Greetings!

Another year has passed, and here we are again! I hope this year brought you many blessings. See below what your classmates have been up to, as well as happenings on campus.

Class Updates

Amber (Jackson) Blomberg “My husband, Brady, and I welcomed our second daughter, Briella Rose on May 9.”

Matthew Schmidt “My wife Erin (Rosol) Schmidt ‘12 and I are expecting our first child, a boy, September 7. We built a house last summer in Delano, MN and moved there July 2018. Erin teaches at Beacon Academy in Crystal, MN, and I am a Business Account Manager with Verizon in Minneapolis.”

Andrew and Kristina Skowanderson welcomed a baby girl, Signe, in July 2018.

Amber (Sperling) Benoit “I am still working at Choice Bank as a Commercial Loan Operations Specialist, as well as serving as the Executive Director of Marketing/Programming for Northern Lights Arts Council. My husband and I recently added a new member to our family, Mac, a puppy from Turtle Mountain Animal Rescue.”

Dr Rachel (Claseman) DeVries welcomed a baby girl, Sophia, in September 2017. Rachel works as a Pediatrician at Mendakota Pediatrics.

Laura (Laufmann) Otis is working at Great Western Bank as an Enterprise Risk Management Analyst.

Jennifer (Bextermueller) and Jared Mackner welcomed a baby girl, Elena, in January 2018.

Dr Megan Jacobsen graduated from The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UTHealth Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences in August with her PhD in Medical Physics. Her research focuses on the physics of medical imaging. She is continuing her post-graduate work as a Medical Physics Fellow at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX.

Kristen (Frank) Swendsrud got married to Peder in August 2014. They welcomed a baby boy, Torin, in November 2018. Kristen works as an Editorial Assistant at the American Academy of Neurology.
Maria (Koski) and Eric Brown welcomed a baby girl, June, in February 2018.

Dr. Derek Mattern received his PhD in Microbiology from Friedrich Schiller University Jena in Germany in June 2018.

Natalie (Barnes) Olson “Lilla Sue was born on the Fourth of July! She has already traveled to North Carolina, North Dakota, and Iowa. I am staying home with her right now and can’t wait for summer! We are looking forward to camping for her birthday.”

Valeria Lopez-Cortes is employed as a Graphic Designer at Rapids Printing.

Steven Reuter and wife, Caitlin, welcomed a baby boy, Ellis in July 2018. Steven recently accepted a position at the Minnesota State Capital working with the leadership within the various departments of the State of Minnesota to improve workplace culture and employee wellbeing.

Schanna Lawinger received her Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from Saint Elizabeth School of Nursing in July 2018.

Michelle (Jensen) Scharpen welcomed a baby girl, Elizabeth in April 2018.

Elizabeth (Olafson) Monson and husband, Brad, welcomed a baby boy, Grant in November 2018.

Lucy (Oehler) Swanson and husband, Eric, welcomed a baby boy, Leo in July 2018. Leo joins big sister, Anna.

Kaitlyn (Boily) Hanson earned a Masters in Education from the College of St. Scholastica in December of 2017. In September of 2018, Kaitlyn and her husband Travis’s joy increased when they welcomed their son, Russell John, into the world!


Kayla (Goetz) Anderson “My husband and I have been enjoying our first year as homeowners in south West Fargo and all the little projects around the house that come with that. The highlights of this past year for us were a 2-week trip to Scotland and Ireland in November, and a week in NYC at the end of February/beginning of March this year, to celebrate our second wedding anniversary. Otherwise, no big changes for us since the promotions we each got last year in our jobs.”
Chelsea (Brady) Hengeveld is still living in Orlando, FL with her husband Karl. In June of 2018 they welcomed their son Titus Henry. He has been constantly on the move since the day he was born! They are expecting baby #2 in September.

Jacob Hanson “I serve as one of the directors within the Lutherans Outdoors in South Dakota organization, overseeing the management of staff and operations at two of the sites including Camp NeSoDak and Joy Ranch. I also serve the South Dakota Synod Office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).”

Lost List
This is a list of our classmates that the alumni office has lost touch with – they don’t have contact info or know where they are or what they’re up to! If you happen to be friends with any of them, please encourage them to update their information at: https://www.concordiacollege.edu/alumni/class-notes/

Dawit E. Elemayehu
Jordan M. Bense
Jihane Bousfiha
Phillip M. Bruckbauer
Jessica N. Cary
Kibiru A. Ejigu
Brittany M. Essig
Tyson J. Hill
Kelly C. Hofer
Megan M. Ireland
George O. Jacobson
Hannah J. Kennealy
Elisa Lange
Laura B. Marquardt
Rachel E. Mertens
Katherine A. Murnion
Tyler B. Nelson
Emma F. Noll
Megan L. Peterson
Megan C. Price
Emily G. Riitahuoma
Masaki Sato
Melissa A. Shoemaker
Gertrude M. Sommerfeld
Hanna E. Stevens
Rachel L. Sudermann
Amanda L. Svoboda
Shing Ho T. Tang
Brock P. Tostenson
Bethany A. Wagner
Anne M. Walters
Kirsten K. Waverek
Andreas Wolf
Mary C. Zeh
Lili Zhao

Homecoming
Celebrate Homecoming this year October 11-13, 2019!
Summer 2018 was a busy one for Concordia Language Villages. We had over 4700 villagers and families from all over the world attend immersion programs at our Turtle River Lake sites just north of Bemidji and at other leased camps in northern Minnesota. This strong enrollment demonstrates the value families are placing on world language and culture education.

Thanks to a generous gift of $5 million from the Simone Corporation and its CEO Kenny Park, we will soon begin the first phase of construction of *Sup sogŭi Hosu*, the Korean Language Village, on Turtle River Lake. The first Village to be built was *Skogfjorden*, the Norwegian Language Village, and that happened 50 years ago this summer. A special event to commemorate this milestone will be held on July 13. *Sjölunden* the Swedish Language Village, celebrates its 45th summer with a *midsommar* event on August 3. International Days are July 5 and August 9 where we will also celebrate 50 years of offering four-week high school credit sessions.

**Music**

Dr. René Clausen announced that he will retire following the 2019-20 academic year, concluding his service as professor of music and conductor of The Concordia Choir. Clausen is a leader in choral music as both a conductor and a composer. He is the artistic director of the Concordia Christmas Concerts. In addition to composing arrangements and original pieces for Concordia ensembles, he has written dozens of commissioned compositions including “MEMORIAL” and “Crying for a Dream” for the American Choral Directors Association. Clausen was also commissioned by Concordia to create a major work in observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The work is titled “The Passion of Jesus Christ” and premiered at Orchestra Hall in 2017. President William Craft noted in an announcement to the Concordia community that throughout his work at the college Clausen has lived the mission of The Concordia Choir “to uphold a sacred choral tradition through the uncompromising and unrelenting collaborative pursuit of musical integrity and spiritual expression.”
The Concordia Choir completed a highly successful tour through the Pacific Northwest in March. The tour featured concerts in Washington, Oregon, Montana, North Dakota, and Minnesota. The Choir also had engagements with ten high school choirs, as well as The Choir of the West at Pacific Lutheran University and a collaboration concert with The Singers – Minnesota Choral Artists at the Ordway in St. Paul. Work is now being done to plan the Choir’s 2020 tour to the Southeast United States. Updates and more information can be found at www.TheConcordiaChoir.org.

The Concordia Orchestra completed a very successful fall domestic tour with performances in Appleton, Wausau and Chippewa Falls in Wisconsin and Roseville, Sartell and Brainerd in Minnesota. Repertoire included Symphony No. 3 by Florence Price, Scheherazade by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and Concerto for Trombone by Jim Pugh, which featured Concordia Professor of Low Brass Dr. Nathaniel Dickey on trombone. Also joining the tour was guest conductor Christoph Rehli-Fankhauser, professor of conducting at the Lucerne University of Music in Switzerland.

The Concordia Band was invited to perform at both the Minnesota Music Educators Association Mid-Winter Clinic in Minneapolis and the North Dakota Music Educators Association Conference in Bismarck. In addition, the band was also invited to be the featured collegiate band at the Westman Honour Band concert at Brandon University in Brandon, Manitoba. As part of their annual domestic tour, the band performed a joint concert with the Encore Wind Ensemble in St. Paul, MN as well as concerts in St. Anthony Village, Albany and Staples-Motley, all in Minnesota. The band is in the beginning stages of planning their international tour to Spain in May of 2020.

**Cobber Athletics**

In the spring of 2018, Concordia had only one team – women’s basketball – with a female head coach. Fast forward one year, and with the hiring of new volleyball head coach Faith Dooley, the Cobbers now have 5 additional female head coaches mentoring student/athletes. Dooley, who was an All-American at the University of North Dakota, joins women’s golf head coach Kari Weidner-Ceniceros, Maureen Greiner of women’s hockey, Rebecca O’Shurak from women’s soccer and NDSU All-American Laura Januszewski who coaches both the men’s and women’s cross country teams. The rise of female head coaches was recognized by University of Minnesota’s Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport in their 2018-19 coaching report card that cited Concordia as the top college in the MIAC for the increase in female head coaches over the past year.

Concordia men’s track and field junior Matt Bye, Moorhead, won the heptathlon at this winter’s MIAC Indoor Championship Meet and went on to finish 11th in the event at the NCAA National Indoor Meet held in Boston, Mass. Bye won the MIAC title with the second highest point total in school history.

The Cobber men’s hockey team earned its seventh consecutive berth in the MIAC playoffs this season. Concordia finished conference play with nine league wins which was the most since the 2013 season. Sophomore forward Tyler Bossert, Fargo, led the MIAC in scoring and went on to earn All-American Second Team honors to become the ninth All-American in program history.

**New Hires**

Concordia added two critical new leaders in the Career Center this year. Kris Olson joined the College as the new Director of the Career Center in October 2018. Jill Wenger, a Barnesville native, was hired in the role of Assistant Director of the Career Center in March 2019.
Kris began her career in Higher Education spent several years in Higher Education at NDSU and Concordia before making a career switch. She began working for Cargill, Inc as a Corporate Training Consultant, Training Curriculum Specialist, a Member of a Global Realignment Team, and a Recruiting Manager. Following her time at Cargill, Kris founded her own consulting business. Kris is an experienced professional with over 30 years of progressive experience in Higher Education, Corporate Business and Consulting.

Jill is an experienced professional with progressive experience within the City of Moorhead ranging from City Clerk, Assistant City Manager, and most recently, Human Resource Director. Jill brings great insight into public service, the local Fargo-Moorhead area, the Restorative Justice process, and recruitment best practices.

Katie Nystuen was hired as our Health Services Coordinator this year. Part of her role is to guide students in making choices regarding their healthcare needs, and connecting them to the many quality providers in our community. Though direct care is not the focus of the Health Services Office, she is First Aid, CPR and AED certified, and can assist with triage and referral to an appropriate medical facility should an urgent situation arise, as can our Public Safety Office. One of her goals is to be more proactive and holistic regarding health and wellness programming on campus.

Dallas Fossum joined Concordia as the new Director for Facilities Management in March. Dallas is an experienced director of facilities management and has, with his teams, completed more than $50 million in renovations, new constructions, infrastructure, and deferred maintenance.

Dr. Jill Abbott has been appointed Deputy to the President at Concordia College, effective June 3, 2019. Dr. Abbott holds a bachelor’s degree in literature/language arts education, a master’s in counseling and human resource development, and a doctorate in educational administration. She currently serves as the associate vice president of academics at Minnesota State Community and Technical College. Dr. Abbott will serve as a member of the college cabinet and will continue the good work of her predecessor Tracey Moorhead as liaison to our Board of Regents. As Deputy to the President, she will work with me to ensure the fulfillment of the new college plan following its affirmation by the Board of Regents, to represent the college in building strong local and regional partnerships for mutual success, and to position Concordia as mission driven institution of national significance.

**Other News**

Concordia’s outstanding tradition of preparing students for medical school is now available to those who have completed an undergraduate degree. This intensive, 1 year program is designed for highly motivated individuals with excellent academic records, who have earned a bachelor’s degree from an accredited four-year institution, but lack most or all of the prerequisite science courses needed for admission to medical school. Our program is ideal for career changers, and individuals deciding later in their academic journey, to pursue a career in medicine.

Concordia sent 12 members to the American Forensic Association National Individual Events Tournament (AFA-NIET) at the University of Alabama, where 60 colleges and universities from across the United States competed for top honors. Concordia was one of only a few smaller colleges that placed in the top 15, which is dominated by larger research institutions.

The Center for Student Success has a new home in the Normandy. The beautifully renovated space is open and light making for an inviting space for students. The center includes academic support, Orientation and First-Year Transition Programming, the Peer Mentor program, and the Diversity Coordinator for Student Support Services.
More than 300 students presented their posters or spoke at concurrent sessions during Concordia’s 2019 Celebration of Student Scholarship (COSS) on April 10. Some students participated in multiple presentations. New at this year’s COSS was an art display with printmaking pieces and two sessions presented in Spanish. “Our goal is to keep building on the diversity of research,” says Krys Strand, director of Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity and coordinator of the Celebration of Student Scholarship.

A dinner was held April 4 to celebrate the naming of Dr. Dan Biebighauser as holder of The Sigurd and Pauline Prestegaard Mundhjeld Endowed Chair of Mathematics. Biebighauser is a 2002 graduate of Concordia and joined the faculty in 2006. The holder of the Mundhjeld chair is to be a person who has provided exemplary service in teaching and scholarship in the field of mathematics and who is known and respected in the field. All of the past holders of the Mundhjeld Endowed Chair were present. Past holders include Dr. Bill Tomhave, Dr. James L. Forde, Dr. Alexander Sze and Dr. Gerald A. Heuer ’51.

Alumni Awards

The National Alumni Board voted on the 2019 Alumni Achievement, Sent Forth and Called to Serve Awards. To learn more about each award, visit [www.concordiacollege.edu/alumni/awards-and-recognition](http://www.concordiacollege.edu/alumni/awards-and-recognition/)

2019 Alumni Achievement Award Recipients

**Dr. Paul Brandvik ’59**, professor emeritus of music at Bemidji State University, served as director of choral activities for 31 years. Brandvik received several awards, guest conducted more than 100 festivals and workshops in 16 states and abroad, and composed, edited or arranged more than 50 works.

**Dr. Kristi Ferguson ’71**, is professor emeritus of General Internal Medicine and served as director, Office of Consultation and Research in Medical Education at the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine. She spent her entire career at the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine where she has greatly influenced the development, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum.

**Dr. Thomas Samuelson ’81**, a board-certified ophthalmologist, is a founding partner and attending surgeon at Minnesota Eye Consultants, P.A., Minneapolis. He’s also an adjunct professor at the University of Minnesota and on the faculty of Hennepin County Medical Center. He has received several awards and has been named to America’s Top Doctors each year since 2002. He has written numerous articles and given more than 600 presentations around the world.

A 1977 Concordia graduate, **the Rev. Ann Svennungsen** is the bishop of the ELCA Minneapolis Area Synod, the first female bishop to serve in any of the ELCA’s six Minnesota synods. She served as a parish pastor prior to serving as president and CEO of The Fund for Theological Education and then as president of Texas Lutheran University. Svennungsen, a well-respected theologian and speaker, is published in numerous journals, and is invited to lecture, preach, and provide keynote and commencement addresses.

2019 Sent Forth Recipients

**Betsy Grams ’98**, co-founder and executive director of Cycle Health, is a 1998 Concordia graduate. CycleHealth was founded in 2014 to equip kids to power their own wellness. CycleHealth’s programs are based on adventure and self-directed goal attainment, and are prescribed by pediatricians in more than 50 Twin Cities clinics through an innovative platform called Sweat Rx.

**Matthew Culloton ’98**, Matthew Culloton, founding Artistic Director of The Singers – Minnesota
Choral Artists, is a 1998 Concordia graduate and earned a master's and a doctorate from the University of Minnesota. He is Choirmaster at The House of Hope Presbyterian Church in St. Paul, Minn., an adjunct faculty member at the University of Saint Thomas and composer. Culloton received the VocalEssence/ACDA of Minnesota Creative Programming Award (2003) and MN ACDA Outstanding Young Choral Conductor of the Year Award (2004).

Fundraising Update

This past year, our class had 5.02% participation (34 total donors) and gave $7,408.48. Since graduation, our class has given $21,545.15 in outright gifts.

THANK YOU!

Until next time,

Amber (Sperling) Benoit