge students to really apply themselves. Even though I didn't end up as a teacher, I believe you can apply that practice to everything. I'm going to utilize the tools that were given to me through Fresno Pacific to continue to grow."

These days, Hignojoz is settling into the job and making plans for the future. At home, he pulls out his instruments—and love of singing George Strait songs—to entertain his dog, Miley, and cat, Romeo (named for the heart-shaped spot on his back). Amelia is finishing an educational program in California and will then join Hignojoz in Texas.

Life doesn't always go according to plan, Hignojoz says. "But just because things didn't go the way you planned doesn't mean that things won't go well for you.

"God had a different path for me, he had a different plan for me, and I couldn't be happier in where he has placed me now." 🏠



# A NEW SEASON

## Becky Field embraced her new purpose

By Amy D. Fienen

**Becky Field (BA '05)** sang her first solo at Kingsburg Covenant Church when she was just 4 years old. She was so small the choir director had her stand on a step so she could be seen over the pulpit. She seemed destined for a career in music and spent her time at Fresno Pacific University making that dream a reality. But over the past decade, Field has allowed the Lord to take her in a different direction and is using the creativity he gifted her to put the focus on others. Instead of standing in the spotlight, she finds herself behind a camera capturing moments that allow others to shine.

Field grew up in Kingsburg, and like many who leave small towns, didn't know if she'd return. But after living in Fresno for 17 years, she is back where she started. She and her husband, Adam, live in her mother's

childhood home, close enough to downtown she can walk to work at her photography studio on Draper Street, or Main Street as the locals call it. Adam splits his time between homeschooling and freelance IT work. The couple has four sons: Oliver, 14; Milo, 11; Xander, 6; and Rory, 4.. Becky has grown Field House Photography into a business that is successful enough to support the family and gives her the flexibility that often eludes working moms. While she struggled with the idea of calling herself a photographer instead of a musician, she has chosen



to embrace this role with her heart wide open.

"I tripped backwards into photography as a career," Field says. "I'm building the plane as I fly it."

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS FOR EVERY SEASON

Field started teaching private piano lessons at 15 and was hired at Reedley School of Music at 16, getting an early start working toward her dream of being a high school choral teacher. After graduating from Immanuel High School in 2001, Field jumped headfirst into her music secondary education studies with a teaching emphasis at FPU. In addition to carrying a full course load, she juggled the rehearsals and performance requirements of her major with various on-campus jobs.



By her junior year, Field realized her natural talent as a musician and teacher didn't extend to conducting—a discovery that left her feeling lost and uncertain about her future. Her professors encouraged her to explore other teaching options, so she returned to Reedley School of Music and teaching private lessons. When she graduated from FPU, many Valley schools were cutting their arts funding, leaving few choral conductor jobs available. Rather than pursue a teaching credential, Field took a marketing job in the Bay Area, where she lasted one week before moving home. She had no idea what to do next, but with the benefit of hindsight, she knows the Lord was working.

"I see his hand in guiding me away from public school choral conducting," Field says. "He said, 'We're going to let you have some hard moments in getting you where I want you to be.'"

Back in Kingsburg, Field became part-time music director at Concordia Lutheran Church while continuing to teach private voice and piano lessons. In the meantime, her undergrad experience working in several FPU offices opened a new door: Field was hired as the executive assistant to the dean of the School of Humanities, Religion and Social Sciences. During seven years in that position, she grew her professional skills, met her husband and became a mom.

Photographing her children reawakened a childhood love of photography, and her hobby became a side hustle. When she left FPU in 2012 to homeschool her growing family, taking photos became a way to supplement her income from music lessons. Friends loved Field's photos of her own children and asked if she could shoot their families. Feeling unqualified to present herself as a professional photographer, Field enrolled

in a three-month intensive photography workshop and studied every photography book she could get her hands on. Setting what she calls her "imposter syndrome" aside, Field started offering family portraits in 2013, and recommendations from satisfied clients allowed her to quickly gain experience. She also taught an intro to digital photography class at FPU and had a display of her work on campus. But still she wrestled with calling herself a photographer.

"I was used to being known as a musician and an admin at FPU," she says. "I initially struggled to be taken seriously as a photographer."

After having her fourth son in 2019, Field took a leap of faith to focus full-time on photography, giving up her 25 private students. She admits that stepping away from music completely felt like a bad break-up and led to an identity crisis. As she wondered if she was squandering her spiritual gifts, her mom reminded her of Ecclesiastes 3:1, which says, "To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven." Field has learned to rest in the promise that God is using her in this season.

## CREATIVE PASSIONS COLLIDE

Field House Photography serves as many as 150 families a year, and recently added school portraiture. In her busy season, August through November, Field works 65-hour weeks. She recently hired a fellow FPU alum as her administrative assistant, freeing Field to focus on

**"Music and  
photography are  
both all about  
creativity and  
artistry."**

– Becky Field

clients and the creative aspects of the business. Field bills herself as a family life photographer, and loves shooting imaginative, theme-styled sessions. Her flare for storytelling and imagination is evident in her work, and she believes her musical background informs her desire to capture beautiful moments.

"Music and photography are both all about creativity and

artistry; it's just a different medium," she says.

Field often first meets families during maternity photo shoots, and then has the honor of following those families as they develop and change over the years. "My favorite aspect of my job is meeting people, specifically watching kids grow," she says.

## LASTING LIFE LESSONS

For many college students, their role never extends beyond that of student. Field's situation is unique in that she experienced FPU as student, staff and adjunct professor. She says wearing those different hats and honing skills like time management, prioritizing, flexibility and discipline perfectly prepared her for the role of small business owner. But what she values most from her time at FPU was how faculty and staff cared for her as a person. She credits them with helping her become who she is today.

"They challenged my beliefs and ability to take in new information. They didn't teach me what to think, they taught me how to think in a loving and safe way," she says. "I learned how to make others feel valued and respected." 🏠



# GREAT OPPORTUNITY

## Brennen Henry developed personally and professionally

*By Doug Hoagland*

On a blazing July day, **Brennen Henry (BA '13)** surveyed a property littered with tanks of flammable liquids that could explode under the unforgiving sun. Henry—a fire prevention officer for the Fresno Fire Department—moved in for a closer look not knowing how unstable the pressurized tanks might be in the 100-degree heat.

His immediate focus: identify all fire hazards now endangering the property owner and his neighbors, and that could prove deadly to firefighters should a blaze erupt. Henry is always mindful of firefighters. “I’m very concerned that they get home safely to their families,” he says. It’s his responsibility, and it’s also personal.

Henry had planned to become a pastor when he started at FPU. How he ended up inspecting the dangerous tanks is a combination of deep family ties to the fire service and the FPU principle of serving others—no matter your major or career. “I can lay my head down at night and fall asleep knowing what I’m doing is something that

makes my community a better place. And that is something that was definitely rooted in me at Fresno Pacific.”

### **PUBLIC SERVICE LEGACY**

“We have a lot of fire in our family,” Henry says. His grandfather was a volunteer firefighter, and his father is a fire chief in rural Fresno County. Two cousins are Fresno firefighters. As a boy, Henry would visit the fire stations where his dad worked. He got the feel of a fire hose dousing a small blaze, and he experienced the thrill of riding in a fire engine. But with age came worry. “Once I was old enough to realize how dangerous my dad’s job is, there was a definite anxiety that went along with everything. I would think: ‘I could be at school and something could happen to my dad, and I wouldn’t know until it was all said and done.’”

After high school, Henry majored in biblical studies and English at FPU. Faculty gave him space to consider his future with faith in God’s







leading. Henry remembers a seminal moment in a course taught by Greg Camp, Ph.D., now associate dean of the School of Humanities, Religion and Social Sciences. Camp was discussing how the words “faith, belief and trust” have different meanings in English but are the same word in Greek. “I realized when we talk about faith and belief in the Bible, we’re really talking about trust and that requires something from us,” Henry says. “Greg was willing to stop his lecture and help me come to terms with that.”

Soon Henry would face a major decision he had not anticipated—a decision that required trust and action. He let go of the dream of becoming a pastor. “By the time I graduated, I had done some work in ministry, and I realized—with some mentoring and coaching—that my skill set is actually in teaching, not in preaching or pastoring.”

In so doing, Henry grasped a truth central to FPU’s faith-based education: no matter their career, students serve God by serving their communities.

## POST-GRADUATION JOURNEY

After graduation, Henry interned at the Fresno Fire Department as he sorted out his future. “I was trying to gain some skills and also figure out where I could find a job so I could get out of my

parents’ house,” he says with a laugh. During the internship, Henry attended some classes in Sacramento required of all fire prevention inspectors. He accompanied his father, then a deputy fire chief and in charge of inspectors. “I realized prevention is really interesting and so important,” Henry says.

The inspectors’ fire code is a detailed set of standards and regulations, which Henry navigates using critical thinking skills honed at FPU. For example, Brian Schultz, Ph.D., professor of biblical and theological studies, would occasionally start class with a thinking exercise, sometimes connected to some current event or other area of life.

“Brian identified it as a skill set needed by people going into the world to be active in their communities. He went out of his way to make sure that all students in his classes had training in critical thinking.”

His ability to pivot from what he studied at FPU to a career in a different field speaks to another principle Henry learned at the university. He says W. Marshall Johnston, Ph.D., professor and program director of history, summarized it by quoting a president of Bryn Mawr College, where Johnston studied: “The point of a liberal arts education is to make your head an interesting place to live for the rest of your life.” Johnston says Henry was a positive

**“ God still has a plan for me, even though it wasn’t the one I originally thought.”**

– Brennen Henry







presence. “His humor and his spirit were always a unifying force for us, as was his wide range of interests.”

For the last eight years, Henry has drawn on his FPU education as he’s advanced to code compliance officer in the Fresno Fire Department. In addition to handling cases, he trains new inspectors, exercising his gift for teaching. “I found this great opportunity to develop as a person and a professional, and I found people at Fresno Fire who were willing to invest in me.”

## ‘TERRIFYING AND EXCITING’

On that hot summer day when Henry found the tanks of flammable liquid, he discovered other fire hazards at the site. Some posed an imminent threat and needed immediate fixing; others could

be addressed later. The property owner was willing to work with Henry, which made his job easier.

“I’m the kind of inspector who wants to come alongside a person and say, ‘OK, how are we going to get this taken care of?’ Part of that approach comes from Fresno Pacific. What I do isn’t just about my career. It’s about how we all fit together in a community.”

Henry sees God’s grace in his journey from a freshman set on pastoring to his current place: a 32-year-old husband and father who keeps the public and firefighters safe. He isn’t certain where he will go professionally in the future.

But, he says, “God still has a plan for me, even though it wasn’t the one I originally thought. It’s both terrifying and exciting to know there is still a mystery and adventure out there.” 🏠

## LIVES TRANSFORMED CHABELLI PEREZ (BA '24)

### The Goodness of Grief *By Christopher L. Scott*

“I came to FPU as a grieving student,” says Chabelli Perez. When she started attending FPU in 2021 her grandmother had just lost her fight with cancer and her uncle had died suddenly too.

But when Chabelli arrived at FPU she encountered more grief. Due to impaired drivers, she lost three of her friends in car accidents. Despite the heartache, people were there for her when she needed help. “There was always someone to check on me. I got a lot of help. People helped me to come out of that situation,” she says.

While Chabelli came to FPU for an education, she found much more. She met people who helped her emerge from her grief, not sink further into it—people like Taylor Starks, assistant director of spiritual formation, and Brian Davis, campus chaplain. “They were always there every step of the way,” says Chabelli.

Faith exploration was another step in the grieving process. “At FPU I was able to explore my own faith not based on parents or tradition,” she says. For Chabelli, that was in her Jesus in the Christian Community class. “That class forced me to discover what Jesus really means to me and what do I need to do to be closer to God,” she says. That led to her becoming a student chaplain, a worship leader in the “Delight” all-women Bible study group and getting involved in a Fresno church.

Despite her grief and heartache, Chabelli is continuing her studies and plans to graduate in 2024 with a Bachelor of Arts in Business



Administration with a management emphasis. Many students faced with the heartaches and pains she has had to endure would have given up school or taken a break, but not Chabelli. She continues on. Her desire is to work in human resources where she can be there for people, helping them just as she has been helped many times at FPU. 🏠



## EDITOR’S NOTE

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



## Offering Something She Never Received

Bao Yang knew about the need for advocates from a young age. As a member of the Fresno Hmong community, she saw many examples of her father—a clan leader—advocating for the needs of people. “I saw a lot of hardships and the advocate work of my parents in the community. I knew that I wanted to work with people, but I just wasn’t sure in what capacity,” she says. That need Yang saw for advocates grew stronger when her brother committed suicide and no grief services were offered to her family.

After graduating from California State University, Fresno she worked for seven years at the Marjaree Mason Center as a victims advocate assigned to the Fresno Police Department. She contacted victims identified by law enforcement and responded to 911 calls with police officers to offer services to victims and children exposed to violence. But she knew she could do more.

### **Beginning at FPU**

One of Yang’s brothers had been helped with his English by **Phyllis Martens (MA ’85)**. Phyllis and her husband, **Elmer** (president emeritus of Mennonite Brethren Biblical

Seminary) regularly went to Yang family functions. “They were our first Christian family friends and listened to our stories without judgment,” Yang says. “They were very accepting of us.” Elmer and Phyllis both taught at FPU and that connection encouraged Yang to apply to the Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) program through Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, a school of FPU. At that time Yang was not a Christian so she was cautious about what her experience as a student might be.

While Yang thought she was coming to FPU to change other people’s lives, her life was changed the first day in chapel. Growing up Hmong she was involved in animism, but during orientation she was sitting in chapel and she met Jesus. She

sensed God telling her, “I’m here and have made myself known to you.” She is now a Christian and lives out her faith in her daily ministry. “FPU is a sacred place for me,” she says. “FPU has always held a special place in my heart because FPU is a place where I met Jesus. And is also where I learned that he was always there.”

### **Helping others**

Yang graduated from FPU in 2018 with her MFT degree. Currently she serves as a school-based clinician with FPU’s On-Site Counseling Center. She conducts counseling at two elementary schools in Fresno County and meets with FPU students too. FPU has helped her understand how religion helps people in the healing process. She finds herself asking, “How

is Jesus present in this room? How is he present with me in this healing process with these individuals?”

While there were limited services offered to Yang and her family while she was a child, she’s now part of services offered to all people of Fresno that need help with social and emotional trauma. “All my professors at FPU imparted a piece of wisdom I utilize personally and professionally. They taught me to walk with individuals in a time of healing by shedding light and speaking truth into a person’s life to help individuals find their voice,” she says.

While no one outside Yang’s immediate family was there to help her find her voice as a young woman, she now is an outside voice helping others find theirs. 🏠



“FPU is a sacred  
place for me.”  
– Bao Yang



# IN TOUCH WITH ALUMNI



## GENERAL » ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Hannah Little (MA '22, BA '17)** was the Madera County Superintendent of Schools Distinguished Teacher of the Year for the 2021-2022 school year.

**Adriana Soto (MA '22)** is the senior vice president of workforce training for Bitwise Industries in Fresno.



**Bianca Torres (MA '22, BA '18)** works for Follett Higher Education as a store manager at Merced College Bookstore. She is also enrolled in Liberty University's Ph.D. in Organization and Management program. She is a proud Samaritan Scholar alumnus and grateful for the mentors and wealth of knowledge gained through both her degrees at FPU.

**Kristen Patterson (BA '21)** is chief operations officer at GC Roofing in Fresno.

**Alysha Kelly (MA '20)** is a school counselor for Learn4Life.

**Michael Lipps (BA '20)** is a mental health professional for Dinuba Children's Services.

**Cynthia Velazquez (BA '20)** designed a mural at Calwa Park in Fresno, depicting a young Latino boy juggling

a soccer ball while surrounded by bluebirds. Cynthia designed the artwork and a team of students from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill helped bring the project together.

**Taylor Moore (MBA '19, BA '16)** is a staff accountant at Bitwise Industries in Fresno.

In 2022, **Grace Spencer (MA '19 BA '13)** and **Beth Paz (BA '05)** launched The PreaCHER Academy—an online international preaching academy for women—in partnership with Danielle Strickland and The Women's Speaker Collective. The women learn to expand their skills, networks and opportunities from master speakers and internationally renowned pastors.

**Meg Clark (BA '17)** was listed among Central Valley arts advocate Donald Munro's Top 20 Cultural Events of 2022 for her portrayal of Belle in *Beauty and the Beast* at Roger Rocka's Dinner Theater in Fresno. "Clark has consistently delivered top-notch performances all around the central San Joaquin Valley, and in each one she finds something fresh and distinct. We're lucky to have her," he wrote in *The Munro Review*.

**Cory Chapman (BA '16)** was interviewed November 1 in *The Porterville Recorder* on his career as a California Highway Patrol officer.

**Gabriel Hughes (BA '15)** and **Kelly Eichmann (CTE)** were named Fresno County Educators of the Year in November 2022. Kelly is a career technical education teacher at Clovis East High School, and Gabriel is a student relations liaison at Weldon Elementary/Clark Intermediate. Honors were presented November 17, 2022, in a ceremony co-sponsored by the Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools and the Educational Employees Credit Union. Kelly was described as a teacher "who sets the bar high for her students and then helps them leap over it" and Gabriel as someone "who is passionate about helping students."

**Patricia Vazquez Topete (BA '15)** appeared on *Business Leaders with Lance Cardoza* on KMPH (FOX 26) October 18, 2022. Once a farm worker, she is now a community relations manager at Citibank.

**Angela (Mannino, BA '14) Delahoussaye's** photography business, Angela Sue Photography, LLC, was a 2023 winner of The Knot Best of Weddings, an accolade for wedding professionals as reviewed by couples, their families and wedding guests on The Knot, a leading wedding vendor marketplace and planning authority. Angela and her husband, Michael, live in Morgan Hill, CA.



**Nikki Donnelly (MA '14, TC '13, BA '08)** and colleague Richard Price presented a research project at the Association for Behavior Analysis International's (ABAI) 11th International Conference in Dublin, Ireland. Their project was a qualitative interview study with caregivers of students with high support needs preparing to transition out of education.

**Shannon Taylor (MA '14)** was named head of the men's basketball program at the University of the Virgin Islands in September 2022.

**Adam Blitz, CPA (MA '13)** chairs CalCPA Education Foundation. Adam is founder of Streamline CPA Accountancy Corp in Fresno.

**Gabriella (Ruiz, BA '10) Garcia, Psy.D.**, was appointed executive director of Storyteller Children's Center in Santa Barbara in August 2022.

**Ashley Jett (BA '09)** was named to the executive board of the Victoria (TX) Professional Express Network as vice president of membership in December 2022. She is pursuing her Master of Arts in Nonprofit Management from the University of Houston Downtown. Ashley plans to pursue a career in nonprofit management to make a positive difference in her community and the world.



The **Rev. Noah Lawson (TC '08, BA '06)** was appointed rector (pastor/priest) at Emmanuel Anglican Church in Fresno on August 1, 2021.

**Ken Melban (MA '07, BA '03)** was named vice president of industry affairs and operations at the California Avocado Commission in October 2022.

**Sharon Starcher (MA '07, BA '99), D.B.A.**, and Michelle Bradford, Psy.D., presented "Building a New Revenue Stream: Collaboration With Community Partners" at the ACBSP Region 7 Fall Conference in Nampa, ID, in October 2022. The presentation focused on community at FPU going beyond the campus as the School of Business now offers workplace education and training through its Business Insights ([fpu.edu/businessinsights](https://fpu.edu/businessinsights)) series. These short videos, virtual discussions, workshops, seminars and trainings are a partnership between the School of Business



» **GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS** (CONTINUED)

and the Alumni Development Office. Sharon and Michelle, both members of the FPU business faculty, also provided training for project managers at Kern Health Systems, part of Kern Family Health Care. The training focused on change management, the people side of change, accountability and the importance of communication.

**Yammilette Rodriguez (MA '06)** is a Gallup Certified StrengthsFinder Coach and National Trainer at Youth Leadership Institute. In October 2022 she trained Capitol Fellows on their naturally gifted talents and how they can use them to serve California.

**Efrain Tovar (MA '06, BA '95)** is part of MetaMetrics' inaugural cohort of Lexile & Quantile Educator Ambassadors. Ambassadors represent the K-12 spectrum and provide insights to help shape the future of the tools and resources educators need. Efrain was selected from nearly 700 educators from all 50 states. He is a seventh/eighth grade newcomers teacher at Selma Unified School District.

**Suzana Dobrić Veiss (MA '02, BA '99), Ph.D.**, assistant professor and program director for M.A. in Strategic and Organizational Leadership, co-authored the chapter "Leadership, Maturity, and Unity: An Analysis of Ephesians 4:1-16" in the book *Biblical Organizational Spirituality* (part of the Christian Faith Perspectives in Leadership and Business series), by Elizabeth K. Hunt, Ph.D. The book, published in July 2022, is edited by Joshua D. Henson, Ph.D., and published by Palgrave Macmillan. Suzana also wrote the chapter "Sensemaking in Alumni Entrepreneurs: Model for Entrepreneurship Friendly Climate" in the book *The Importance of Developing an Entrepreneurial Mindset (Even if you Never Wish to Become an Entrepreneur)*. Contributing authors were from Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Ireland, Slovenia and the USA. The book was edited by Anamarija Delic, Suncica Oberman Peterka and Julia Peric, and published in Croatia in 2022.

**Kori James (Johns, TC '00, BA '00)** is a history teacher and advisor for *The Feather Online* at Fresno Christian High School. She is also an adjunct instructor in digital photography at FPU.

**Christopher Brownell (MA '99), Ph.D.**, was a visiting scholar with the Finnish Institute for Educational Research's Innovative Learning Environments group September-October 2022, working with the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) education team. He is now the head of instruction for the National Museum of Mathematics (MoMath) in New York City. Chris taught full-time at FPU from 2000-2022.

**Felipe Hinojosa (BA '99), Ph.D.**, was promoted to full professor at Texas A&M University.

**Sean Peifer (BA '97)** is the pastor at First Baptist Church in Taft, CA.

**Margaret Mims (BA '95)**, who retired as Fresno County Sheriff in January 2023, received the Lifetime of Service Achievement Award at the State of the County luncheon. She started her law enforcement career as a Kerman police officer in January 1980, joining the Fresno County Sheriff's Department in 1983. She became the first female sergeant to supervise field patrol units as well as the first female lieutenant, captain and assistant sheriff before being elected sheriff in 2006.

**Charles "Monty" Montgomery (BA '91)** is the controller/director of human resources at Allwire, Inc. He has been there for 12 years and currently holds several different HR certifications: PHR, PHRca and SHRM-CP. He also a former board member of the Central California Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the statewide CalSHRM.

**Greg Sommers (BA '89), Ph.D.**, served as president of the Accounting Program Leadership Group section of the American Accounting Association this past year and led the organization's merger with the Federation of Schools of Accountancy. The new combined Leadership in Accounting Education section provides a voice and resources to support the critical activities of accounting education leaders. This summer was spent revising his *Valuation Using Financial Statements* textbook while trying to stay cool and celebrating his 30th anniversary with **Susan (Phariss, FS '94)** in Dallas, TX.

**Donald Thiesen (BA '86)** retired in 2020 after nearly 20 years as an accountant for the City of Madera. The same year his wife, Brenda Thiesen, retired from Fresno Unified School District as a buyer II. They were preparing to move to Iowa to be near her family when she suddenly died April 20, 2022, from complications from surgery.



**Stephen Penner (SEM '79, BA '71)** published *February Run*, a book of poetry touching on universal themes of loss and love, injustice and wonder, life and death. It is available on Amazon.

**Jim Hopkins (BA '78)** pastor of Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church in Oakland appeared on *Mosaic* on KPIX TV (CBS San Francisco) August 14, 2022, in a segment on Pentecost.

**Rick Miles (BA '72)** retired from his position at Christ Church on Capitol Hill Episcopal Church and resides in Kenai, AK.

**Richard (BA '69) and Carol (Wallace, BA '70) Cornelsen** have been married for 53 years, and their two children have each been married 22 years. They are retired and live in Salinas, CA.

» **WEDDINGS**



**Freddie Lopez (BS '19)** married **Brittany E. Michelle Acosta (TC '21, BA '19)** on November 13, 2022, in Springville, CA.



**Noemi Murillo (BA '16)** married Jorge Saldana on September 30, 2022, in Temecula, CA. They reside in Bellflower, CA, and Noemi works as a medical hospice social worker.

» **BIRTHS**



Brayden Malachi De Leon was born to **Angel (BA '17) and Lora (Whitaker, BA '16) De Leon** on September 27, 2022. He weighed 7 lbs. and 8 oz. and measured 19 3/4 inches.



Nick and **Stephanie (Bogdanov, TC '17, BA '15) Sainato** welcomed Jack Alexander Rae Sainato on September 6, 2022. He joins big brother James. Jack weighed 7 lb. 10 oz. and measured 19 inches. The family resides in Orange County, CA.



Ernest Michael and **Nicole (Zalewski, BA '15) Hawn** welcomed Ezekiel Michael on October 10, 2022.



**Samantha (Domingo, BA '14) and Luke (BA '12) Arce** welcomed Theodore Arce on May 12, 2022.



» **DEATHS**

**Collette Marie Banks-Turner (BA '14)** died July 4, 2022. Born in Merced, Collette worked for the Merced County Office of Education, Mariposa County Office of Education, Merced College and UC Merced in educational roles. She was active in Yosemite Church, Merced, and The Well, Modesto. Survivors include husband Jonathan Turner, three children, seven grandchildren and seven siblings.

**Jesse Penner (MA '08)**, 40, died October 26, 2022, after a long struggle against brain cancer. While working in real estate alongside his father, the late **Harold Penner (MA '76)**, he graduated from seminary to further develop his pastoral heart. He served at Youth for Christ for 24 years—first as a student leader and finishing as a board member. He and his wife, Allie, worked with high school students at The Well Community Church, and cared for pre-foster children through Safe Families for Children. His greatest joy was leading and loving his family with a God-centered focus. Survivors include Allie and their two children, Jed and Riley.

Former Sunbird women's basketball player and coach **Diane Weise (Weststeyn, MA '96, BA '90)**, 54, died on November 30, 2022, after a long battle with brain cancer. Her husband, Paul, and her family were by her side. She taught and coached women's basketball at FPU from 1995-2005, becoming the all-time winningest coach in university history. She was inducted into the FPU Athletic Hall of Fame in 2014.

**Kathleen Ann Perry (BA '84)** died July 2, 2022. Born in Fresno, she spent most of her life in Kingsburg. Kathleen taught kindergarten at Kings River Elementary School and later preschool in New London, first in student homes, then in a recreational vehicle outfitted by First 5. She was also active in Kingsburg Evangelical Covenant Church. Survivors include husband John Perry Jr., four children and eight grandchildren.

**Allen Warkentin (PBI '55)**, 90, died August 10, 2022. A native of Dalhart, TX, he grew up in Reedley and graduated from Immanuel High School. A U.S. Navy veteran, he worked as produce manager at Tops Market for over 25 years and retired from Nikkel Iron Works in 1998. He and wife **Belva (PBI '53)** met at PBI, married in 1953 and had three children who are all FPU alumni: **Craig Warkentin (BA '79)** (deceased), **Donna Marie Warkentin Stover (BA '83)** and **Edie Warkentin (BA '83)**. The couple was active at Shafter Mennonite Brethren Church, attending for over 60 years. Survivors include his wife, two daughters and three grandchildren.

**Arlene Klassen (PBI '50)**, 93, died July 17, 2022. A native of Winton, CA, she grew up in Shafter and Dinuba and graduated from Immanuel Academy in Reedley. She and **Abe Klassen (PBI '45)** married on October 20, 1949, and had three children, all of whom survive, along with grandchildren, great grandchildren and others. She spent many years as a substitute teacher and was active in Dinuba Mennonite Brethren Church. She and Abe also had a 20-acre farm before moving to Fresno and attending Butler Church.

**Dale Matson, Ph.D.**, 78, died October 9, 2022, while following his passion of hiking in the Sierras. Growing up in Royal Oak, MI, he worked as a heavy equipment operator while he and wife Sandra Luecht raised sons Benjamin and Zachery in Wisconsin. Returning to school in the mid-80s, he earned a B.A. at the University of Wisconsin Green Bay, an M.A. from UW Whitewater and a Ph.D. from Marquette University before becoming a school psychologist and professor, joining the FPU faculty in 1993 and becoming a program director. Dale was ordained in the Episcopal/Anglican church in 2008 and became a priest in 2010. Survivors include wife Sharon and his two sons, two stepsons and seven grandsons.



**Edith Jost Thiessen (MA '12, BA '00)**, 78, died October 4, 2022. Born December 7, 1943, in Reedley, she grew up on a farm and graduated from Immanuel High School. While attending Pacific College from 1962-63, she met Ronald Thiessen. The two married March 14, 1964, and moved to San Jose. Shortly after they returned to Reedley in 1987, she began work as credential analyst in the department (later school) of education, retiring in July 2022. Edith was respected by her colleagues and in the wider field, where she led the statewide organization. Survivors include husband Ron, sons **Eric (MA '96, BA '89)** and **Jeremy (BA '93)** and their wives, Marcie and Eden, seven grandchildren, including **Megan Spencer (BA '21)**, and three great grandchildren.



**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](https://fpu.edu/alumniupdate)



**NEW MEMBERS OF THE FLOCK**

Recently had a baby? Let us know—we'd love to send you one of our cute little Future Sunbird baby t-shirts, like Rowyn Henry is wearing, pictured here with dad **Brennen (BA '13)**.



**STAY IN TOUCH**

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

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# The sixth and seventh Alumni and Friends Tours! Mediterranean Bound

## Spain, the French Riviera and Italy June 2024

- ▶ Start in Barcelona
- ▶ North to Carcassonne and Avignon
- ▶ On to the French Riviera, Cinque Terre and the Italian Riviera
- ▶ Conclude in Milan and Lake Como
- ▶ Optional extension to Rome



## Greece September 2024

- ▶ The Ancient Acropolis and Parthenon
- ▶ Ancient Delphi, home of the oracle, and early monasteries
- ▶ Corfu
- ▶ Olympia and the ancient temple of Zeus
- ▶ Ancient Epidaurus
- ▶ Follow Paul's travels in Athens and Corinth
- ▶ Optional extension to Santorini

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



## From the Archives...

# 1953

By Kevin Enns-Rempel,  
Director, Hiebert Library



## BARTSCH HALL HAD A HISTORY BEFORE JOINING THE FRESNO PACIFIC FAMILY

If Bartsch Hall looks more like a residence than a university office building, there is, in fact, a good reason. It was built about 1953 as the home of Joseph and Maxine Jones, who had lived in the Giffen Mansion (today's Seminary House) since 1939. They sold the mansion to Rogers and Patricia Clark in 1953, but kept land for a new ranch-style home. In March 1955 Jones sold the land south and east of the mansion to Pacific Bible Institute, and in November 1955 the Clarks sold the land with the mansion to PBI as well. The only section not sold to PBI was the one on which the new Jones house was located, at 1595 South Chestnut Avenue.

The Joneses sold their home to Leonore ("Lee") Erickson around 1973. She married Maurey T. Haas in 1976. Lee and Maurey hosted as many as 800 guests in their backyard for frequent fundraising events.

Lee Haas was a nurse for 25 years, and with first husband Bill Erickson operated a ranch and dairy near Raisin City. According to her obituary she "was equally at home in a pair of Levi's, out brushing the horses, or in an elegant full length ball gown presiding as President of the Emblem Club." She was a founder of La Caballista de Fresno, a mounted women's parade drill team that participated in parades across California. Her second husband, Maurey Haas, was a vice president for Pacific Bell.

Despite its proximity to the college, little of the house was visible from campus. It was bounded on the north, east and south sides by a low brick wall, some of which remains today. Shrubbery along those walls provided additional privacy.

Fresno Pacific purchased the house in 1986 for education program offices. Renovations included reorienting it so the main entrance faced east rather than west onto Chestnut Avenue. Initially named "West Hall," in October 1990 it was christened "Bartsch Hall" to honor Silas Bartsch. 🏠





# NCAA TOP RUNNER

*Gebrehiwot finds a winning footing on the track and in life*

By Katie Fries

As a child, Yorkabel Gebrehiwot didn't imagine higher education. Become a top runner at an NCAA Division II school—unlikely. “I remember playing outside, going to school, normal childhood things...but also the struggle of being in a Third World country,” she says of her early years in Eritrea and later, after her family relocated due to civil unrest, Kenya.

She was 10 when her family settled in Fresno. Soon after, a middle school PE teacher invited her to join the cross country team.

“I started and quit,” she admits, noting she was still finding her footing in her new country. “But I joined again in high school. A big part of it was thinking that if I was back there, I wouldn't have had the chances I do now.”

By her senior year, she led Hoover High's women's cross country team. That's when she met **Ray Winter (BA '98)**, FPU's head cross country and track coach.

Though Gebrehiwot didn't run the times needed to be recruited, Winter saw something. “She was interested in running, and I saw enough of her to know she was very undeveloped in terms of her training and her experience,” he says.

What's more, Gebrehiwot hoped to attend FPU for its Christ-centered curriculum. When she began working out with the cross country team, Winter says, her talent emerged.

“I knew I had to do whatever it takes,” she recalls. “I worked hard over the summer and realized I can do this. I belong here. I can go farther; I can get faster.”

As a freshman, Gebrehiwot was among the top Sunbird runners and scored PacWest Freshman of the Year.

Then came the obstacles. As the pandemic sidelined in-person practices and competition, Gebrehiwot struggled with pain, starting in the

knees and moving into her hips and shins.

“That was a dark, hard time,” she adds. “I asked myself questions like, ‘Why am I putting myself through the pain if we're not even going to race?’”

Her injuries persisted through rehab and physical therapy. When competition resumed for the 2021 track season, Gebrehiwot says, “I was not at my fittest, physically or mentally.”

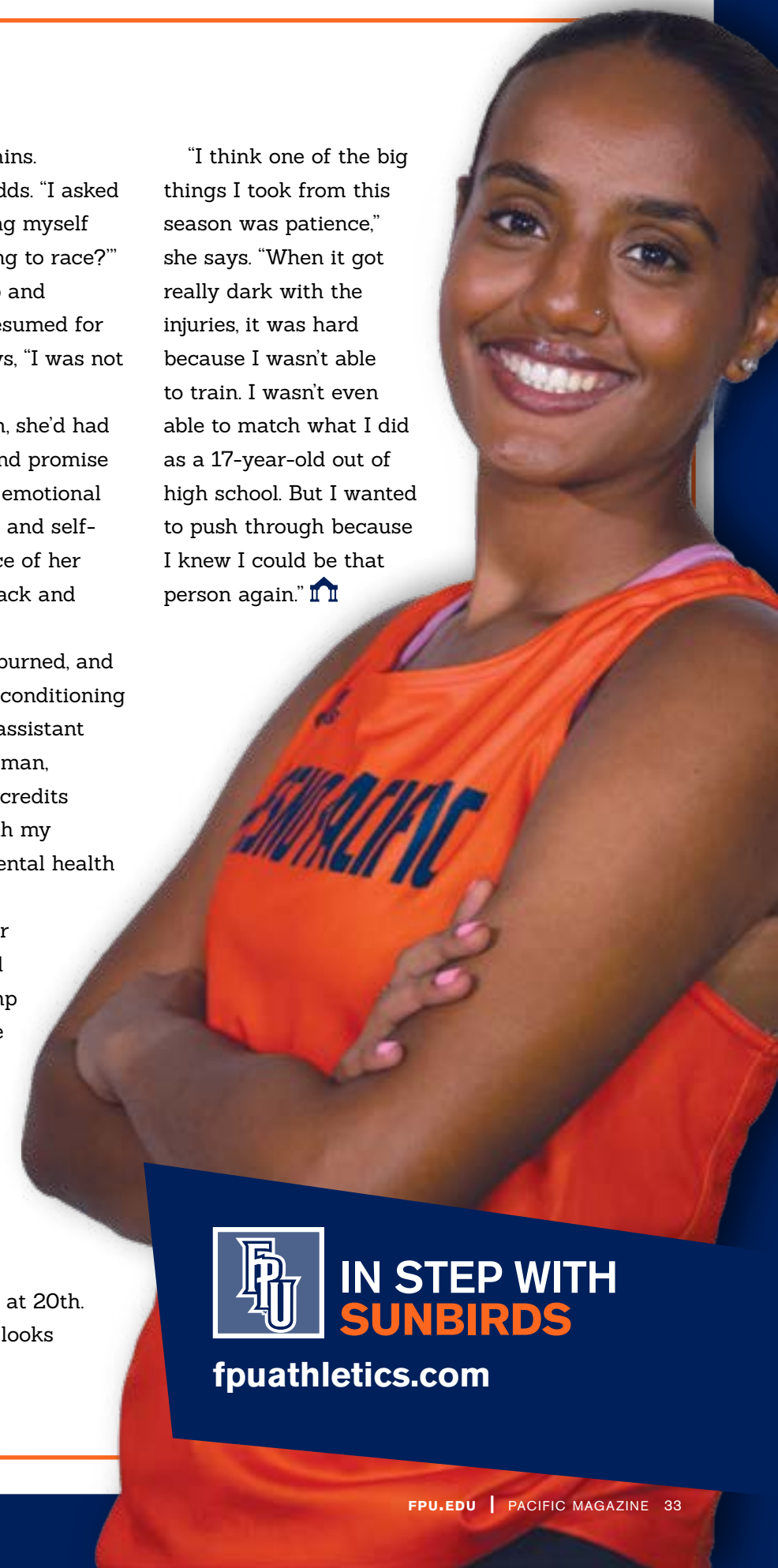
By the end of the 2022 track season, she'd had enough. “She went from great hopes and promise to really wrestling with the social and emotional challenges of being sidelined by injury and self-doubt,” says Winter. “The last track race of her season, she actually stepped off the track and didn't finish.”

But the spark Winter had seen still burned, and with the commitment of strength and conditioning coach Whitney Levya-Camberos and assistant director of sports medicine James Guzman, Gebrehiwot began her comeback. She credits Guzman, especially. “He helped me with my physical rehab, but also told me my mental health mattered and not to ignore it.”

“They really turned the tide,” Winter says, “and it culminated in healing and fitness. She showed up at training camp amazingly fit and so excited to be able to run.”

A surprise win at the team's first meet set the tone for the season. She placed ninth at the PacWest Cross Country Championships and became the highest finisher in FPU history at the NCAA Division II West Region Cross Country Championships, at 20th. Now healthy and faster than ever, she looks forward to the 2023 track season.

“I think one of the big things I took from this season was patience,” she says. “When it got really dark with the injuries, it was hard because I wasn't able to train. I wasn't even able to match what I did as a 17-year-old out of high school. But I wanted to push through because I knew I could be that person again.” 🏠



IN STEP WITH  
**SUNBIRDS**

fpuathletics.com





# NEW CASA PACIFICA DEDICATED TO GOD'S WORK



When Mandie Wall, director for residence life and housing, put the finishing touches on interior updates to Casa Pacifica, Fresno Pacific University's Shaver Lake cabin, in June 2020, the last thing she expected was a massive wildfire to destroy it that same summer. Having spent weeks refurbishing and redecorating and years taking thousands of students to the cabin, she was crestfallen.

"I grieved the memories," she said, "the efforts that we had poured into the atmosphere, and my heart was broken that we wouldn't have a space to create more memories," she said.

Wall was not alone in her feelings and on February 11, 2023, a new Casa Pacifica was

dedicated. "The original Casa was the product of many people," said Dalton Reimer, Ph.D., emeritus communication faculty, during the dedication. Reimer was instrumental in the acquisition and construction of the original cabin more than 35 years ago. "This place here is a testimony that it takes more than a fire for a vision to die."

The new Casa Pacifica is a furnished three-story, 3,768-square-foot house in Millerton that accommodates 25 people in four bedrooms, four bathrooms, dining and meeting spaces, swimming pool and spa. Lake access is nearby at South Finegold Picnic Area. Like its predecessor, Casa is available for student groups, departments, employees and others.

The \$775,000 purchase was funded by the insurance payout and land sale of the previous cabin with enough remaining for repairs, improvements, furnishings and to seed an endowment. The one-acre fenced property boasts sweeping views of Millerton Lake and access to numerous trails.

During the dedication, students, alumni, faculty and administrators shared memories of the original Casa Pacifica and excitement for the new one. All emphasized the importance of retreat.

"Students of great faith, of no faith and those questioning their faith will meet God here," said President André Stephens. 🏠



From left, starting on previous page: Dalton, emeritus faculty, and Beverly Reimer receive a plaque from Danya Gonzalez, president, student government association.

Gary Nachtigall, emeritus faculty; Beth Stephens, first lady; Carne Carey; Rob Carey, director of independent studies; and Ted Nickel, emeritus faculty. The Careys were married at the old Casa Pacifica.

Beth and André Stephens with the Reimers.



## CASA RISES

Be part of Casa Pacifica's future [fpu.edu/casaendowment](https://fpu.edu/casaendowment)







## Donors Hit Home Run with Large Gift

The crack of the bat, the aroma of hotdogs, the cheers from fans—the magic of baseball has inspired student-athletes like Brady Crow since little league. Crow can't wait to hear those sounds in a new stadium.

A generous \$3 million gift from the Daniel R. Martin Family Foundation will allow construction to begin at FPU Diamond on a new concession stand and restroom, stadium seating, press box and locker room. "The gift is a game-changer for the whole university," says Matt Mazzoni, assistant athletics director for external relations, "it will not only transform the lives of our current student-athletes, but every single future Sunbird that steps on campus."

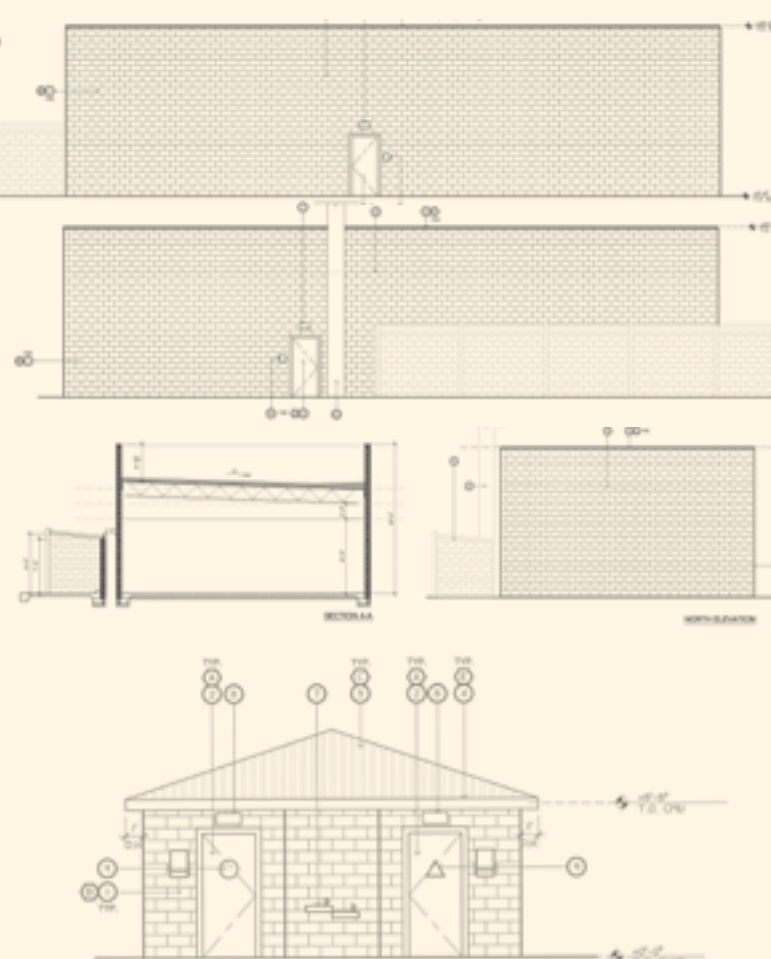
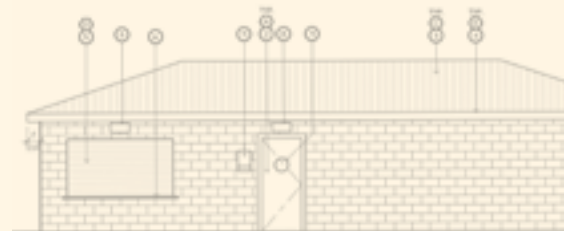
The three-phase upgrade, led by a gift from Valley Iron, Inc., will be unveiled at the start of the 2024 baseball season.

More than buildings, Sunbird Athletics is about raising up leaders.

"At FPU we strive to provide a holistic academic and athletic experience for our student-athletes by modeling the core values of being Christ-centered, student-serving and community-focused," Mazzoni says.

**“The gift is a game-changer for the whole university.”**

– Matt Mazzoni



Crow, a biblical and theological studies major from Fresno, is the kind of leader athletics seeks to foster. "Being held to a high standard has pushed me to the point I am able to guide others," says Crow. "I know the leadership skills I have learned from being a student-athlete will be with me for the rest of my life."

The new facility will also enhance outreach. "A state-of-the-art facility allows us to welcome our community to campus with pride," Mazzoni says.

For Crow, the upgrades boost morale. "It is a huge blessing when donors invest in student-athletes. It is a sign that people believe in us," he says.

**“It is a huge blessing when donors invest in student-athletes.”** – Brady Crow

# 2022 GRANT HIGHLIGHTS

Government and private foundation grants comprise a critical budgetary support for FPU's mission and programs.

# 11

New Applications Submitted

# 14

Grant Awards Received

# 400+

Direct-To-Student Awards

# \$1,940-\$999,824

Range of Award Amounts

FPU is deeply grateful to 2022 funding partners, including:

- ◆ California Governor's Office of Emergency Services
- ◆ California Humanities
- ◆ California Student Aid Commission
- ◆ Canadian Mennonite University
- ◆ Central Valley Community Foundation
- ◆ Central Valley Higher Education Consortium
- ◆ Community Schools
- ◆ In Trust Center for Theological Schools
- ◆ Kern Family Foundation
- ◆ Lilly Endowment Inc.
- ◆ SoCalCan
- ◆ Teichert Foundation



## INVESTING IN STUDENT LEADERS IS A WIN-WIN!

Help build the new athletics complex by sponsoring a seat or a locker. For \$1,000, have your name displayed on the stadium chair of your choice, or be featured in the clubhouse. Sunbirds 4 Life can connect to the current program, and take pride in what they helped build.

**More at [fpuathletics.com/winningbydesign](https://fpuathletics.com/winningbydesign)**



Fresno Pacific University Foundation

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- ◆ **Do you own an IRA?**
- ◆ **Would you like to give more but need the retirement income?**
- ◆ **Have you considered a charitable gift annuity in the past but weren't ready?**

If you answered "yes," now is an excellent time to consider a Charitable Gift Annuity with Fresno Pacific University—and the Secure 2.0 Act provides a once-in-a-lifetime way to do so with a tax-free distribution from your IRA.

## BENEFITS OF A CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY



**Lifetime income and financial security**



**Attractive payment rates of 5-7% or even greater**



**Make a significant charitable impact while reducing your taxes**



**Fulfill your philanthropic objectives while advancing Christ's work at FPU**



**Maximum allowable distribution amount of \$50,000 in 2023**

The Fresno Pacific University Foundation can help you use tax breaks and maximize retirement income while leaving a blessing to Christian higher education.



**For more information** on setting up your own gift annuity, charitable remainder trust or other planned giving strategy through Fresno Pacific University, contact Director of FPU Foundation Development and Legacy Gifts Steven Redekop or Senior Advisor and Gift Planner Mark Deffenbacher.

**steven.redekop@fresno.edu | 559-453-3451**  
**mark.deffenbacher@fresno.edu | 559-453-2239**

# CONGRATULATIONS Outstanding Graduates

## FALL 2022

### *School of Business*

Gerardo Lemus | MBA

Matthew Martinez | B.A. in Business  
Administration: Emergency  
Management Emphasis

### *School of Education*

Jeremiah Ruesch | M.A. in  
Mathematics Education

Staci Copley | M.A. in Administrative Services

### *School of Humanities, Religion and Social Sciences*

Amanda Hansston | B.A. in Studio Art  
and Biblical and Theological Studies

Luke Colvard | B.A. in Pre-Law

### *School of Natural Sciences*

Cecilia Ceja-Lopez | B.S. in Biology –  
Human Health

Marie Celine Roque | M.S. in Nursing

### *Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary*

Crystal Shipley-Gutierrez | Master of Divinity

## SPRING 2023

### *School of Business*

Rachel Berry | M.A. in Strategic  
and Organizational Leadership

Leann West | B.A. in Business Administration:  
Organizational Leadership Emphasis

### *School of Education*

Gabriel Vasquez-Salinas | B.A. in Liberal Arts –  
Science Concentration

Stephanie Villarreal | B.A. in Liberal Arts –  
Science Concentration

### *School of Humanities, Religion and Social Sciences*

Elizabeth Davis | B.A. in English:  
Secondary Teaching and Theater

Danya Gonzalez | B.A. in History

### *School of Natural Sciences*

Rosemary Chapman | B.S. in Kinesiology: Pre-  
Physical Therapy/Occupational Therapy

Jeffrey McPhetridge | B.A. in Mathematics

### *Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary*

Lisa Basile | M.A. in Marriage  
and Family Therapy

Mitchell Ross | Master of Divinity and M.A. in  
Marriage and Family Therapy





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### Parents of Alumni:

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.

# Join us for **GATHER** **'23**

**Thursday-Saturday**  
**October 5-7, 2023**

**Fresno Pacific University Main Campus**

Connecting meaningfully with our alumni  
and community.

### Enjoy:

- ▶ **Alumni Hub and reunions**
- ▶ **Food and family fun**
- ▶ **Fall Choral Concert**
- ▶ **ArtHop**
- ▶ **Athletic team reunions  
and home volleyball game**

**We look forward to seeing you!**

**For updates, visit:**

**[fpu.edu/gather](https://fpu.edu/gather)**

