

CAMPUS MINISTRY REPORT

Arizona State University

Gary N. McCluskey, Campus Pastor

The first word of report to the Grand Canyon Synod is "Thank you!" Grand Canyon Synod is our number one cheerleader, financial supporter, supplier of students, and prayer worriers. You are also our number one consumer of Campus Ministry made lefse! Thank you!

I have recently entered my 20th year as campus pastor at ASU. My, how things have changed!

I took an alum on tour and he got lost in the student union. Little remains the same with campus appearance, educationally, or with the make-up of students. Yet one thing never changes: the type of students with whom we work tend to be the very best ASU has to offer.

And there continue to be many with a spiritual hunger that finds nourishment in our ministry.

Students do not arrive with the same emotional or spiritual maturity. Many bring with them a wonderful Sunday School faith that served them well in childhood. Now they learn life is more complicated than once thought and they require a faith that speaks to a complicated and often confusing life. This is where we come in. Students new to college look up to the upper class students. Upper class students remember what their first year in college was like and are happy to serve as mentors and role models. Friendships, often lasting a life-time, are formed. We had a couple return recently to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. They were married where they met: in our church. They came to say thanks. We have a constant parade of alumni who return or who simply keep in touch. They express similar gratitude. They also let us know of their current involvement in church. I'm never sure which I find more inspiring: what students do while here or what they do after they graduate. Our alumni serve the church and the world on every continent.

So far I have said "our" and "we". But these students are also "yours." They might not be here were it not for your support. We need pastors and youth directors to tell us when their students come to ASU. We need prayers and food and scholarships for weeknight and Sunday meals and retreats. We need above and beyond giving from congregations. We need your partnership in so many ways to make this all happen. And we are happy to partner with you. Want to hold a youth retreat in the Phoenix metro area? Come to our center. We will have students come and talk about college life and take youth on a campus tour. Or simply contact us and bring your youth group over some Sunday or Wednesday and eat and worship with us. Senior groups are also welcome.

What 20 years has taught me is to not fear for the Church's future. I don't know what it might look like. I do know it will be different in ways of expression. I also know it will continue to be served by people of great and growing faith. It will, of course, continue to Christ's Church, the Body of Christ. We see our role in working hard to mold leaders for this future church willing and eager to be involved and take it forward into whatever future God may be calling it.

I also want to thank you for being supportive of a ministry that often receives students rejected by other campus ministries on campus. Sometimes it is because they believe "heretical" things like the world being more than 4,000 years older. Many times it is because of sexual orientation. One such rejection was so harsh, the student needed PTSD counseling. Here, among us....among you....they find welcome. Here the bruises they incurred elsewhere begin to heal. I hope you are proud that you support a ministry that proclaims "God loves all the world!"

Every year brings us some new challenge. This year brought us a student whose El Salvadorean Mom had her TPS status revoked and was deported after about 25 years of living legally in the US. Mom has three children: one in the US army, an ASU sophomore, and one still in school. This same student arrived here as a freshman from Houston only to learn Hurricane Harvey wreaked havoc on her home. We were here for her. We continue to be here for her. YOU are here for her and I know YOU will continue to be here for her.

We worship twice weekly, share a meal twice weekly, engage in weekly Bible Study, frequent discussion groups, and retreats. We build houses in Mexico and occasionally travel to places like Martin Luther's Germany. Twice a semester we gather for "Dinner Church". Students prepare the food, sit around tables and follow a worship format that includes communion, eat, share in conversation, complete the worship, and clean up. If you would like to join us at one of these, please contact us. After all, we are YOUR ministry.

Naturally we also serve faculty and staff of ASU. Nine years ago a professor who had grown up in an atheist home, had his newborn daughter baptized. He was baptized at the same time. Recently he sent me a picture of he and his daughter with lighted baptismal candles and a cake celebrating their 9th baptismal birthday. Do you see what you do? Far too often our view of ministry is confined to what is around us. Most likely it is a good view. But always it is only a fraction of what you and your community actually do. We at Lutheran Campus Ministry are simply one slice of your ministry pie.

I thank you for the honor and privilege of serving as campus pastor. I thank you for your partnership in our ministry. Please keep us in your prayers as we keep you in our prayers.