



From a Heart of Gratitude to a Heart as Big as the City

By John Withers, Board Chairman

When Jesus providentially introduced me to the Leadership Foundations model, the first thing I knew was, I had found a handle for my heart. The second thing I knew was, I wouldn't be the best person to lead the day-to-day operations. I know I am a better initiator than sustainer. There's an old anecdote in life that makes me laugh, and maybe it's because there happens to be some truth to it. It goes like this; lead, follow, or get out of the way. When I met Eric Geary (also thanks to God's providential timing), I knew I'd found someone worth following, and someone whose way I could get out of!

I watched the way in which Eric followed Jesus and served others and I knew almost instantly how trustworthy he was. I am so grateful for the journey we've had together over the last 17 years. I'm confident Lexington Leadership Foundation's success has been the result of Eric's love for Jesus, passion to empower others, and ability to develop a healthy workplace culture. He has always been great at loving his neighbor just like Jesus commanded in Matthew 22.

Proverbs 16:9 says, "A man's heart plans his ways, but the LORD directs his steps." When Eric shared with me the direction his heart was being led, to engage in a new global ministry opportunity, I couldn't have been more excited for him. I knew who was directing his steps, and I felt total peace. Unashamedly, I was also pleased to hear of his desire to remain on our Board of Directors!

Eric, you came into Lexington Leadership Foundation with a heart as big as the city. As this ministry grew under your excellent leadership, so did your already big heart. May your next ministry venture be as fruitful to the Kingdom as your time was at LLF. On behalf of our Board of Directors, we wish you all the best and

express our deepest heartfelt thanks for 17 years of servant leadership to our team and our city. Both are better because of you.

- John



A Message from our CEO

On June 6, 1991, the day my mother, siblings and I arrived in Lexington, I couldn't have possibly appreciated the city that had just become my new home. I was five years old and my main passions in life were candy, Ninja Turtles and (oddly) the Miami Dolphins. Fast forward 32 years later and you'll have a hard time convincing me we don't live in the gem of the universe.

Sometimes fewer words communicate things best; there is just something special about this place. And I hope I'm not delivering breaking news when I suggest that it actually isn't the horses, basketball and bourbon. We may lay claim to the best of the best in each of those industries, but I would argue there's something even more significant that gives the city of Lexington such a beautiful identity: its people. Made by a loving God, in the image of a loving God.

It's the people, which make up families, which make up neighborhoods, which make up communities, which make this city our collective home.

And yet, as precious a gem as it may be, I believe Jesus desires Lexington to reflect His light even brighter, bolder, better and farther than it ever has. I believe increased Kingdom expansion is on the horizon. How will that become possible? You guessed it: its people.

This was illuminated for me as I read through the stories in this newsletter, which highlight community partners engaging our various ministries throughout the end of 2022. Reading about these stories just a few months after I witnessed them happening feels timely, as I now begin my tenure in this new role.

I find myself dreaming about how bright a gem Lexington can become, knowing full-well that through Jesus the potential is limitless, also knowing full-well that it will take all of us; from elected officials and school personnel to those serving in the marketplace and in local congregations. Lasting, city-wide transformation will require continued convergence across multiple sectors.

The good news? Thanks to the great leadership that came before me and the amazing team already in place, we're off to an incredible start. I am reminded of Paul's words to the people in the city of Philippi, "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:6)

May it be so in Lexington, and may the Kingdom come in Lexington as it is in heaven. That's my dream for our city. I'm all in. I hope you are too. Let's continue to transform Lexington, together.

- Christian Postel



LLF's mission

Through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit we CONNECT leaders, UNIFY the body, and MOBILIZE people to TRANSFORM Lexington into a city for God.



Be a Mentor!

Over **50** kids waiting
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AMACHI

Fun at Life Adventure Center

Our various community partners add so much life, depth, and richness to the ministry we offer to our young mentees. One of our longest community partners, Life Adventure Center of the Bluegrass, has been working alongside us since 2011. During that time, LAC has provided scholarships for over 60 Amachi mentees to attend camp, introduced mentees to the world of horseback riding and vaulting, taken them hiking, taught them archery and much more. While engaging in fun new activities like these, LAC teaches leadership and team building skills while encouraging mentees to set goals and conquer fears. The result, as you can imagine, is young people who feel more confident, empowered and capable; not to mention their newly developed appreciation for the outdoors!

LAC's unique approach to building-up young leaders like our mentees is a shining example of how an intentional investment in young people, from a community partner, can result in lasting change. The Amachi staff

and mentors alike have enjoyed a front row seat, seeing mentees become more resilient and better understand how to navigate the tough circumstances of life.

Recently, LAC hosted Amachi for our annual "fall adventure day" where our mentors and mentees played games, painted pumpkins, practiced archery, rock climbing and zip lining. Mentees set goals, challenged themselves to do things they thought wouldn't be possible, and had lots of FUN! We are so thankful for LAC for providing the space and expertise that allows our mentors of faith and good will to engage children of promise; they represent so much of what Amachi is all about!



URBAN IMPACT

Fall was for Food, Family, and Fun

The last handful of months were packed with family-centered activities. From fall festivals, to Thanksgiving meal prep, to team development activities out of state; Urban Impact has been busy!

Our team took some time in Baltimore and D.C. to learn about violence prevention and intervention efforts in other cities. In addition to that, we spent

time in community centers learning how they love their neighborhoods and the young people they're charged with. We also hosted a fall festival here at the Woodhill Community Center, coupled with resources from community schools, partners and workforce agents so that families could access supports that would benefit them.

Lastly... we ate! Some of our elementary Academy students cook weekly with one of our volunteers, Mrs. Gladys. She teaches them about food in different cultures and she expands their palate by having them try things they've never had before.

Thanksgiving season around here is always a big deal for us. Because our neighborhood is incredibly diverse, we want to bring as many of our cultures together to celebrate the diversity and enjoy each other's fellowship. We ate, laughed, danced, drew pictures and just enjoyed time together. The following week, we prepared a meal with the help of church partners to feed parents and guardians at a local elementary school so they could eat a Thanksgiving meal with their children and grandchildren.



FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE

Dedicated Dads

Fathers engaged within the ministry of Fatherhood Initiative, along with their children and families, enjoyed a sunny day at Eckart's Orchard this fall, courtesy of our friends at Thrivent. Fathers and their children were treated to an afternoon of picking apples, hayrides, a catered BBQ lunch, farm-inspired playgrounds and even pig races (definitely a kid favorite!). We witnessed fathers walking away with joy and

pride, knowing precious memories were created through a day full of care-free moments with their kids. We'd like to thank Thrivent for the intentionally they showed in inviting our fathers and families into such a great event.

We're looking forward to connecting more fathers to healthy experiences in the community that are safe, fun and foster lifelong memories. If you or your organization would like to explore opportunities to positively engage, encourage, and/or empower fathers and their children through healthy community experiences, please reach out to Jared at jsloan@lexlf.org.

In additional Fatherhood news, we are proud to announce that before the year ended, 130 fathers received a certificate for graduating from our Responsible Fatherhood class. Our team is excited and grateful for the positive relationships forged at the end of the year - from shared experiences in the community to the classroom at our Center for Fathers and Families. We look forward to continued growth, increased impact, and all that Jesus is doing through Fatherhood Initiative in 2023.



THE PRAYER ROOM

City-Wide Prayer & Worship

On November 17th, LLF in partnership with other local ministries, hosted our fourth and final city-wide prayer gathering of the year. Approximately 100 people from over 20 different congregations attended, including pastoral leadership from Man O' War Church of God, Fuente de Avivamiento (the meeting site), Growthpoint Church, Lexington Chinese Christian Church, Hope Presbyterian, Commonwealth City Church, First African Baptist Church, Asbury Theological Seminary, First Alliance Church, and Lexington House of Prayer.

In keeping with the heart of LLF to see the Body of Christ connected and mobilized regionally, this was the most diverse intercessory gathering in which we have ever participated. Yet even though we enjoyed the beauty of the "Latino" church represented together with the "Chinese" and "African American" church, the reality that we are "One" Church in Jesus was truly illuminated above all else.



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Let's Transform Lexington, *Together!*

Do you feel like God is prompting you to make a meaningful impact in our city? If you're ready to put your faith foot forward and share your passion this winter and spring, connect with us at volunteer@lexlf.org or call 859-277-3087. Let's chat and move forward where God leads us!