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St. Paul’s Catholic Newman Center Newsletter
Serving the Students of North Dakota State University, Fargo

Faith Based Friendships - “Run with Me”

Rev. James Cheney, Director

Our young adults today face many cultural challenges that in many ways represent the battle for the future of a good and just society. The secular campus today at many state universities challenges the basic definitions of family, religious liberty, and freedom of the press. Our young adults often face a classroom, a teacher, peers on the campus, that increasingly seek to silence opinions or facts that are at odds with liberal ideologies.

Rather than expanding the students’ universe of ideas, higher education has in many ways narrowed them. Many young people emerge from their college experience less mature and less prepared for life than when they entered.

Too many ideologies and false representations of happiness are presented to our young adults today by forces that do not love them. Our young adults today wonder whether the possibility of love even exists as many come from families that are fractured. They are continuously bombarded with disconnected distractions everywhere they go. They are constantly connected but desperately alone. This is perhaps best represented by one staggering fact: more people visit porn websites in any given month than Netflix, Twitter, and Amazon combined. Too many young people are giving up; they are giving up on marriage, life and God: the effects on the future of the Church have been disastrous. Our world has never been this complicated and lost.

One of our students, Ashley Stoppbleworth, recently reminded us that you become like the five people you spend the most time with. Today’s young adults need someone to run with them. This year’s theme for Newman is “Run with Me.” Our goal is to provide peer-centered discipleship to help facilitate faith based friendships in the pursuit of a virtuous life. It is important to have a friend you can ‘run with’ during the college experience, however, it’s just as important to run to a destination.

Your love and generosity has helped us provide tremendous support for the faith and to provide the destination of Jesus Christ for our young adults. We could not provide countless opportunities to facilitate the encounter of Jesus Christ in young adults without your support. All of us at Newman thank you for your generosity and your willingness to “Run with Us” in our mission to change hearts, change lives and form future leaders: vibrant leaders | strong communities | healthy society – “Run with Me.”
Meet the NDSU Peer Ministers and FOCUS Missionaries

Nicollette Bitz
Hometown: Napoleon, ND
Year in College and Study: Senior in Psychology and Human Development/Family Science
Interests, Hobbies, On-Campus Organizations: I enjoy playing piano, being outdoors, and hanging out with friends! I'm a student missionary with FOCUS, a Lison Ambassador, and member in Blue Key Honor Society.
Favorite Parts of Being a PM: Seeing all of the people who are involved in FOCUS here at NDSU.
Fun Fact: My favorite saint is St. Teresa of Calcutta.

Joshua Geinert
Hometown: Nortonville, ND
Year in College and Study: Junior in Electrical Engineering
Interests, Hobbies, On-Campus Organizations: I enjoy playing band, watching the outdoors, and hanging out with friends! Anything that gets me active.
Favorite Parts of Being a PM: Getting to serve the community and having fun doing it with great people!
Fun Fact: I come from a family of 6 boys and only 1 girl!

Lizzy Heil
Hometown: Albertville, MN
Year in College and Study: Second year student studying to be an Occupational Therapy Assistant at NDSCS.
Interests, Hobbies, On-Campus Organizations: I enjoy hanging out with my family and friends, running, cooking, and hunting.
Favorite Parts of being a PM: I love being able to serve the community that brought me in and helped me to find who God made me to be.
Fun Fact: I have been told I can sleep with my eyes open.

Faith Hapka
Hometown: Andover, MN
Year in College and Study: Sophomore in Nursing
Interests, Hobbies, On-Campus Organizations: One of my favorite things to do is paint canvases, or baking a fun recipe. On campus, I am involved in the Catholic Health Ethics Association and the Phi Eta Sigma Honorary group.
Favorite Parts of Being a PM: The opportunity to serve the students of NDSU at the Sunday evening Bucklucks!
Fun Fact: I know that those lives will affect so many more lives that I cannot even see or will ever know about!

Trey Stephens
Hometown: Columbus, NE
1st year missionary
School: University of Nebraska-Lincoln and studied Agronomy
Why I love mission: Because I continually get to see God change lives here on campus and I know that those lives will affect so many more lives that I cannot even see or will ever know about!
Fun Fact: I'm the only right-handed person in my family.

Jonathon Spaid
Hometown: Brooklyn Center, MN
7th year missionary
School: University of Minnesota Duluth and studied Exercise Science
Favorite thing about being a missionary at NDSU: The deep and authentic friendships that I have made with the students and my teammates.
Fun Fact: I swam with sharks and survived.

Rachel Ojeda
Hometown: Lincoln, NE
2nd year missionary
School: Went to University of Nebraska-Lincoln and studied Secondary Education for Mathematics
Favorite thing about being a missionary at NDSU: One of my favorite parts about serving on campus is leading bible studies! I love the desire for holiness that these women have, and I love getting to spend time with them each week!
Fun Fact: I spent my summer before senior year of college in India serving with the Missionaries of Charity. I love Mother Teresa!

Marie Foley
Hometown: Lincoln, NE
1st year missionary
School: Went to University of Nebraska-Lincoln and studied Secondary Education for Mathematics
Favorite thing about being a missionary at NDSU: One of my favorite parts about serving on campus is leading bible studies! I love the desire for holiness that these women have, and I love getting to spend time with them each week!
Fun Fact: I spent my summer before senior year of college in India serving with the Missionaries of Charity. I love Mother Teresa!

Joe Eicher
Hometown: St. Michael, MN
Year in College and Study: Junior in Electrical Engineering
Interests, Hobbies, On-Campus Organizations: I enjoy marching band, jazz band, praise and worship at Newman, Sports! Anything that gets me active.
Favorite Parts of Being a PM: Anything that gets me active.
Fun Fact: I come from a family of 6 boys and only 1 girl!

Serving the Students of North Dakota State University, Fargo

Samuel Mettler
Hometown: Burtum, MN
Year in College and Study: Senior studying broadcast journalism and minoring in sociology
Interests, Hobbies, On-Campus Organizations: Leading bible studies with FOCUS, I also like to play various sports as well as watch them.
Favorite Parts of being a PM: Getting the word out, including the Word. I'm the Communications Chair and I hope to work with communications in a parish after I graduate.
Fun Fact: Most people look at me questionably when I say I'm a 20-year-old senior who's also married. I don't know why.
Fall Outreach Week

To start off a brand new year, Newman had a jam-packed schedule, filled with nights of cookouts, bonfires, ultimate frisbee, volleyball and watermelon, and a rootbeer kegger. Returning students at St. Paul’s Newman Center spent their welcome week being present on campus, playing volleyball, spikeball, and tabling around dorms, inviting new students to our numerous events. BisonCatholic had an incredible presence on campus and our welcome week events were filled with new faces each night. To start the year off strong, we implemented a launch night of our student organization called the bisonCatholic Live Show! This consisted of a live band, skits, and interviews from a student, FOCUS missionary, and Father Cheney, sharing their experiences of finding the Catholic faith during their college years. This was an incredible night of old and new members of Newman being inspired to dive deeper into their faith and devoting themselves more fully to living out the mission of following Christ and bringing others into His Church.

Student Testimony

Sarah Bofferding, Sophomore at NDSU

My story starts in Bemidji, MN. There I was raised in a loving, Catholic family. I was blessed to attend Catholic school through eighth grade and be taught the beauty and truth of our Catholic faith, but the one thing that was missing from my life was an intimate and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I was introduced to this concept at conferences I attended in high school, where I had profound encounters with God. Although these were great, I would come back and fall into the same life I was living. This was a double-sided life, one of being a good Catholic girl and also drowning in sin and shame. I was searching for belonging in all the wrong places, leading me to put so much of my worth and identity in worldly friendships and relationships.

Coming into my freshman year at NDSU, I knew that I wanted to get involved with St. Paul’s Newman Center. I was desiring and searching for a community to be a part of. Little did I know, being a part of the bisonCatholic community would change my life!

It all started with invitations: to events, to daily mass, to a bible study, and to a FOCUS conference in Chicago called SLS. Within these invitations, Jesus was inviting me into a deeper relationship with Himself. At events, I grew in authentic friendships that were faith-focused. At daily Mass, I encountered Jesus in the sacraments. At bible study, I found my identity in the truth of God’s word.

The most impactful invitation was to SLS. At this conference, there were around 8,000 other young adults that were striving to live out their Catholic faith. Over the five days of SLS, there were many talks that spoke to my heart and inspired me to start tearing down the walls I had put up in my life to keep God and others from seeing my brokenness. The most profound moment came in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. In this encounter with God himself, He revealed to me that He wanted to love all of me, not just the good face I put forward, but also the sin and shame I had been hiding from Him and others. This encounter led me to receive God’s mercy in the sacrament of confession for the first time in almost two years. All the simple invitations cumulated into a life changing experience!

The many opportunities and people at the Newman Center led me into deeper conversion and deeper relationship with God. Now in my sophomore year at NDSU, I have the honor of leading others into the same conversion and relationship through discipleship and leading my own bible study. I am so blessed to be a part of this amazing community that is running with me towards eternal life, towards sainthood.
Finding Vocation: Beautiful Marriages Blossom from Newman Ministry

Fargo, ND

They got married on our friends. When they were wed:

How they met:

How the Newman Center impacted their relationship:

How they wed:

Andi (Schiefelbein) and Samuel Mettler

Hometowns: Sam grew up in Swanville, MN and Andi grew up in Kimball, MN.

What they studied:

When they wed:

Hannah (Fussy) and Nathan Fix

Hometowns: Hannah is from North Prairie, MN and Nathan is from Jamestown, ND.

What they studied:

How they met:

How the Newman Center impacted their relationship:

When they wed:

Amanda (Kensok) and Jim Fedor

Hometowns: Jim is from Stillwater, MN and Amanda is from Casselton, ND.

What they studied:

How they met:

How the Newman Center impacted their relationship:

When they wed:

Kelli (Klepper) and Luke Niefield

Hometowns: Kelly is from Bismarck, ND and Luke is from St. Michael, MN.

What they studied:

How they met:

How the Newman Center impacted their relationship:

When they wed:

Kaylyn (Herold) and Dylan Christopherson

Hometowns: Kaylyn is from Bismarck, ND and Dylan is from Waite Park, MN.

What they studied:

When they wed:

Sam (Schiefelbein) and Andi Mettler

Hometowns: Andi grew up in Swanville, MN and Sam grew up in Kimball, MN.

What they studied:

When they wed:

Hannah (Klepper) and Luke Niefield

Hometowns: Hannah is from North Prairie, MN and Luke is from St. Michael, MN.

What they studied:

How they met:

How the Newman Center impacted their relationship:

When they wed:

Kelly is from Bismarck, ND and Luke is from St. Michael, MN.

What they studied:

How they met:

How the Newman Center impacted their relationship:

When they wed:

Sam is from Swanville, MN and Andi is from Waite Park, MN.

What they studied:

When they wed:
Calendar of Events

Our calendar is much fuller than this—take a look at our weekly calendar at bisonCatholic.org to see what we mean. Here are our semester highlights, and a few upcoming events for our supporters!

Semester Highlights

- September 5-November 1: Fall Fundraising Banquets in Plymouth, Williston, Bismarck, and Fargo featuring guest speakers Archbishop Bernard Hebda, Raymond de Souza, and Sr. Jane Dominic Laurel
- October 13: Newman Alumni Summit for all Newman alumni from the quad-state area who call the Twin Cities home. We had a generous family host the event, featuring Jeff Cavins, at their home in Chaska, MN.
- October 21: Blood Drive at the Newman Center that was sponsored by the newly formed Catholic Health Ethics Association
- October 24: Fall Keynote Speaker Dr. Richard Gallagher presented his experience of distinguishing between possession and mental illness while assisting exorcists in his psychiatric practice
- November 16-18: Going on Vocation retreat for new student retreatants and 20 student team members
- November 16-18: Koinonia weekend retreat with 40
- December 14-16: Going on Vocation retreat for students discovering their vocation

Coming Up

- January 3-7: FOCUS SEEK 2019 Conference in Indianapolis, IN
- January 26-February 2: bisonCatholic Week! Mass with Bishop Folda, two dances, a formal dinner, a Casino Night, two guest speaker addresses from Matt Simons, and women’s and men’s ministry events to fill the exciting week celebrating the conversion of St. Paul!
- February 9: “How to Not Marry a Jerk or Jerkette” workshop on relationships
- March 2: Decora-Celebrating the Gift of the Feminine Genius
- March 8-12: Annual Mission Trip to Belcourt to serve the people of the Turtle Mountain Reservation
- April 27: Our 34th Annual NDSU vs UND Bike Race N’ Ride
- All our on-campus speaking events are free and open to the public! Check bisoncatholic.org for our upcoming events which are informative and inspiring for the entire community.

Alumni Spotlight: Paul Wilburn

I came to NDSU with a few main goals: make a lot of friends, be the life of the party, find a cute girlfriend, and get a good job after graduating. My parents did a good job raising me, but I allowed the culture to influence me into believing that what was bad, was good; and what was good, was just preference.

As a freshman (Fall 2004), I thought I was accomplishing all three goals. I should’ve been happy, but I wasn’t. As the months wore on, living life this way brought me to the loneliest place of my life. In those dark moments, my friends’ best advice was, “whatever, have another drink.” But I thank God for working through FOCUS, the Newman Center, and my parents for reaching out and offering another way.

During that first semester at NDSU, the small things God did through others slowly opened the door to my eventual conversion. It began at the first weekend Newman Mass. After filling out a registration card, Michelle Duppong called and invited me to come tour the Newman Center. On the tour, I met the Eric Clark (now Fr. Clark), the new FOCUS Missionary. He invited me to lunch, which led to joining his weekly Bible study. Although I continued partying every weekend, I attended Eric’s study, where the Word of God slowly worked on my heart.

In December I hit that rock bottom moment, thinking “there had to be something more.” Through Eric’s persistent invitations, and Mom’s yes to paying for the trip, I registered for the FOCUS conference in January, which is where everything changed. At the conference I saw 1500 college students from across the country who were searching for something more. During the opening talk, I was moved to tears realizing how my sins had separated me from God. Following the talk, I approached the first priest I saw, and received God’s mercy through the sacrament of reconciliation and never looked back. Convinced that God had a plan for my life, I just knew that everything would be fine if I just kept seeking Him first.

Providentially, that conference is where I met my eventual wife, Mandie. After returning to campus,
Seminarian Story
Jasper Keller, St. Paul's Newman Center Alum

My name is Jasper Keller, and I am currently discerning the priesthood as a seminarian of the Diocese of Fargo. I was born and raised here in Fargo, and I attended JPII Catholic Schools from Kindergarten through my senior year at Shanley High. After high school, I studied Computer Science at NDSSU for one year, during which time I spent most of my free time at the Newman Center, and eventually I discerned a calling to go to seminary. I also have one older brother, Colton, who graduated from NDSSU and was very active in the Newman Center community.

My discernment regarding the priesthood was a very gradual process. In high school I was pretty open to pursuing either marriage or priesthood, but being as I hadn’t received anything particularly leading me towards seminary, going to university seemed like the most prudent next step. During that summer after senior year, however, a conversation with my spiritual director really made a huge impact on me. We were discussing the impact of a dating relationship that had recently ended, and during the course of the conversation, he asked me the question, “How are you called to love?” It was a really simple question, but the Holy Spirit worked through it; suddenly, the possibility that I was called to the priesthood or religious life became real to me. It wasn’t just an abstract idea, but a concrete reality. I really took that with me to NDSSU, and right away, encouraged by the advice of my brother, I began spending time at the Newman Center. This was a vital part of my discernment; I had a place right off campus where I could go to attend daily Mass, frequent adoration, get involved in a Bible study and discernment group, and meet amazing and genuine Catholic friends, allowing me to grow deeper in my faith than ever before. Through a LOT of prayer, spiritual direction, and an untold amount of help from our Mother Mary, I was led to apply to seminary for this 2018-2019 school year.

My time so far here at seminary has truly been one of the most fruitful times of my life. It has also been one of the most challenging. I have already grown immensely in prayer and my relationship with God, especially in my striving to rely on Him in everything. I’ve met some amazing people and started new friendships that I know will continue for the rest of my life. My own flaws and weaknesses are becoming more and more apparent, reinforcing in my mind the need to surrender everything to God. The fact that these scandals within the Church are coming to light just as I am entering to study for the priesthood has not been lost on me. It is a chilling reminder of the gravity of this vocation and of the great responsibility that God may be calling me to in rising above this great evil. I know that I could never live up to such a calling by myself, but I am once again led back to the blessed knowledge that, by surrender to the will of God, “I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13)
**New Staff Update**

_St. Paul's Newman Center is pleased to announce our new Development Officer, Ricky Paulson and Development Director, Bryan Wilburn_

Ricky Paulson is the newest edition to the development team. Upon graduation Ricky will be a Development Officer for St. Paul’s Newman Center based in the Twin Cities. Ricky is from Valley City, North Dakota and will be graduating from ND State in December with a degree in Broadcast Journalism. He has been very involved with life at Newman while attending ND State, leading a Bible study and teaching Religious Education.

Bryan Wilburn has worked for St. Paul’s Newman Center for 3.5 years as a Development Officer and was promoted to Director of Development. Bryan started serving St. Paul’s Newman Center as a peer minister while attending ND State studying Business Administration. Bryan and his wife Maura reside in Fargo and have three children; James, George, and Caroline.

**Donor Story**

_Meet Larry Petri_

**How did your relationship start with St. Paul’s Newman Center?**

Several years ago, there was a speaker at a Sunday Mass, at my home parish in Langdon, ND, who spoke on the future plans of the new Newman Center facility in Fargo. After reading an article about the project in a Catholic paper, then talking with my local priest, I decided to meet with Kyle, one of the development officers, at the current Newman Center. Seeing the building, built in 1958, helped me to realize the great need for the new expansion to accommodate their ministry needs.

**How important is the building project for St. Paul’s Newman Center to you?**

After sleeping and praying on the idea of donating to St. Paul’s, I knew that the time was right and that I had to contact Fr. Cheney. A wise man once told me when I was young that there is a time to buy and a time to sell land, don’t get married to it. As my mother taught me – she wanted to see and hear the thank you on a nice gift, she would give, while she was living. The same is true to me.

I always have liked to help the younger generation, being they will be our future leaders. For example, I have donated to help a local daycare center, American Legion baseball dugouts, and boy scouts. I believe a Newman Center may help out young men and women before they enter into life after college as they have the guidance of the priests and community in that Catholic environment. College students face issues like drug and alcohol abuse, pregnancy concerns, suicide, and other crisis situations. These unfortunate circumstances could be prevented through the faith formation the Newman Center provides to the students of ND State.

**What are you contributing to the Capital Campaign and how did you come to that decision?**

I have farmed on my father’s farm for many years. Throughout my farming career, I have expanded the farm’s acreage from 800 to 5,000 acres and have grown and harvested wheat to sunflower crops. After 50 years of farming, I decided to step away from farming and give back to the community. One way I have chosen to give back is through donating a portion of my land towards the bisonCatholic Capital Campaign.

Larry comes from a family of 8 children. He has one son, one daughter, and 3 grandkids.

Larry presenting Fr. Cheney and Bishop Folda with the deed to his land.