

An aerial photograph of the Northwest Nazarene University campus. In the foreground, a large green lawn is filled with hundreds of people sitting in neat, rectangular rows, facing towards the background. A blue canopy tent is visible among the seating. In the middle ground, a large, multi-story red brick building with a grey roof and several dormer windows stands prominently. The building has a clock tower on the left side. In front of the building, the letters 'NNU' are visible in red. The background shows more campus buildings, trees, and a residential area with houses and streets.

# *the* MESSENGER

NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY | WINTER 2021

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MORE THAN AN EDUCATION // COMMUNITY DESPITE COVID-19 // INNOVATION TO STAY HEALTHY





Over the last several months normal has been regularly redefined. What was once normal may not even be possible now, and what became normal to us last week has likely changed this week and may change again tomorrow. This process has become so routine that many of us even steer clear of the phrase, “new normal.” Just when we think we can settle into a routine—well, we can’t!

This past summer, the challenging decision was made to return to the classroom for face-to-face instruction for our Fall 2020 semester. NNU was one of the only universities in the Northwest to make that bold of a decision, and it was the right thing to do. While we didn’t return to “normal,” having students back on campus created a sense of normalcy. In spite of physical distancing, face coverings, daily health screenings, regular

asymptomatic testing, quarantining, grab-n-go meals on occasion and a host of other accommodations, there was normalcy in spite of the not normal. Why? Community!

Our core value of Community guided our decisions as well as our methods for returning to campus and the classroom. The entire NNU community was asked to commit to putting “Community First” by being respectful, humble and flexible. We all agreed to the following ideal:

An NNU education is more than an intellectual pursuit. It’s more than merely acquiring a degree to get a better job. It’s about identifying a purpose and turning that into a meaningful life. At Northwest Nazarene University, we believe that a meaningful life is rooted in timeless values and





empowered by a community that embodies those principles. Together we realize our potential by committing to a life of service that transforms ourselves, our society and the world.

In putting “Community First,” we embraced Philippians 2:3-4 (CEB):

Don’t do anything for selfish purposes, but with humility think of others as better than yourselves. Instead of each person watching out for their own good, watch out for what is better for others.

Normal? We believe so!

In these days of ongoing adjustment and regularly redefining normal, we all seem to crave a sense of normalcy. We seek

comfort and constancy. We long for affirmation that someday we will experience a stable normal again. While we don’t know what that will look like or when it will happen, the writer of Lamentations offers us assurance and provides the grounding for a much greater hope. Normal? We believe so!

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:22-23 (NRSV)

Mark Cork  
AVP for Marketing and Communication



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**Cover:** The opening community chapel of Fall 2020 looked a little different than typical, with face coverings and social distancing, but still embodied the joy of returning to an open campus.

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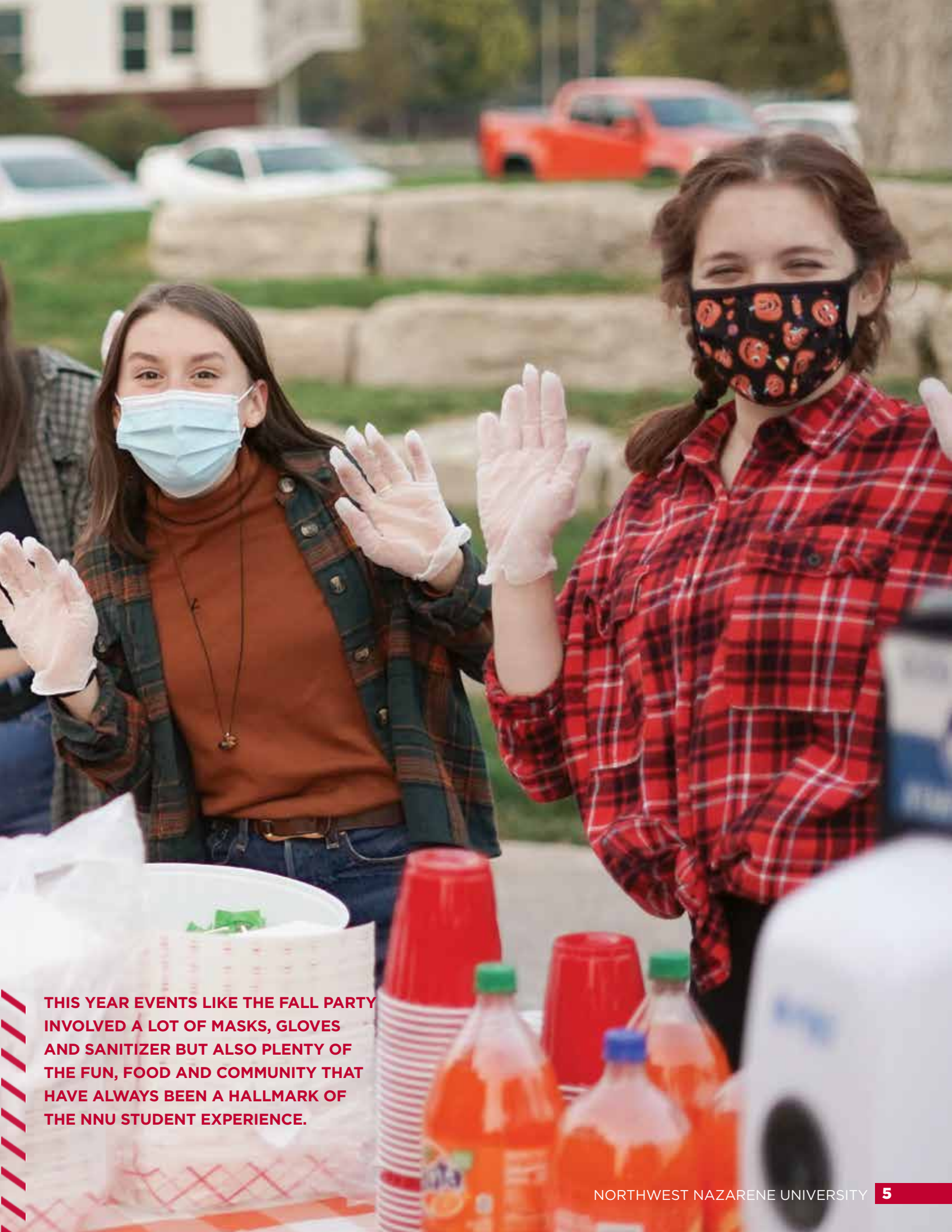
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THIS YEAR EVENTS LIKE THE FALL PARTY INVOLVED A LOT OF MASKS, GLOVES AND SANITIZER BUT ALSO PLENTY OF THE FUN, FOOD AND COMMUNITY THAT HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A HALLMARK OF THE NNU STUDENT EXPERIENCE.

# *EDUCATION and* **COMMUNITY**

*NNU continues to thrive in face-to-face community ... carefully*

BY GRANT MILLER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY LIFE, CLASS OF 2010

**M**onths ago, on what initially seemed like a normal Friday night on campus, our sophomore class council was getting ready to put on Mr. NNU, an annual comedy show featuring our students competing with one another through comedy skits and videos to entertain the student body. As director of community life, I was excited (and as always, a little nervous) to attend and see what our students had put together. Little did any of us know that the email we would receive that night, just minutes before the show opened, would send all of us off campus the following week.

As we all remember, that would not be the first piece of surprising news we would receive; eventually, what was supposed to be an extended spring break became a semester finished online.

I think all of us were unsure and a bit uneasy about what the future would bring. Over the following months, there was anxiety about what would happen in the fall. With news that other colleges and universities were planning to go fully online for the year, my colleagues and I began to receive questions from students.

“Will we be moving online?”

“If we are back, will we be able to do events?”

“How are we going to keep the community going if we all have to wear masks?”

Ask any student what makes the NNU experience better than a typical college experience, and it is more than likely they will reply, “It’s all about the community.” This response has become so commonplace that it has almost become a running joke within the student body.

It is hard to explain this sentiment to someone who has not been on campus and lived through the transformational experience of doing life together in a communal rhythm, moving from residence hall to chapel to classroom in a wonderful current of life and learning. Every place on this campus is special in its own unique way, from that corner in the library that is just for you, to the way that your group of friends pulls their chairs around a table in the dining hall, to the fields where we have played frisbee, volleyball and held events.

Now, let us be clear on this point: Students primarily choose to come to NNU because we offer an amazing education. Our programs are taught by incredible instructors, and our graduates experience great success in their fields when they leave. The



A SOAPY SLIP N' SLIDE  
WAS A HIGHLIGHT OF WEEK ONE  
WELCOMING STUDENTS BACK TO CAMPUS  
FOR FALL SEMESTER.





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“THE COMMUNITY AT NNU HAS MADE SUCH A DIFFERENCE FOR ME DURING THIS COVID SEASON. BEING SURROUNDED BY A GROUP OF LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE WHILE GOING THROUGH THE EVER-CHANGING DAY-TO-DAY LIFE TOGETHER HAS BROUGHT **CONSTANT ENCOURAGEMENT AND A NEW SENSE OF COMMUNITY** THAT I HAVE NEVER FELT BEFORE.”

—Zach Booker, Junior, Medford, OR



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“THE COMMUNITY OF NNU HAS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN MY FORMATION AS A STUDENT, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY AS A PERSON. SOMETHING NO ONE TELLS YOU IS **HOW MUCH YOU CAN LEARN OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM** HERE AT NORTHWEST NAZARENE.”

—Luke Wicks, Senior, Edmonds, WA



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“IT HAS BEEN SO AMAZING TO BE SURROUNDED BY THE NNU COMMUNITY DURING THIS SEASON. I KNOW THAT NO MATTER WHAT IS GOING ON, **THERE ARE PEOPLE AROUND ME WHO CARE ABOUT ME** AND ARE DOING EVERYTHING THEY CAN TO MAKE SURE WE STAY SAFE AND HEALTHY.”

—Cally Harper, Senior, Nampa, ID



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“THE NNU COMMUNITY HAS BEEN SO IMPORTANT TO ME THIS SEASON BY ALWAYS BEING THERE FOR ME. WITH EVERYTHING WE ARE ALL GOING THROUGH, **HAVING THE NNU COMMUNITY BY MY SIDE IS THE BEST GROUP OF PEOPLE TO BE AROUND.** THERE IS ALWAYS SOMEONE WHO IS WILLING TO HELP OR TAKE TIME OUT OF THEIR DAY TO MAKE SURE I’M DOING OKAY.”

—Dyson Scott, Junior, Caldwell, ID



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“BEING ON CAMPUS IMMERSSED IN OUR NNU COMMUNITY IS THE MOST NORMAL-FEELING THING WHILE WE ARE DEALING WITH THIS PANDEMIC. **THE COMMUNITY AT NNU IS THE HEART OF OUR CAMPUS.** THE CHARACTER OF OUR STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF IS SO UNIQUE, IT IS NEARLY UNEXPLAINABLE. IT HAS TO BE EXPERIENCED TO TRULY BE UNDERSTOOD.”

—Jace Ziegler, Junior, Zillah, WA





BY VERONICA CRAKER, CLASS OF 2020

“WHEN THEY CAME ALONGSIDE TO HELP WITH THEIR CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE AND INSIGHT, WE SENSED GOD’S PROVIDENCE AND FELT CONFIDENT THAT WE COULD TACKLE [IT].”





COVID-19 health protocols.

“When I reached out to the Wiricks for a little advice, they immediately researched the options, made suggestions and volunteered to meet with us,” Dr. Chase said. “When they came alongside to help with their considerable experience and insight, we sensed God’s providence and felt confident that we could tackle [it].”

Emily’s experience working with a diagnostic company in Utah meant she understood how to use tools needed to conduct the COVID-19 saliva screening.

“My first job after Utah was with a company where I developed tools like this,” Emily said. “At the time, COVID-19 didn’t exist. But the biggest project I did at the company was designing a gastrointestinal bug test that was then sold to clinical labs at hospitals, so this was very much right up my alley for what I’ve done in my career.”

### **The student becomes the teacher**

Three weeks after Dr. Chase reached out to the Wiricks, Emily traveled to the Boise Valley to give hands-on training to NNU students. It is undergraduate students who actually perform the tests for the entire campus.

“Undergraduate science students rarely get to do service with their skills—it has to wait until after medical school or grad school,” Dr.

Chase said. “The students are so enthusiastic about the fact that they can make a contribution to the health of the NNU community.”

In an email to the NNU campus community, Dr. Brad Kurtz-Shaw, vice president for academic affairs and chair of the 2020-21 COVID Planning Team, said leadership understood the university would not be immune to the impacts of the global pandemic.

“Currently, we are pleased with the ways the health and safety plans and protocols we have in place are working to help ensure impacted community members are getting the support they need while simultaneously mitigating the spread of the virus on campus,” he said. “We will continue to work together to do all we can to put community first as we navigate the challenges that COVID brings our way.”

For the asymptomatic surveillance screening, all on-campus community members have been divided into pools and are able to collect and submit their own saliva sample. The samples are then proactively screened as a group to help preserve privacy. In the case that a positive test results for a pool, NNU Health Services staff follow-up with those individuals for additional screening and/or diagnostic testing.

While Emily led the hands-on work, her husband Ryan worked with Dr. Bryon Hemphill, NNU director of health services, to determine the feasibility of NNU conducting its own surveillance



screening on-site. Ryan often works with regulatory agencies, such as the Federal Drug Administration, so he was able to help NNU navigate that space.

"There's not a lot that's specific to universities that explicitly permits testing, so we had to review the FDA emergency protocols together and make sure what NNU was wanting to do was within the regulatory framework that had been provided," Ryan said.

## Screening continues

Weekly saliva screening will continue as students return to campus for the start of the spring semester—a fact that wouldn't have been possible had it not been for the efforts of our NNU community working together to ensure the health and safety of everyone on campus. 🔥

# NNU COMPLETES FALL SEMESTER IN PERSON

## *Asymptomatic saliva screening key line of defense in COVID-19 battle*

Following Thanksgiving break, NNU students had the option of returning to campus to finish the final two weeks of fall semester in person. This is a choice very few college students have had this year. Unlike many college students across the Boise Valley and throughout the nation who have been confined to dorm rooms or bedrooms for fall semester, NNU has offered predominantly face-to-face classes since Aug. 31, and they finished the semester on Dec. 10 just as they started: in person.

"At the beginning of the summer, NNU had one primary objective and that was to allow students to safely return to campus for the entirety of fall semester for the exceptional face-to-face classes and in-person community NNU is known for," NNU President Joel Pearsall said. "Our NNU community has worked together this semester to live into our 'Community First' pledge, implementing necessary health protocols to keep NNU healthy and open and thinking of others before self. We were delighted to achieve our objective and celebrate completing our fall semester—together!"

The ability to have students on campus engaging in in-person learning is due, in large part, to the innovative asymptomatic saliva screening NNU implemented early-September as part of their COVID-19 health protocols.

"We know that our saliva screening is our first line of defense and is a key element in helping us keep our campus open as we continue to provide the best in-person educational experience possible," Vice President for Academic Affairs and Chair of the 2020-21 COVID Planning Team Brad Kurtz-Shaw said. "We are cautiously optimistic that it will continue to help keep our campus open and safe as we move into 2021!"

The SalivaDirect protocol that NNU is using to conduct the saliva screening was developed at Yale University and is being

carried out by trained NNU undergraduate research assistants under the supervision of Dr. Jennifer Chase, NNU professor of biology. All screening is able to be done on campus utilizing equipment the university already owns. In mid-November, the campus pivoted from weekly screening of campus members to Monday-Thursday screening. Since the screening began in early-September, over 17,000 screens have been conducted.

"This new, more accessible, more affordable surveillance screening helps us to proactively monitor and assess the ongoing health of our campus community and provides for early identification of potential infection, often even before someone

is showing symptoms," Dr. Bryon Hemphill, director of health services, said.

"This allows us to care for those impacted quickly and mitigate the possible spread of the virus early."

It was this asymptomatic screening that alerted university officials to an increase in possible cases in early-November. This provided administration the data they needed to be able to issue a proactive "stay-in-place" directive before there was significant community spread.

The proactive measure successfully interrupted

the spread of the virus and helped reverse the trend in cases, allowing the university to return to face-to-face classes for the remainder of the semester.

"We know that rapid detection of asymptomatic infected individuals is critical for helping NNU prevent COVID-19 outbreaks within our community and allowing us to continue face-to-face instruction," Hemphill said. "Our saliva screening gives us this ability which, in turn, empowers us to implement proactive measures that can interrupt chains of transmission."

NNU is the only university in the Boise Valley that has been predominantly face-to-face the entire fall semester, with plans to start Spring 2021 fully in person on Jan. 12. Updates will continue to be provided at [nnu.edu/covid19](https://nnu.edu/covid19).



# *EDUCATION* and **SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

*Pastor Cremer of Euclid Church of the Nazarene shares about his NNU spiritual transformation*

BY BENJAMIN R. CREMER, CLASS OF 2008 AND 2010

Unite the pair so long disjoined, knowledge and vital piety.” This quote by Charles Wesley holds a prominent place in NNU’s Brandt Center auditorium. It was one of the first impressions made on me as a potential student at the “Explore NNU” event. In the midst of trying to figure out what I was going to do with my life after high school—like everyone else there—I was also struggling to reconcile a past filled with church splits over disagreements between right belief and right ways of living. I felt called into the ministry, but my faith struggles left me wondering if there was such a thing as a “healthy church.”

As I read this quote from Charles Wesley, my eyes filled with tears and it gave me hope. That day, I became eager to dive into my newly found community at NNU, and I imagined what healing might come from my time there as a student. I was unaware then of how impactful this ideal of knowledge joined with vital piety would become for me in my life.

As is stated in its mission, Northwest Nazarene University’s Wesleyan-Holiness tradition strives for the holistic transformation of its students. NNU partners with students to not only work toward a renewal of the mind, but a renewal of life and the





world beyond! “Centered in Jesus Christ, the NNU education instills habits of heart, soul, mind and strength to enable each student to become God’s creative and redemptive agent in the world.” Our heritage as Wesleyans has always been founded on this two-sided ideal: personal transformation and world transformation.

We Wesleyan-Holiness people are committed to the principles that our religious expression (piety) should not only include transformation of persons, but also participation with God’s ongoing work in transforming the world for the better. Knowing the gospel is not enough unless it is lived, we are determined to be transformed by it and live it out. Knowledge and vital piety: As a student, I found this mission deeply influential in my life.

In my first year as a theology student, I learned some history of the church, Biblical Greek, and theological perspectives all previously unknown to me. This education was not only

NNU also provided many opportunities to cultivate my spiritual life outside the classroom. The prayer chapel, small group Bible studies, the weekly rhythms of chapel services and Timeout on Wednesday nights all became a proving ground for how the student body practiced its faith in Christ together. Add to this that, as a ministry major, part of my educational requirements was to be involved with the local church, its ministry and its outreach.

On an average day, I would find myself hearing lectures and sermons by NNU’s faculty in class, then pondering their words as I worked with my church’s youth group pulling weeds or painting fences in town. Through these practices and education, worshiping God became something greater than just the things I did. Worshiping God was changing who I was. It became a daily commitment to allow Christ to transform my whole life and discern how to live out the transformation Christ wants to see in

OUR CHRISTIAN HERITAGE COMPELS US AGAIN TO RENEW OUR CONVICTION THAT THE TRANSFORMATION OF OUR PERSONAL LIVES IN JESUS LEADS TO THE TRANSFORMATION OF GOD’S WORLD. THIS MESSAGE IS CENTRAL TO THE ACADEMIC AND SPIRITUAL MISSION OF NNU AND THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE, BY WHICH MY SPIRITUALITY WAS FOREVER CHANGED AS A STUDENT.

illuminating a deeper picture of God for me, but it encouraged me to see how this new knowledge should change how I live my life. My professors were passionate and so dedicated to their craft, and it was so clear to me, even as a young student, that they valued their students just as much as they valued their call to teach. They were not just professors, but mentors and fellow Christians on the journey of uniting the knowledge of God and the mission of God in daily life.

For the first time in my life, I was exposed to people and ways of thought that were far different from anything I had encountered before. The faith that I had called my own since childhood took on deeper meaning and sacredness. I was not only engaged with books, professors and classmates with whom I agreed, but equally important, I was also taught to engage with books, professors, and classmates with whom I didn’t agree. This exposure stretched me in difficult, yet formative ways.

As I was being introduced to the broad spectrum of knowledge and skills in my studies of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and formal sciences, my mind and heart were set free to comprehend life and my faith as much bigger and much more complex than I had ever anticipated. Even my deepest held beliefs, which I felt completely certain about before, were found in need of deconstruction and reconstruction. NNU gave me the necessary tools to not only have a deeper grasp of the world around me, but to make my faith my own.

the world.

Now as a pastor, with my undergraduate years far behind me, I find myself ministering to a deeply divided culture, which will come as no surprise to anyone reading this. However, I do not believe these divides within the church begin and end just with partisan politics, as many might assume. I believe what makes these divides so deep and damaging is that we have stopped practicing what we learned to do as students in the classroom. That is to intentionally engage with the nuances and complexity of the world around us in truth and love, including the things we agree with and the things we don’t.

From the many politicians, news cycles, and even some Christian leaders in the public eye, we are constantly fed a false narrative that our world is caught in a battle between starkly black and white (or red and blue) categories. That there is no gray area or middle ground anymore. There are only winners and losers and you’re either “for us or against us.” The dominant mindset in our cultural arena would have us believe that our lives only revolve around two choices, one good and the other bad. The issues we all care about are reduced to their most superficial definitions and pitted against each other in order to defeat our so-called enemies. Around every corner, we are compelled to force everything we believe and experience into these either/or categories, all while being told by those who lead us that any attempts to understand the “other side” is a sign of compromise

and weakness. Sadly, doing this causes us to rally behind one issue or another, creating enemies of other people, rather than discerning together how God might be calling us as the church to heal the brokenness in every single one of the complex issues facing God's world today.

During this unprecedented time, I have been deeply privileged to serve alongside a wonderfully gifted staff and charitable church. We have not only been able to serve numerous families in need of food and supplies during the pandemic, but we have been able to network with a sister church and local school to address other needs in our community. As we would all quickly realize, however, these physical needs are only the tip of the iceberg. The mental and spiritual needs of people became just as pressing as the physical needs, especially as the pandemic continues to drag on and escalate.

People are not only dealing with isolation and financial

world. To put it another way, we are not called to live by the rule "love the sinner, hate the sin." This only serves to put people in categories of sin we create, while taking the focus off of our own deep need for transformation. We are instead called to "love the sinner, hate our own sin."

It has always been my sincere conviction, since my days as an NNU student, that how we respond to the news of the day must be shaped first and foremost by the Good News of the Gospel. The Gospel must be good news to those in need and those most vulnerable to harm or it isn't the good news of Jesus Christ. Therefore, if we are asked to be inconvenienced and wear a mask for the safety of others, then Christians should be the first to do so. For Jesus called us to "go the extra mile" and put the needs of others above our own. If our Black brothers and sisters are crying out for equal justice under the law, then the church should be the first to listen to their stories and seek to understand the



difficulties, but grappling with social unrest and trying to make sense of continuous unfolding events. "What are we to make of all this?" is a question we are asked often by those in our community. We are actively seeking ways to serve and pray for our medical workers, school teachers, students, police officers, city officials and the cause for equal justice for our Black brothers and sisters. All these who call Boise, Idaho, home face their own individual set of challenges, struggles and needs. I believe the church has a tremendous opportunity right now to embody the radical love of Christ in each situation people are facing in the world today.

Ministering in such a culture is obviously fraught with challenges. But one of the greatest challenges facing the church right now is overcoming the prevailing either/or categories of our time that prevent us from truly knowing and understanding the complexities of people's lives. The prevailing Biblical truth is that no matter someone's circumstance, lifestyle, economic status or beliefs, each human being is created in the image of God and therefore can never be reduced to an either/or category. When we reduce people in that way, we dismiss their actual needs and only elevate what we want over them.

In this culture of ours, so shaped by this either/or metric, it is a challenge to remember that our God-given purpose as the church is not to dominate our world for the sake of the Gospel, but to live lives that are dominated by the Gospel for the sake of God's

complexities of their lives and what changes are needed. When we are faced with the false narrative that all major social issues should be divided into "right" and "left," either/or categories, we Christians should be the first to respond in declaring to the world that we resist anything that seeks to divide us from one another. For our Christian religious expression is founded on the truth that the Gospel we know must shape the way we live with and love all people.

In these days, our Christian heritage compels us again to renew our conviction that the transformation of our personal lives in Jesus leads to the transformation of God's world. This message is central to the academic and spiritual mission of NNU and the Church of the Nazarene, by which my spirituality was forever changed as a student. This heritage of ours urgently implores us to understand that our world will be transformed, not by political saviors or the decisions of those in power, but when common everyday, ordinary people refuse to be divided and pitted against one another, but rather insist on supporting one another in love. We, as the church, are tasked by God to lead with purpose towards that loving unity by example.

We must, as Charles Wesley said, "Unite the pair so long disjoined, Knowledge and vital piety: Learning and holiness combined, And truth and love, let all people see. In those whom up to thee we give, Thine, wholly thine, to die and live." 🕯





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# GIVE

**Your gift is so much more than a means to an education; it's a powerful statement to NNU students about your belief in them and their ability to change the world for good**

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# EDUCATION and GLOBAL ACCESSIBILITY

*M.Ed. graduate Thomas Ofori Agyei represents NNU from his home in Liberia*

BY VERONICA CRAKER, CLASS OF 2020

There were many 2020 NNU graduates who were unable to return to the Boise Valley for the rescheduled commencement ceremony held on Labor Day weekend. But for one student, Thomas Ofori Agyei, there was never any plan to travel that far. That's because Agyei obtained his Master of Education degree while living in Liberia. Despite never stepping foot on campus, Agyei became connected to the university when his path crossed with NNU professors. They heard his story, and after working with him, encouraged him to pursue his graduate degree with NNU.

"Thomas is an amazing young man," Eric Keller, education and global outreach professor, said. "Most of us would see the circumstances in which he is living as an impossible situation. Survival would be our priority, but Thomas has gone beyond survival and sees hope for his nation."

## A faraway land

Thomas Ofori Agyei is the fifth of six children born to Eugene Agyei Atakora and the late Agnes Amankwa Agyei. He was born in the rural area of Bepong in Ghana before migrating to Accra, the capital of Ghana.

"We resided in five different communities until I left

home," Agyei said. "Living in Accra from age 10 was a fulfilled dream. The place looked beautiful compared to Bepong —my hometown."

Agyei grew up in an area where he was in constant contact with people from different backgrounds. He says he enjoyed learning about different cultures. When he was 15-years-old he found himself being drawn to Christ while attending youth camp meetings at the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.

"I found myself deeply involved in what has to do with the Bible and church activities," he said.

Eventually, he would go on to college, earning his degree in agriculture at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Following the completion of his degree and required national service in 2016, he decided to move to Liberia to teach.

"A decision friends and family have never embraced, but [I] know it's divine," Agyei said.

## The Nazarene network

In 2016, Agyei met Gary Friesen, executive director for Innovation Education International (IEI). That partnership would ultimately lead him to NNU. Friesen and the IEI director approved his volunteer service in the Samuel Morris Scholars



*Agyei works with students as part of his volunteer service with the Samuel Morris Scholars Program.*

Program. Two years later he would meet Dr. Kellerer and Friesen when they went to Liberia. Agyei was hired at IEI in 2017, but less than a year later he informed them he would be moving to China to pursue a master's degree. That's when Friesen stepped in and suggested he pursue the online M.Ed. in Curriculum, Instruction and Innovation at NNU.

"I begun reading about NNU," Agyei said. "I liked how simple and detailed information on NNU's websites looked. Fortunately, I got admission and enrolled in NNU on January 14, 2019. Gary and Eric helped in many ways. Getting financial aid, receiving handheld recommended books a semester ahead for future courses are a few of the roles they played. Calling them bosses gives me joy."

With a focus on high-quality instruction, instructor leadership, innovation, personal reflection, and research practices and applications, the M.Ed. in Curriculum, Instruction and Innovation equips graduates with the appropriate skill sets needed to access and effectively use technology and resources in today's dynamic learning environments. The objective is to develop attitudes and practices that prepare educators to remain current and effective in an ever-changing world.

Agyei says he enjoyed learning from all of his professors but

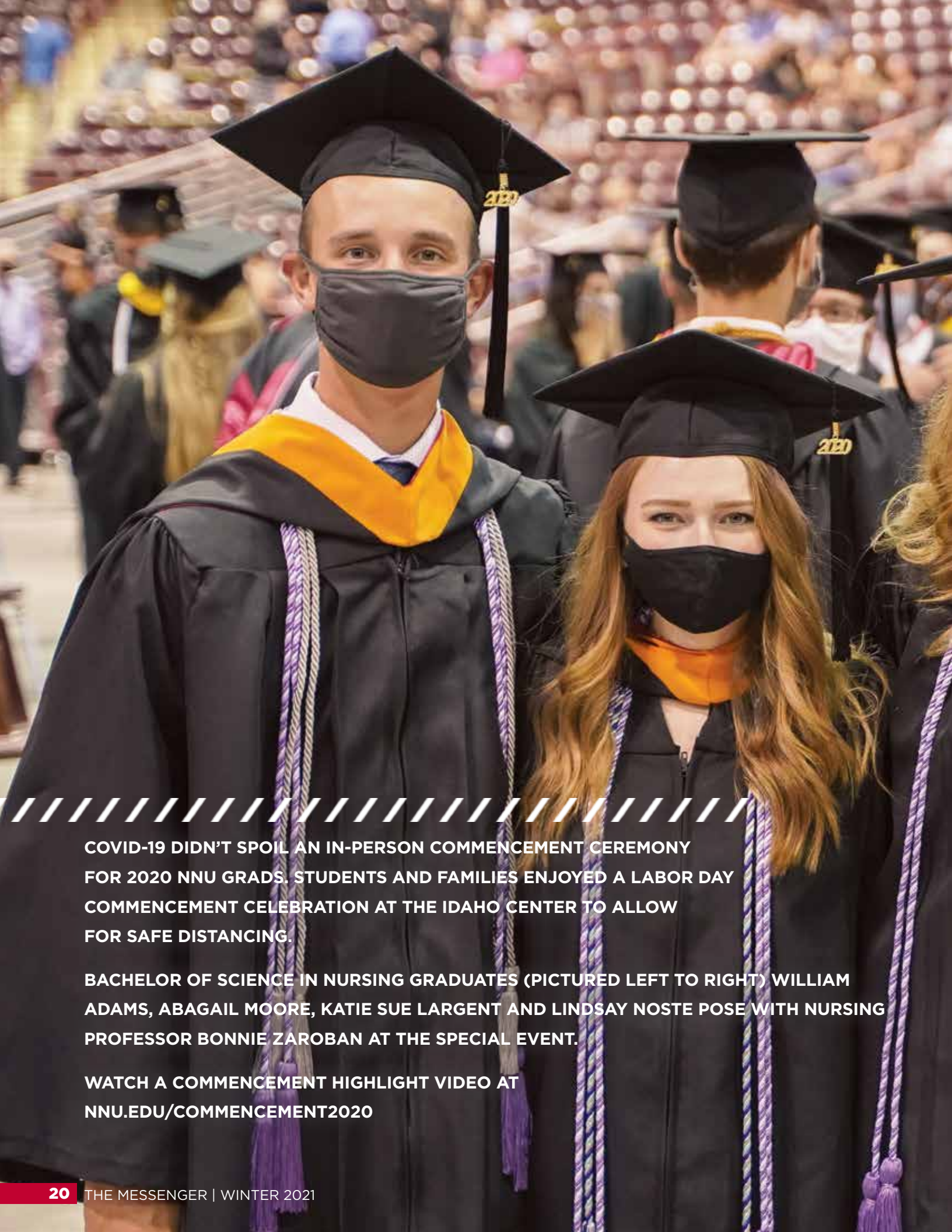
credits Dr. Amy Ackley, assistant professor of education, with being his mentor. He often struggled with power outages and unreliable internet connections. He says Ackley and his other professors took the time to help him get through the technology issues of completing the program online. In time he was able to gain a great deal from his courses.

"Everything Thomas learned, he immediately would go and implement, even when it meant pushing against barriers and the 'status quo' of his country," Ackley said.

Today, Agyei teaches Agriculture, Mathematics and Chemistry in grades seven through 12. He says earning his M.Ed. in Curriculum, Instruction and Innovation is a dream come true and is one step closer to him becoming a college professor, which is his ultimate goal.

"Thomas has been an incredible asset to our IEI team of nine nationals in southeastern Liberia," Friesen said. "His love for Christ, humility, Spirit-filled character and competence have impacted every aspect of our program. In the eyes of the world, Thomas has given up much to leave his middle-class life in Ghana to follow God's call to serve in this remote region of one of the poorest countries in the world." 🙏





COVID-19 DIDN'T SPOIL AN IN-PERSON COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY FOR 2020 NNU GRADS. STUDENTS AND FAMILIES ENJOYED A LABOR DAY COMMENCEMENT CELEBRATION AT THE IDAHO CENTER TO ALLOW FOR SAFE DISTANCING.

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN NURSING GRADUATES (PICTURED LEFT TO RIGHT) WILLIAM ADAMS, ABAGAIL MOORE, KATIE SUE LARGENT AND LINDSAY NOSTE POSE WITH NURSING PROFESSOR BONNIE ZAROBAN AT THE SPECIAL EVENT.

WATCH A COMMENCEMENT HIGHLIGHT VIDEO AT [NNU.EDU/COMMENCEMENT2020](https://nnu.edu/commencement2020)







# ALUMNI NEWS

*Catch up on classmate updates and recent additions*



**Donna J. Knight** -96- published her book “The Boy Who Saw Double,” this year. Her book is her testimony of how she unconsciously developed a meaningful relationship with God. It is an homage to her late son, Rashard Miles Henry, a talented tennis player who was diagnosed with Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma.

She said of her NNU experience, “God used the guise of basketball to cast me into an area where Christianity was and still is the foundation of all-being. He not only cast me into a new world, but He ensured that I crossed paths and developed some deep and meaningful faith-based relationship with believers that would positively influence and shape my perspective and understanding about life.”

## 1980s

**Sabrina (Smith) Jones** -89- received her Ed.D. in Leadership and Professional Practice from Trevecca Nazarene University. Her international research addressed the subject of multicultural leadership within the Church of the Nazarene. She was

named Chief Operations Officer of the 510 Foundation and the Congregational Life Pastor at Nashville First Church of the Nazarene. In this role, she oversees urban outreach ministries, collaboration of six worship cultures, discipleship and international mission teams with partnerships in both Haiti and Kenya.

## 1990s

**Todd Gill** -92- was named president and COO at United Heritage Insurance.

## 2000s

**Danielle (Silvers)** and **David Richert** -00- have been named instruction coaches at the Pechersk School International in Kyviv, Ukraine.

**Shemia Fagan** -03-, an employment law attorney and Oregon state senator, won her bid in the November election to become Oregon’s next secretary of state.

**Rebecca (Merriam) Eyre** -05- was named CEO at Project Heal, a nonprofit that focuses on equitable healthcare access for people with eating disorders. Eyre earned her B.A. in Psychology.

## Marriages

**1 Vickie (Bowles)** -80- and Jim Evans on February 9, 2018 in Pasco, Washington

**2 Lynette (Kugler)** -93- and Randall Smith on August 4, 2018

**3 Jacquelyn (Vanderpool)** -11-M.Ed. 06- and **Nathan Capen** (15) on October 27, 2018 in Emmett, Idaho

**4 Natalie (List)** -18- and **Eric Stone** -17- on December 22, 2018 in Nampa, Idaho

**5 Kellie (Miller)** -13- and Dominik Weiss on February 5, 2019 in Seattle, Washington

**6 Natalie (Knauf)** -19- and **Adam Paulson** -18- on July 27, 2019 in San Clemente, California

**7 Libby (Herrick)** -98- and James Cameron on September 19, 2019 in Vancouver, Washington

**8 Allison (Christy)** -16- and Matthew Edwards on January 4, 2020 in Valencia, California

**9 Bethany (Haglund)** -12- and **Marshal Schultz** -07- on March 14, 2020 in Nampa, Idaho

**10 Kamerron (Lowe)** -15- and Sean Slay on June 13, 2020 in Boise, Idaho

**11 Samantha (Lundberg)** -15- and Derek Gutheil on August 2, 2020 in Seattle, Washington

**12 Lexie (Southfield)** and **Nathaniel Tollman** -18- on August, 8, 2020 in Caldwell, Idaho

**13 Matty (Salazar)** -21- and Deoncio Wynia on September 30, 2020 in Marsing, Idaho

## Births and Adoptions

**14 Rylie Rayne Miller** on August 25, 2018 to **Emily (Bwan)** -14- and **Greggory Miller** -13-

**15 Vivian Elise Marshall** on July 13, 2019 to **Amber (Roach)** -05- and **Shane Marshall** -03-, joining Colette

**16 Everly Faye Nutting** on July 27, 2019 to **Hillary (Martin)** and **Randy Nutting** -96-, joining Ashlyn and Riley

**17 Junia Promise Dean** on August 2, 2019 to **Sarah (Pence)** -09- and Austin Dean, joining Isaac, Annelise, and Daniel

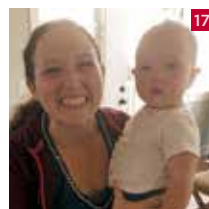
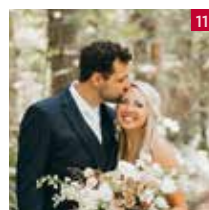
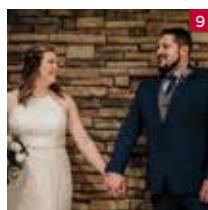
**18 Jonah Mark McGehee** on October 7, 2019 to **Rachael (Snyder)** -14- and Nathaniel McGehee

**19 Eilish Mae Webb** on October 29, 2019 to **Shanna (Rippy)** -13- and **Justin Webb** -13-

**20 Ella Louise Brigowatz** on December 2, 2019 to **Stephanie (Ortman)** -00- and John Brigowatz, joining JJ, Zach, and Megan



Submit updates, announcements and photos at [NNU.EDU/UPDATE](https://nnu.edu/update)



**21** Mabel Ruth Scott on December 10, 2019 to **Emily (Emerson)** -14- and Casey Scott, joining Bennet

**22** Luke Joshua Mackey on January 17, 2020 to **Christi (Tiel)** -01- and Warren Mackey

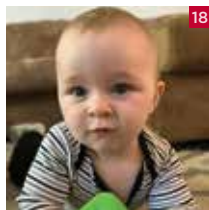
**23** Grayer Weston Myers on February 24, 2020 to **Lexi Fesenbek** -16- and Daniel Myers

**24** Foster Scott Skovgard on February 26, 2020 to **Heather Skovgard** -16- and Gabe Owen, joining Waylon

**25** Daxton John Lorig on February 28, 2020 to **Lindee (Triplett)** -16- and **Kramer Lorig** -17-

**26** Elyssa Jean Galloway on April 13, 2020 to Tiffanee (Tilford) and **Keenan Galloway** -11-, joining Eliana

**27** Maylene Elizabeth Sevier on April 26, 2020 to **Heather (Pence)** -08- and **AJ Sevier** -11-, joining Maverick Danger



**28** Watson Freiburghaus on May 5, 2020 to **Rebecca (Clark)** -06- and **Jordan Freiburghaus** -10-, joining Pierce and Fletcher





**29** Brock Nathan Emerson on May 11, 2020 to **Kenzie (Clark)** -18- and **Nathan Emerson** -17-

**30** Emmett Russell Funk on May 24, 2020 to **Melina (Flynn)** -17- and **Cody Funk** -17-

**31** Oliver James Capen on May 25, 2020 to **Jacquelyn (Vanderpool)** -11-M.Ed. 06- and **Nathan Capen** (15)

**32** Ava Reese Bland on July 7, 2020 to **Hailey (Cook)** -19- and **Nick Bland** -16-

**33** Maxwell Jeffrey Siems on August 17, 2020 to **Melinda (Welch)** -14- and Benjamin Siems

**34** Milo Ray Holland on September 7, 2020 to **Lisa (Bloomquist)** -09- and Daniel Holland

**35** Hannah Sophia Rojas on October 10, 2020 to **Candace (Breshears)** -06- and Alex Rojas, joining Abraham, Isaiah, Elijah, Isabella, and Nehemiah

## In Memory

**Dolores (Bone) Hurn** -47- on May 1, 2020

**Fred E. Fowler** -50- on August 13, 2020 in Boise, Idaho

**Gordon Belzer** -52- on March 24, 2020 in Sherwood, Oregon

**Phil Lamm** -54- on October 18, 2020 in Kamiah, Idaho

**Noreen (DeJong) Wieczorek** -55- on July 24, 2020 in Mitchell, South Dakota

**Larry Azeltine** -56- on September 4, 2020 in Portland, Oregon

**Lawrence Bunts** -57- on November 30, 2019 in Nampa, Idaho

**Ralph Ewer** -59- on June 10, 2020 in Spokane, Washington

**Elon Booker** -59- on July 16, 2020 in Wyoming



**Russell David Aman** -67- on July 7, 2020 in Nyssa, Oregon

**Richard Kayser** -69- on October 12, 2020 in Pullman, Washington

**Nancy (Zimbelman) Clayton** -72- on May 22, 2020 in Woodburn, Oregon

**Nancy (Ratzloff) Robinson** -73- on September 23, 2020 in Nampa, Idaho

-year- indicates graduation year  
(year) indicates matriculation year



**Harold Thomas**, longtime NNU Foundation Board member, passed away on August 21, 2020. In

addition to serving on the Foundation Board for 29 years, Thomas was also instrumental in the completion of the Thomas Family Health & Science Center. He was awarded the Emerson Award in 1995 for his contributions to NNU. NNU President Emeritus Richard Hagood had this to say about Thomas: "Harold was someone we could always count on to cut through the doubts and perceptions of tasks too big, to ask what we could do together to bring success to our mission. He believed in what we were trying to do with Northwest Nazarene University—he loved our chapel services, enjoyed our students and trusted the leadership to chart a course into the future."



FROM THE OFFICE OF ALUMNI RELATIONS

# CONNECT

## NNU EXCLUSIVE ONLINE COMMUNITY

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WITH CLASSMATES

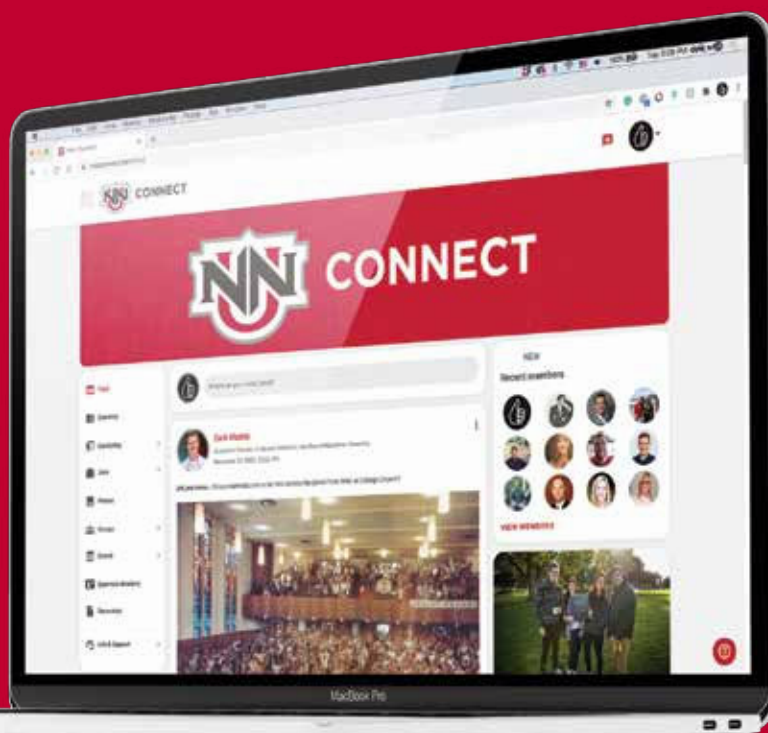
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YOUR NETWORK

**ADVANCE**  
YOUR CAREER

**MENTOR**  
FELLOW ALUMNI

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[WWW.NNUCONNECT.COM](http://WWW.NNUCONNECT.COM)





# MORE than EMPLOYEES

*NNU honors five individuals with emeriti status for their devoted service to the university*

**NNU** is privileged to have a community of faculty and staff dedicated to serving the university above and beyond expectations. This year, five of those individuals were honored with emeriti status. Nancy Ayers, Kevin Dennis, Brenda Johnson, Wes Maggard and Bill Packard truly exemplify that the NNU community of faculty and staff are more than employees—they are servant-leaders committed to the success of the university and its students.



**NANCY AYERS**  
REGISTRAR EMERITA

Nancy Ayers, registrar emerita, first came to NNU in July 2000 as the Degree Audit Coordinator and Secretary to the Dean of Academic Resources. Nancy became the Registrar in July 2006. She graduated from Arizona State University in 1979 with a B.A. in Elementary Education and received a Master of

Business Administration degree from Northwest Nazarene University in 2006.

Before coming to NNU, Nancy worked as a sixth-grade teacher in Phoenix, Arizona, and served as the co-owner and vice president of a small business in Nampa, Idaho. Nancy has two adult children and eight grandchildren, whom she loves dearly.

In her time at NNU, Nancy participated in the implementation of NNU's current student information system, taught Math for Business in the NNU School of Business, worked 18 commencement exercises, handed out thousands of diplomas and her signature graced thousands of transcripts. Nancy served for a number of years as the Principal Designated School Official for international students and as the school certifying official for veterans using tuition benefits. Over her 20 years at NNU, Nancy has served faithfully on numerous committees and councils and has overseen a number of employees and vital institutional projects.

When Nancy began at NNU, her primary task was to hand-write degree audits for every degree-seeking student. During her tenure in the Registrar's Office, she built the systems infrastructure for the current automated degree audits and oversaw several technological updates to the student information and reporting systems. Nancy's employees note, "Nancy is a delight to work for.

She sees the potential in her team, and always supports our goals. Nancy is beloved by staff and faculty, and will be sorely missed." Nancy has been a dedicated servant to NNU even in the midst of personal adversity, and her knowledge of policy and procedure has been vital to NNU's success over the years.

As the master says to his faithful servant in the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25, we can look to Nancy's career at NNU and say: "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much." Nancy has certainly been set over much at NNU, and like the servant in the parable, has proven faithful.



**KEVIN T. DENNIS**  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
EMERITUS OF ENGLISH

Associate Professor Kevin Dennis has devoted his entire career to Northwest Nazarene University. Professor Dennis graduated from Northwest Nazarene College in 1977 and received a Master of Arts from Idaho State University in 1979.

Over the course of his career, Professor Dennis instructed and mentored students in English and the arts. He taught courses ranging from English Composition to Principles of Writing to Greek and Roman Classics to Modern World Literature. During his teaching career, he received the Alumni Excellence in Teaching Award in 1994 and was voted Professor of the Year in 1994.

Professor Dennis has served the university on many committees and councils, including service on the Faculty Policy Council for 14 years, on the General Education Council for 10 years, and as a faculty representative to the Board of Trustees for 14 years.

Although his tenure and service to the university in various governance roles is impressive, more importantly, Kevin loved and served NNU's students well. His deep care and concern for students was significant in their lives. When Kevin saw a need, he offered a listening ear and then did his best to find ways to support the student. NNU and her students have been blessed by this deeply committed professor who has spent his life in service to them. Kevin would love to stay in touch with former students and colleagues. Email him at [ktdennis@nnu.edu](mailto:ktdennis@nnu.edu).



**BRENDA G. JOHNSON**  
**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR**  
**EMERITA OF BUSINESS**

Brenda Johnson went home to the Lord on May 7, 2020. At the time of her passing, she was an active and important member of the faculty in the College of Business at Northwest Nazarene University.

Dr. Brenda G. Johnson, Associate Professor of Business, began her career at NNU in August 2001 as an administrative assistant. She subsequently served in several capacities, including the program coordinator for the MBA program.

She graduated from Olivet Nazarene University in 1974 with a B.S. in Elementary Education and earned a Master of Business Administration degree from NNU in 2002 and a Doctorate of Business Administration from Anderson University in August 2011.

While receiving her doctorate, Brenda served as an adjunct professor for the NNU College of Business before joining the College as a faculty member in 2007. In recent years she also served NNU as the head of the International Study Program.

Dr. Johnson was loved by her students, and, in return, she was completely devoted to them. As her health declined, she continued to come to campus and teach to the point of her final hospitalization. Brenda drew strength from her students, and, in many ways, her continued service was therapeutic.

We are deeply grateful for Dr. Brenda G. Johnson's 19 years of dedicated service to Northwest Nazarene University and her students.



**M. WESLEY MAGGARD, JR**  
**STAFF EMERITUS**

Mr. M. Wesley Maggard, Jr. devoted his 45-year career to higher education, all at Northwest Nazarene University. "Wes" graduated from Northwest Nazarene College in 1975 with a degree in Religious Education. He went on to earn a Master of Ministry degree, graduating in 1992. Following his graduation in

1975, Wes began his career as the Director for the Brick House, going on to hold other positions as Director of Campus Safety, then as Director of Housing, and spending the last 36 years in the Financial Aid Office, including a number of years as the Director.

Wes is known for his love, care and ministry to the students and their families. He spent countless hours working with the students and their parents to search for all options that would allow a student to become part of the NNU community. He knew that every student was another candidate for Christian transformation. Wes never forgot his mission at NNU—to serve students and be a Godly example to every one of them. His kind heart and gracious demeanor eased parents' minds as he discussed the hard aspects of financing their child's education.

Wes set the standard for what it means to be a Christian steward of NNU's resources.

Not only did Wes contribute his work ethic to NNU, but he also shared his fun and jovial side. Wes played Santa Claus for Morrison Hall, oversaw Thanksgiving and Christmas gift baskets and facilitated Constitution Day remembrances.

Wes offered his talents and services to the Nampa community as well, serving as a board member at Nampa Christian Elementary School and Northwest Christian Credit Union, as a member of the scholarship committee for Mission Aviation Fellowship and as a bell ringer for the Salvation Army. He serves in his local church teaching Sunday School and has participated in three Work and Witness mission trips. Wes received the Alumni Distinguished Service Award in 2005. He exemplifies Servant Leadership in every aspect of his life.



**WILLIAM PACKARD**  
**PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF**  
**PHYSICS**

Dr. William Packard, Professor of Physics, has devoted most of his career to higher education. Dr. Packard graduated from Olivet Nazarene University in 1980, received a Master of Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1981 and earned his Ph.D. in Physics from

the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1987. While working on his doctorate, he also studied mathematics and electrical and computer engineering.

Dr. Packard began his career at Northwest Nazarene University in 1999. Before coming to NNU, Dr. Packard served in higher education at Arizona State University, the University of Notre Dame and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Between 1990 and 1992, he also founded Pachyderm Scientific Industries where he served as Director of Research & Development and CEO.

Over the course of his NNU career, Dr. Packard instructed and mentored students in the mathematics, physics and engineering departments. His colleagues report, "Bill has always been a man of impeccable character and high moral and academic standards. He has poured his life into his NNU students and has been beloved by his students year after year. He was affectionately known for bringing fantastic Physics demonstrations into the classroom to motivate and inspire students. He took on an Albert Einstein-like persona 'Alfonso Machuly' and was known to dress in character to engage his students. He brought students into his research, including work on an LED lantern project for third-world African countries. But most importantly, he cared deeply for the salvation and spiritual growth of his NNU students. He is sorely missed in both the classroom and lab at NNU." 🍷





## COMMENCEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

On Sunday, Sept. 6, Northwest Nazarene University held its 104th Commencement ceremony, celebrating the graduating class of 2020 while maintaining COVID-19 safety precautions. A total of 517 traditional undergraduate, graduate and non-traditional students graduated.

NNU President Joel Pearsall served as keynote speaker for the Graduate and Professional Studies ceremony. He addressed the noticeable changes to the ceremony, but encouraged everyone to focus on what had remained the same as graduates celebrated this milestone.

Dr. Joe Bankard, professor of philosophy and 2018-19 Professor of the Year, provided the keynote address during the Traditional Undergraduate ceremony and encouraged graduates to face the challenges of life with love, not fear.

“You can go to any university and get job training. You can go to almost any university and get prepared for a career. But NNU is special because we believe in the transformation of the whole person. We want to see you as men and women developing those traits that are going to allow you to withstand the storms of life,” he said.

Recordings of both ceremonies can be found at [nnu.edu/commencement](http://nnu.edu/commencement). 📺



## IEEE BEST IN THE WEST AWARD

A team of computer science and engineering students placed first in the Western region and eighth in the nation in the 2020 IEEEExtreme global competition in October. NNU's second team placed 12th in the Western region.

IEEEExtreme is a 24-hour computer programming competition sponsored by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). Students compete against teams from around the globe to solve a set of programming problems.

“Years ago when I asked myself what I wanted to do when I grew up, I never imagined I would voluntarily code for a 24-hour competition. Nothing feels better than the gratification of solving a problem that you have been staring at for more than 4 hours,” said senior Enoch Levandovsky.

NNU had two teams in the competition: Levandovsky joined with senior Hope Henry and senior Jason Hatfield on the team that placed first, and junior Aaron Borger, junior Jeffrey Fairbanks and senior Kyle Duncan made up NNU's other team. Unlike most other teams that include graduate students, NNU's teams were composed entirely of undergraduates.

The NNU teams competed against 3,701 teams from around the world. 🌍



## NEW HEALTH COMMUNICATION MAJOR

NNU launched the Bachelor of Science in Health Communication program in 2019 and will have its first graduating class Spring 2021.

“Effective communication is essential to any type of healthy relationship especially when speaking about health issues with both medical and non-medical members of our society. This pandemic has shone a spotlight on the need for clarity and careful attention to health messages and health education,” said Dr. Donna Allen, Department of Communication Arts and Science chair.

This major is designed for students with an interest in health but not wanting to be providers, for those looking for places to advocate for others and for those wishing to go on in careers or graduate school in public health, health administration, health communication or community health.

Allen said, “We want NNU's program to equip students to be creative and redemptive in these important healthcare roles and to be prepared for graduate programs in Health Communication or Public Health if they choose to continue on.”

To learn more about the Health Communication program visit [nnu.edu/healthcomm](http://nnu.edu/healthcomm). 📺



## INTERNATIONAL BUSHFIRE RESEARCH

NNU Computer Science Professor Dr. Dale Hamilton worked as Science Lead on a project with the Australian/New Zealand Frontier Development Lab Data Quest on research using artificial intelligence to address bushfire issues by using space-based sensors.

Hamilton recruited computer science majors Braelyn Boerner, Kyle Duncan, Jeff Fairbanks and Kamden and Enoch Levandovsky to assist him with the international research.

“Our students helped the research teams with data acquisition and collection tasks as they obtained and prepped data as the Data Quest was starting,” Dr. Hamilton said.

Dr. Cormac Purcell, program director with Trillium Technologies in Australia, said of the students, “Their broad knowledge of machine learning and computational geography was a real boon to the Fire Behaviour team especially. We do hope that the students had a positive experience working with an international team of cross-disciplinary scientists.”

Students completed their part of the project in August. Their work on an international stage is evidence that the education they are receiving at NNU is preparing them for real world applications. 📖

## NNU PARTNERS WITH CHP

Local nonprofit Care House Partnerships (CHP) opened the doors of a new health clinic in Nampa last fall. The clinic provides basic medical care and counseling services for the uninsured in the community.

NNU nursing and counseling faculty and students have played an important role in the development of the CHP Clinic and will continue to provide key support in its implementation.

Chandra Salisbury, assistant professor in NNU’s Master of Counseling program, is part of the CHP board of directors and a counseling services advisor. Drs. Christine Bayes and Bethany Mello, faculty in NNU’s Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) program, were on the medical services steering committee and serve as medical providers. Dr. Linda Valenzuela and Prof. Jane Weis from NNU’s undergraduate nursing program also served on the steering committee.

NNU students are also involved with supporting the CHP Clinic providing counseling, nursing and social work services.

Pastor Tony Johnson, CHP director, said, “Because of the collaboration that occurs between NNU and CHP, our neighbors receive a better standard of care and compassion.”

To find out more about CHP, go to [carehousepartnerships.org](http://carehousepartnerships.org). 📖

## ISDA GRANT FOR ORBOT PROJECT

Dr. Duke Bulanon, NNU professor of engineering, has received a grant from the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) to support the development of the University’s OrBot project. OrBot is a fruit harvesting robot prototype that Bulanon has been developing with a team of undergraduate NNU students.

“This grant provides the means for our Computer Science and Engineering students to get revolutionary, hands-on experience applying what they are learning in the classroom,” Bulanon said. “Additionally, it helps them begin to envision how their degree can be used to better their communities, which is a key part of an NNU education.”

This competitive grant, totaling \$131,784, will enable the project to move from conception to prototype. The main goal of the project is to develop an Orchard Robot (OrBot) that can be programmed to do various agricultural tasks, with specific attention devoted to harvesting.

The OrBot project is the fifth grant awarded to NNU by the ISDA. OrBot is an extension of the other ISDA funded projects that include the Crop Monitoring and Assessment Platform, IdaBOT and the Fruit Yield App. 📖





# *ATHLETICS and* **an EDUCATION**

*Alumnus John “Rock” Simmons came for basketball and left with a passion to make a difference*

BY CRAIG CRAKER, SPORTS INFORMATION DIRECTOR, CLASS OF 2002

**J**ohn “Rock” Simmons began picking cotton when he was 5 years old. Growing up on the Mississippi Delta in a family of sharecroppers, that was just the way of life.

For 12 years he picked cotton every summer. From sunrise to sunset, six days a week in the relentless heat and humidity of Mississippi, Simmons was bent at the waist in the fields picking and chopping cotton.

Come October when the mechanical picking machines would clean the last bits of the field and the work was done, Simmons said there was no better feeling in the world.

“I haven’t met a Christmas yet that could replace that feeling,” said Simmons, a 1970 Northwest Nazarene graduate. “You get off the school bus and look across the field, the meadow, the glen and there ain’t no cotton. Basketball season is starting. You can be with

your friends. You can see your girlfriend.

"I haven't hit a jump shot yet that could replace that feeling. I've never met anything like that."

And Simmons has hit a lot of jump shots in his life.

He left Mississippi in 1965 and moved to St. Louis, where he played on an inner-city powerhouse basketball team. After high school, he went to Missouri Baptist College and then ended up at Northwest Nazarene College for his junior year in 1968.

Fifty years ago this summer, Simmons walked across the graduation stage in Nampa, Idaho, becoming the first African-American men's basketball player to do so as he completed a journey he wasn't sure was possible when he was filling bags with cotton in the Jim Crow South.

"[Northwest Nazarene] was the place that made me look inward," he said. "If I had gone to Mississippi Valley State, I would've stayed empty and I wouldn't be the person I am today. My consciousness and my politics wouldn't be what they are today."

## Mississippi

The first basketball hoop Simmons ever had was built by the plantation's Black mechanic in 1955 in Ruleville.

The Simmons family had moved from Dockery Farm Plantation, the birthplace of the Blues, when Rock was an infant to the hometown of Fannie Lou Hamer, a famous Civil Rights advocate who was beaten for trying to register to vote.

They lived in a shotgun house with no running water, and

basketball proved to be an outlet for Simmons and his two brothers. When they weren't picking cotton, they could often be found playing basketball.

Because of the segregated schools, Simmons never got the chance to play the legendary Archie Manning, who attended a nearby high school. Despite that fact, basketball was an avenue to college for all three of the Simmons brothers and left Rock dreaming of being Elgin Baylor. If the NBA didn't work out, he wanted to be a teacher and a coach.

"My dream was certainly playing college ball," Simmons said, "and to be just like my coach, who played for Alcorn State. He was drafted [into the military], went to Germany, came home and got a 1960 yellow Impala that was the prettiest car in town. I wanted to be a school teacher and a coach just like him." Although he didn't follow his coach's footsteps exactly, he did in spirit. Simmons went on to have successful careers working in the juvenile court system, at the Red Cross and as a State Farm agent.

A run-in with the plantation mechanic led to Simmons moving north to St. Louis, which set him on his path to Idaho. While out running errands one summer afternoon, Simmons came upon a German shepherd in the middle of the road. It wouldn't move and he drove near it until it finally got up and left the road. The dog was owned by the plantation owner. The Black mechanic, who didn't sharecrop and drove a plantation truck, ran out of the shop and yelled that Rock better not run over the dog.

After Simmons finished his errand he came back and confronted the mechanic and said something nasty to him about defending





a German shepherd over him. The high school junior returned home and told his mom, who said she was sending him to live with relatives in St. Louis.

"I tried to talk her out of it, but she made me get on a Greyhound bus," he said. "My mother had had a bad experience with this guy previously. After a month or two, my mother said, 'forget this stuff, I'm leaving as well.' That is how the balance of my family ended up in St. Louis."

Simmons played his senior season for Vashon High and planned to follow his older brother to Mississippi Valley State, but a coaching change left him with nowhere to go.

He went to Missouri Baptist, a local junior college. His sophomore year they advanced to the national tournament and lost to Boise Junior College.

He's never confirmed if Northwest Nazarene coach Orrin Hills was at that game or if he heard about Simmons from that game, but Hills offered Simmons and two teammates scholarships to come to Nampa.

Simmons was the only one who came.

## NNC Year 1

Simmons boarded a plane for the first time in the summer of 1968 and flew to Boise, Idaho. The distance from St. Louis was a main draw, as it gave his college choice a bit of cachet.

"I didn't know anything about Idaho," he said, "but what was attractive was that it was far away. That put some zip on it. To go away to school was a positive."

He roomed with the first Black men's basketball player in school history, Glenn Miller, who was in his second year at NNC. Miller had been a member of the freshman team the year before.

Simmons and Gary Lawson ('70), who Simmons credited for being extremely welcoming, shined for the Crusaders that season. Simmons averaged 14 points per game and the team finished 17-9 overall.

It was what happened off the court, though, that turned Simmons' life around.

He had always identified basketball as the way his life mattered, but the mentoring of Dr. Bob Woodward, a pair of guest speakers and a new desire to start reading put basketball on the back burner.

"At the junior college I was a ballplayer," he said. "I didn't cut class, but I had no respect for academics. All the athletes at the schools that we played against in my conference in Mississippi and St. Louis, they were the popular kids. I saw no one stroking the kids that were smart, but that changed when I was out [in Idaho] when I picked up Malcolm X and Soul on Ice."

Simmons helped organize the first memorial at NNC for Martin Luther King Jr., who was killed in the spring of 1968. He recruited a Black pastor from Boise to come speak at chapel and later a Black graduate student from Idaho State.

Those speakers combined with Dr. Woodward's tutelage helped Simmons become an avid reader and learner.

"That's how you break the chain," said Mark Clark, a 1970 graduate and close friend of Simmons. "Dr. Woodward told him he thought he could do better and (Simmons) had never had anyone outside of the world of sports say that to him. That is what turned him around and started him on the way."

## NNC Year 2

Woodward wasn't sure what to make of Simmons initially, but during one of his 400-level history classes he found himself in the student's corner.

"I saw him writing during class, a class he shouldn't have been in," Woodward said. "He was making a vocabulary list from my lectures. That turned me on to him. I was really for him after that."

Simmons' senior year was less about basketball and more about studying, reading and writing columns in the campus newspaper as he delved deeper into what was going on culturally and politically in the country at the time. Simmons was the lone Black student on campus from December to June of his senior year.

Woodward, who is now 94 and living in Boise with his wife Belle, said that Simmons worked hard to become a good student. When Simmons graduated, he asked Woodward to write a letter of recommendation for him to attend prestigious Washington University in St. Louis to pursue a Master of Social Work.

"I just told the truth," Woodward said. "I told him how I saw him pulling himself up as best as he could. He got in and got his master's degree."

## Post NNU

Simmons married Mary Jessie, graduated and returned to St. Louis.

He knew he wanted to do something to help youth, so he went to a local police station and asked if they had any jobs that didn't involve carrying a gun.

"The guy laughed at me and told me to go across the street and talk to the juvenile court people," Simmons said. "I worked there for 10 years and went to WashU at the same time."

He eventually left the juvenile court and joined a program called AID which helped victims of crimes. After two years, the grant money ran out and he moved on to the Red Cross. He supervised veteran services, enjoying advocating for people who had been forced out of the military.

Eventually, he ended up as a State Farm agent where he has spent the last 33 years.

In 1997, Simmons got remarried to Theresa. He also has three children: Patrick, Maceo and Holiday. His daughter is named after the singer Billie Holiday and his youngest son after a Cuban revolutionary, Antonio Maceo.

He credits his time at NNC as helping put him on a path to even know who Holiday and Maceo were.

"I would call it a pilgrimage," he said. "It was almost like a religious journey when I got started. You start discovering stuff that you never paid any attention to. That is what I would wish to see these Black kids go through ... to be proud of their achievements."

Simmons' pilgrimage started in the fields of Mississippi, wound through the humidity of St. Louis, stopped in the farmland of Idaho and ended up back in Missouri, helping as many people as possible along the way. 🍷



# *MORE* than **A BOSS**

*Dr. Rev. Fred Fullerton is commended for his work with the NNU community upon his retirement*

BY MICHELLE KUYKENDALL, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT, CLASS OF 1981

**F**inding a word to describe Dr. Rev. Fred Fullerton is difficult. What word do you use for someone who is wise, kind, a pastor, shepherd, diplomat and encourager? All of these come to mind when trying to describe Fred.

Fred entered my life in April 2009 when he took NNU's newly created position of Vice President for Spiritual & Leadership Development. Over the following eight years, I served as his administrative assistant. In this role, Fred's tasks have been to lead the work of spiritual formation for the undergraduate programs at NNU, serve as the relational contact for the constituent churches of the Northwest Region, begin initiatives in spiritual formation for graduate programs and guide service opportunities for students to minister here in the Treasure Valley.

After Fred started, it quickly became evident how much of a blessing he was to our department and our campus. Fred sees the potential in people. He always believes in and empowers them to do their best work. Fred supports people in their endeavors, whether those be professional, personal or spiritual. Regardless of the setting he supports and encourages everyone he encounters. In addition, Fred is a wise counselor, and, at heart, he is a consummate pastor. He pastors everyone he encounters as a spiritual mentor and guide. Fred has the ability to be empathetic, to cry with people, but also to stand firmly for his beliefs. He cares for strangers. I have seen him laugh with students, mourn with employees and comfort the poor and the needy in the community. Countless times I've seen him astutely discern the needs of others and do whatever was in his power to help.

Fred became a personal leader and a mentor for our family in multiple instances. The most memorable was in May 2017 when my husband Steve and I both had major surgery. Steve had suffered with chronic kidney disease for several decades, and in 2016, was placed on the donor list. By the grace of God, I was a match, and in May 2017, he received one of my kidneys. Not only was Fred an understanding boss, providing encouragement, prayer, and the time off for the procedure, but he also insisted on being at the

hospital with us in Salt Lake City during the surgery. I assured him he did not need to be, but he insisted. Arriving the day before the procedure, he proved a reassuring presence, spending the evening with us.

On the day of surgery, we were to report at the hospital at 6:00 a.m. Fred met us there. He offered prayer as we went into surgery and sat with our daughter and Steve's sister for the duration of the surgery. He took them to lunch that afternoon and talked for some time with Steve's sister, a board member at her home church, about their Nazarene connections. He stayed with them until after the doctors reported both Steve and I had come through surgery successfully. Fred offered comfort and kindness beyond what was necessary that day, and we were incredibly grateful for the support.

That day will forever solidify in my mind how Fred was truly a servant leader. The Center for Servant Leadership defines the servant leader as being, first and foremost, a servant.

It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first.... The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant—first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? (<https://www.greenleaf.org/what-is-servant-leadership/>)

Through Fred's servanthood, we have certainly grown as people in Christ. We learned what it means to love like Christ loves us. Fred cared for our souls that day in Salt Lake City. Since then I have watched Fred offer these same qualities to others; caring for their physical needs, whether food or shelter; caring for their mental needs, whether providing laughter or a shoulder to cry on; and caring for spiritual needs, whether providing wise counsel or theological insight.

It has been an honor to watch Fred minister to others and to be ministered to throughout these years. 🌿



# MORE *than* MUSIC

*The NNU Department of Music finds ways to carry on despite a global pandemic*

BY DR. PHILIP MILLER, DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC CHAIR

## MUSIC

Music Breathes

Music Speaks

Music Breathes Beauty into Ugliness

Music Speaks Love into Hatred

Music Breathes Light into Darkness

Music Speaks Truth into Deception

Music Breathes Life into Death

Music Speaks Hope into Despair

The realities of the power of music became all too clear when the world's ensembles went silent in early 2020. I was attending a conference with many of my other regional choral colleagues just as the full realities of COVID-19 were coming into focus. It became clear that a shutdown of our music ensembles would inevitably come. The stories of super-spreader events happening in choral rehearsals spread across the news, and the risks of continuing ensembles were too great. With a heavy heart, I pushed out the announcement that all music rehearsals at NNU would immediately cease. The date was March 12, 2020.

In many ways, the days and months since March feel like years. It seems like every day we had to face something we have never faced before and were forced to make decisions we had never had to make.

Being unable to gather together with the other faculty and students.

Having to finish the school year with remote learning.

Having to learn the best methods for remote learning literally overnight.

COVID-19 continuing to spread and communities struggling to keep up.

Shutdowns causing incredible job loss, especially in the arts.

News stories emerging of how higher education would never recover and students wouldn't come back in the fall.

All kinds of different timelines on when (and even if) things would ever be normal again.

And then in the middle of all that darkness, it happened. Artists

all across the world began to band together through discussion boards, social media, and video chat (I didn't even know Zoom existed before March) to figure out the way forward. How could the arts survive in these unprecedented times? How could the very important gift of music still be offered to the world?

The creation and sharing of online music lessons came first. Teachers and artists banded together to create dynamic virtual content to share with their students and the public. Virtual choirs began to pop up all over the internet as directors and ensembles continued their work in new and innovative ways.

Multiple national arts organizations combined their resources to research and understand how COVID spread and how musicians could work to mitigate that spread while performing or rehearsing. The world came together and the arts began to battle back.


Over the summer, I worked with my colleagues, researched and prayed about how NNU Music could return in the fall. Would our students even come back? If so, how do we make music again? Then, one by one, the NNU Music students began to commit to coming back. In fact, we were even growing larger than the year before!

So, the NNU Music Department is up and running again. Our rehearsals certainly look different; the masks, social distancing, symptom checking, and weekly COVID testing present challenges. But we are together, breathing light into darkness and hope into despair.

On October 1, nearly seven months after being silenced, NNU Music presented a concert on our beautiful campus. Concert Band, Bella Voce, Northwesterners, NNU Jazz, and University Choir and Orchestra all performed. We were outside and still following all of our protocols, but we performed! What an amazing day and an answer to prayer.

We continue to work on creative ways to bring you music. Just a few weeks ago, the NNU Film School partnered with the Music Department to film a performance of the song "Is He Worthy?" Lights and cameras filled the campus quad and almost 200 performers and crew worked together on the project.

So, we are back. The students at NNU are using music once again to bring Beauty, Love, Light, Truth, Life, and Hope to our campus community and to all of you.

Pray for us as we continue to work to keep the music playing. 







The Lord our God is ever faithful  
Never changing through the ages



# CONRAD COMMONS



TIMEOUT, THE WEEKLY STUDENT-LED WORSHIP SERVICE, MOVED OUTSIDE LAST FALL STAGED IN FRONT OF THE NEW CONRAD COMMONS BUILDING. GATHERING FOR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT HAS HAPPENED CREATIVELY BUT STILL CONTINUES AS A TOP PRIORITY.

WATCH LIVESTREAMED OR RECORDED CHAPEL SERVICES AT [NNU.EDU/CHAPEL](http://nnu.edu/chapel).



# *MORE* than a **SCHOLARSHIP**

*Thanks to the Nighthawks Fund,  
Cassie Hinnenkamp presses on toward her degree*

BY STEPHANIE TOMLINSON

Things haven't always gone as Cassie Hinnenkamp planned. She never planned to start a family when she was halfway through college the first time. She never planned that the choice of which house to buy would eventually lead to her calling and future career. And she never planned to have her salary cut significantly because of COVID-19 halfway through her first semester after returning to finish her degree.

But it was a soul-seeking assignment in her Cornerstone class, which asked Cassie to reflect on what had brought her to this point in her life, where she began to see how all of those "unplanned" moments—and many others—had been pivotal experiences that were intricately woven together to bring her to exactly where she needed to be.

Last January, Cassie was finally able to continue her dream of earning a college degree. During her first attempt right out of high school, her plans took a bit of a detour when she became pregnant shortly after her sophomore year. Although not at all what the then-20-year-old had planned, looking back she can see how the amazing journey and lessons she learned along the way have played such an integral role in making her who she is and preparing her for her current challenges.

"Things haven't always been easy ... But hard is a reality in life. As I've learned from Code Red founder Cristy Nickel, we just need to choose our hard ... Do you do the 'hard' of not being able to continue advancing in your career because you've reached as high as you can without a college degree or do you do the 'hard' of going back to school while managing a family and doing a job?" Cassie asked.

Cassie is currently balancing her life as a wife of 20 years to her supportive husband, a mom to three great kids—a son who is a sophomore at NNU and two daughters, one who is a junior in high school and one an eighth-grader—a full-time employee working as an educational aide (EA) for a special needs student and a student herself in her second semester in the adult professional studies accelerated teaching certificate program working toward her elementary education degree.

Whether making friends with a special needs student in middle school, peer mentoring in high school or pursuing a degree to be

a sign language interpreter during her first go-round at college, Cassie has always had a heart for children and teaching. Shortly after her son and daughters were school-aged, a close connection with a neighbor led her to volunteering at the local elementary school. There she found a natural gift and love for being in the classroom. One unplanned opportunity led to another and another, leading her down the path of becoming an elementary EA to serving as an elementary computer teacher to her current role. Although promoted through the ranks quickly and continually encouraged by administrators and classroom teachers to finish her degree, Cassie never thought she had the time to go back. After a particularly memorable conversation with her administrator, Cassie knew it was time to figure out how to make it happen.

"On the first day in my current role, my administrator came to me and asked 'So when do you start your program to get your certification?' She then went on to offer high praise and encouragement for what she saw in my potential. It was right then that I chose the 'hard' of going back to school."

Cassie came home and started looking into programs. Although the cost was definitely a concern, NNU quickly rose to the top of her list.

"In my current role, I'm so blessed to be able to be in multiple classrooms and work with many different amazing teachers," Hinnenkamp said. "As I started doing some research I found one thing that several of the teachers I admired had in common: they had all graduated from NNU."

That decision has been reinforced time and time again.

"When my son started to look for a university, he was recruited by NNU to be part of their track team. When we came to visit, being on campus felt comfortable and right. Although I'm not Nazarene and not an active church member, I felt like this could be a safe place for my son to explore and to learn more—without judgment." Cassie said. "Then when it came time for me to start looking for a school, I called to inquire about the program and I immediately connected with Lindsay, my admission counselor. While I don't remember our exact conversation, I remember how I felt. I felt heard. She was genuinely interested in me and wanted to help me achieve my goals."

This is something that Cassie has continued to find during her short time at NNU. She remembers feeling like she was in way over her head in her Intro to Biblical Studies class only to have her professor quickly respond to her concerns and reassure her she was right where she needed to be and was in a better position than she thought, giving her the confidence to keep going.

“Returning to school after being away for over 20 years has definitely been a challenge,” Cassie said. “But I wanted—needed—to remember the struggle and see the difference a teacher can make when they believe in their students—even before the students believe in themselves. This will help me be ready to do the same for my students when that time comes.”

COVID-19 hit this spring as Cassie was in the midst of her first semester of classes. In retrospect, she can see the blessings that came from the chaos and difficulties—despite the loss in income. While she was incredibly grateful for the opportunity to continue serving students given the situation, there was a noticeable reduction in her hours, and therefore, her paycheck.

“Although it meant added stress about how I was going to pay for the program, it gave me the time and space to really lean into my studies and remember what it meant to be a student,” Cassie said. “It also forced me to live up to what I tell my kids about accepting nothing less than what they are capable of because with all of us in the same house, I knew they were watching. I could show them the value of education and acknowledge that sometimes it is hard, but it’s always worth it!”

As the semester wrapped up and the reality of tighter finances set in, Cassie came to the realization that she was going to have to take a break from her program. Devastated, she called her program director, Julie Howard, to break the news. In the call, it was reinforced again why NNU has been perfect for Cassie.

“Julie wouldn’t let me quit. She asked some questions, listened to my concerns and then provided a variety of options that would allow me to stay on track with the program within the confines of our financial constraints,” Cassie said. “Again, it was the personal touch and the way she cared for me and my situation that reminded me why I am here.”

One of the ways Howard helped Cassie bridge the gap was through a scholarship funded by the Nighthawks Scholarship fund. This fund was provided by donors specifically to help support students like Cassie who otherwise would not have been able to return to NNU because of financial hardships caused by COVID-19.

The impact of this scholarship wasn’t lost on her. “Without them, I wouldn’t be back here this fall. I want to thank those who don’t even know me for being willing to support me and invest in not only my future but our community’s future as well,” Cassie said. “When things get hard—as I know they will—I will remember the sacrifices, investment and all of those who have had faith in me, and I will push through until I have my teaching certificate in hand and am able to speak life and confidence into future students as they have for me.”

Cassie is scheduled to graduate in December 2022 and looks forward to helping future students realize that sometimes those unplanned things in life are exactly what is needed on the pathway to their futures—and they all have the capabilities to face the hard things along the way. 🍂







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