

## Unique Opportunities

Vicar Brian Westerbur

In the spring of my sixth-grade year I was persuaded to join the Jasper little league baseball team. It took a great deal of persuasion. I have never been overly coordinated, and sports intimidated me, but I joined. Jasper was a small town and with me they finally had a team with nine players. I happily accepted my spot as ninth out of nine in the batting order. My goal each game was to survive and not make too much of a fool of myself!

One week, Mr. Plahn, our coach, said he was changing up the batting order for the next game versus Baltic. I discovered he had completely changed it: I was now batting first in the lineup. This was curious, as I don't believe I had even gotten on base at this point. The day of the game came, and I went up to bat first. I was all nerves; the last thing I wanted in sports was peoples' attention on me. To my astonishment, the pitcher threw four balls and I walked on base. Just standing there was enough to get me on base! Later that inning, due to the good play of others, I found myself rounding third base and scoring my first run. It was my only run all season.

To this day I am grateful for the curveball Mr. Plahn threw me that day. I was mortified to go first, and I didn't play any better than usual, but from that unique game I felt a new closeness to my team and respect for our coach.

These past two months have been a curveball in our lives we will never forget. At the very least, we have all had to make sacrifices and change daily routines. Some of us have experienced sickness, or even loss of loved ones. Allie and I are finishing an internship at Ruthfred in a way we would never have guessed, and we have grieved the loss of personal farewells to the loved ones we've met at Ruthfred.

So how do we move forward as a church? When I batted first, I realize looking back that nothing changed about my ability in that game. I was still the same uncoordinated kid, but I had a unique opportunity. We all have a unique opportunity for ministry right now as our batting order of priorities is changing. People are looking for answers and many tire of hearing the same answers the world gives. Friends, colleagues, family, and neighbors are seeking truth, and we have a unique opportunity in this current climate to show them the way of peace, the way of salvation, through Jesus Christ, the son of God.

Our abilities haven't changed; we are still weak vessels. The church is still flawed, but we also embrace the miracle that God chooses to work in and through His Church to bring the Gospel to the world. He has orchestrated peculiar opportunities—much like a topsy-turvy batting order—to proclaim the same message in a new context.

In this hectic environment of unknowns, Jesus sends us out to minister. Early in His ministry many abandoned Jesus when the way forward seemed difficult. Jesus asked His disciples, "Do you want to go away as well?" (John 6:67) Peter answered:

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:68)

Praise the Lord that in the midst of this pandemic we have been given the hope of eternal life in God's Word, which overcomes fear and even death.

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## Ruthfred Lutheran Church

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The submission deadline for the next Herald is **Saturday, May 23, 2020.**

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God is placing us even now in situations that make us uncomfortable; they may be unfamiliar, but our Lord is familiar. He has revealed himself to us through His Word, Holy Scripture. Like a young boy watching baseballs whiz by him at great speeds, the world changes and we struggle making sense of all of it. Yet we are where God has called us. Ruthfred has been established for such a time and place as this. Already the church is embracing new ministerial opportunities. This has been an incredible "going away present" to me from Ruthfred as I finish my internship: witnessing the church adapt and seek to meet the needs of its members and community. I have learned a great deal and will treasure this wisdom.

Ruthfred, thank you for loving Allie and me as we are preparing for ordained ministry. Thank you for reaching out in love to our community. Thank you for seeking why God has placed you where you are. Thank you for your example of confidence in God's Word and humility in service. I have grown this year thanks to your faithful ministry to me. I pray continued blessings on you as the Lord continues to call you to His service.

In Christ,  
Vicar Brian Westerbur

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## **Council Highlights**

April 13, 2020

- Council approved a \$500 disbursement to Josh and Ruthie Wagner from the Special Needs Benevolence Fund to help defray travel expenses associated with medical treatment.
- Assuming COVID-19 restrictions are lifted in time, ordination and installation for Bryce McMinn is planned for June 29th at Ruthfred.
- Council approved transferring \$7,000 from the Current Fund to the Benevolence Fund.
- Council approved adding Dave Compel as a part-time employee. Dave has been working with Andrew Vogel to make Ruthfred worship services available online.

Respectfully submitted,  
Leslie D. Gill, Council Secretary

**Member Profile**

By Mettelise Ziegler

**Pastor Bryce and Erin McMinn**

At some point in late May or early June, our new associate pastor, Bryce McMinn, wife Erin, and their five children will be unpacking their lives at the Ruthfred parsonage on Patterson Road.



At this time, Bryce is serving as vicar for two congregations in Roseau, Minnesota – Rose Free and Spruce Free Lutheran churches. The town is well known for manufacturing Polaris snowmobiles and for serious ice hockey! It is so far north that 80% of Canadians actually live south of Roseau. It is so isolated, that the nearest city is over five hours away. And yet, the McMinnns have loved their vicarage year. They have grown close to the people of Roseau and look forward to implementing new skills and insights at Ruthfred in the near future.

The McMinnns are both from Pennsylvania. Bryce was raised Lutheran in Lancaster.

Erin, originally United Methodist, grew up

in Bethel Park. They met at the University of Pittsburgh as business majors. After graduation, Bryce worked in politics, supporting state legislators. Erin was employed at American Eagle Outfitters in the corporate office. However, neither of them found their job fulfilling.

Needing more, Erin entered Duquesne University, earning a Master's Degree in Education. The McMinnns chose homeschool education for their kids. The couple recognizes this is not the right option for everyone. For their family, it has made the journey to seminary, vicarage, and several moves run smoothly. Erin is able to individualize learning and feels confident that she knows the academic level of each of the children. There are four boys and one girl. Noah is thirteen followed by Elliot (ten); Caleb (eight); Lillian (seven); and Joshua (five).

Bryce exited the contentious world of politics. First, he led the Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation and later accepted a position at Morningstar, a Pregnancy Resource Center, in Harrisburg. By that time, he held a Master's Degree in Organizational Leadership from Geneva College and had become a member of Ruthfred.

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. . . Member Profile, Continued

Bryce and Erin joined Ruthfred in 2003, resolving to raise their family in a Biblical church. Both became active members. You will recall that Erin worked long hours with Vacation Bible School, Kids Time, and other children's ministries. To this day, worshipping in our high liturgical style brings tears of joy to their eyes.

Although Bryce was working at Morningstar, his "favorite job ever," he sensed God calling to pastoral ministry. Their good friend Pastor Brent Olson, who is also godfather to their oldest son, invited the couple to visit the AFLC Seminary. Bryce reasoned that if he tried a Greek or Hebrew class and failed miserably, it would be obvious that pastoral ministry would be out of the question. Furthermore, he reasoned, when Erin spent time with the seminary wives and saw first-hand the cramped living conditions and financial crunch experienced by large families, she would dismiss the idea too.

Well, you can guess what happened. God had plans. The McMinns packed for Minnesota.

Fast forward to 2020. Bryce and Erin are nearly at the seminary finish line, wondering how graduation, ordination, and relocation will occur in light of the Coronavirus epidemic. But even before then, they prayed that wherever the Lord would send them, they would develop affection for the people and place to which they would be called.

As Bryce says, the McMinns are not Midwestern "Norwegians." Culturally, there are some differences between suburban Pennsylvanians and rural Minnesotans. "Vicar McMinn" believes that he has been taught life-altering skills in Minnesota. "Pastor McMinn" expects that his interaction with the people of Ruthfred will be lovingly gracious, patient, and gentle because that is what he has learned.

Although the McMinns would have accepted any call from the Lord, they said it was "unquestionably clear" that the call to Ruthfred was divine in nature. They are overjoyed to be joining Pastor Steve and Jen Carlson. God willing, they will be able to unpack their lives and boxes at the parsonage very soon.

[Note from Pastor Carlson: Pastor McMinn will start on June 7, 2020.]

## Song of the Month

By Tom Glasser

# O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go

Lyrics: George Matheson

Music: Albert L. Peace

In 19th-century Scotland, it was not uncommon for Christians far and wide to say “Let’s go hear ‘Matheson of Innellan’ preach.” By the time George Matheson had become pastor at the church in the village of Innellan his reputation as a dynamic, moving speaker had spread throughout the country. As Matheson preached he would often glance down as though he were following hand-written notes. Why he did this is uncertain because he was almost totally blind and certainly would not have been able to read any such notes.



George Matheson, the eldest of eight children, was born with poor eyesight, and this malady continued to grow worse throughout his youth. He persevered, however, with his plan to study for Christian ministry. “His sisters joined ranks beside him, learning Greek and Hebrew to assist him in his studies, and he pressed faithfully on.” (“Then Sings My Soul,” Robert Morgan.) About the time he was finishing up his studies he had become virtually blind. Despite his handicap he was known to maintain a joyful spirit. One development in his life that did crush him for a while, however, was when his fiancée decided to return his ring because she did not want to marry a blind man. He never did marry.

As Matheson entered ministry as an assistant pastor in Sandyford, the eldest of his sisters continued to assist him by taking dictation, managing the household, and even helping with the administration of the parish. Then came a day when this sister was to be married. George was not only to lose his faithful assistant, but it is generally thought that this also brought back painful memories of his romantic disappointment years earlier. “O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go” was written on the night before his sister’s wedding. Here are his own words about that night:

My hymn was composed in the manse of Innellan on the evening of the 6th of June, 1882, when I was 40 years of age. I was alone in the manse at that time. It was the night of my sister’s marriage, and the rest of the family were staying overnight in Glasgow. Something happened to me, which was known only to myself, and which caused me the most severe mental suffering. It was the quickest bit of work I ever did in my life. I had the impression of having it dictated to me by some inward voice rather than of working it out myself. I am quite sure that the whole work was completed in five minutes, and equally sure that it never received at my hands any retouching or correction. I have no natural gift of rhythm. All the other verses I have ever written are manufactured articles; this came like a dayspring from on high. ([www.joshweidmann.com](http://www.joshweidmann.com).)

Unfortunately there is not room enough here to reproduce all the lyrics of Matheson’s hymn. (Check out SBH #402 for the entire text.) However, here are the first two verses:

O Love that wilt not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in Thee;  
I give Thee back the life I owe,  
That in Thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be.

O light that followest all my way,  
I yield my flickering torch to Thee;  
My heart restores its borrowed ray,  
That in Thy sunshine’s blaze its day  
May brighter, fairer be.

Author’s Note: This article was inspired by, and partially based upon, an article in the book “Then Sings My Soul,” which was kindly loaned to me by Judy Boyd.

## Bible in a Year Reading Plan May 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					<b>1</b> 1 Chronicles 6	<b>2</b> 1 Chronicles 7-8
<b>3</b> 1 Chronicles 9-11	<b>4</b> 1 Chronicles 12-14	<b>5</b> 1 Chronicles 15-17	<b>6</b> 1 Chronicles 18-21	<b>7</b> 1 Chronicles 22-24	<b>8</b> 1 Chronicles 25-27	<b>9</b> 1 Chronicles 28-29 & 2 Chronicles 1
<b>10</b> 2 Chronicles 2-5	<b>11</b> 2 Chronicles 6-8	<b>12</b> 2 Chronicles 9-12	<b>13</b> 2 Chronicles 13-17	<b>14</b> 2 Chronicles 18-20	<b>15</b> 2 Chronicles 21-24	<b>16</b> 2 Chronicles 25-27
<b>17</b> 2 Chronicles 28-31	<b>18</b> 2 Chronicles 32-34	<b>19</b> 2 Chronicles 35-36	<b>20</b> Ezra 1-3	<b>21</b> Ezra 4-7	<b>22</b> Ezra 8-10	<b>23</b> Nehemiah 1-3
<b>24</b> Nehemiah 4-6	<b>25</b> Nehemiah 7	<b>26</b> Nehemiah 8-9	<b>27</b> Nehemiah 10-11	<b>28</b> Nehemiah 12-13	<b>29</b> Esther 1-5	<b>30</b> Esther 6-10
<b>31</b> Job 1-4						