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# LUMUNOS

FAITH & LIGHT FOR THE JOURNEY

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Doug Wysockey-Johnson

## A Tale of Two Meetings

The conversation was open, humorous, sometimes sad, and at moments, profound.

The first meeting was confrontational and edgy. The agenda imploded halfway through. A nurse practitioner threatened to quit her job right on the spot. My armpits were sweating. The second meeting was smooth, easy, and fun. I would have been there even if I hadn't been leading the conversation.

On the surface, these meetings couldn't have been more different. But as you know, at Lumunos we prefer to hang out in the deep end of the pool, below the surface.

### Below the Surface

As different as these two meetings were, they were also much the same. They were linked together by Lumunos' mission and our theme for this year: Connect, Reflect, and Engage. In both cases, Lumunos was there to help people think about their calling and why they do what they do. Sometimes that leads to hard conversations about what gets in the way of following a call, and sometimes that means relaxed conversations about what success means at each stage of life.

*“Following a calling is about caring passionately about something—holding it close to your bones... Following a call is also about being willing to let it go.”*

Below the surface-level anger in that hospital conference room was a lot of pain. There is a term that is used in health care these days called “moral injury.” It is a term that originated in the military but is now heard amongst many health care workers. “Moral injury” refers to the emotional or spiritual wound that comes when you can't provide the kind of care you know your patient needs. Whether the cause is limited staffing, current reimbursement models, or lack of proper equipment, it is the emotional and spiritual hurt that comes from knowing what needs to be done to help others and not being able to do it. It's all about what gets in the way of a person's

calling, and some version of it exists in every profession.

### Letting Go

Meanwhile, over in the men's conversation, we were working on our definition of what success looks like at our current stage of life. One guy commented, “Success is being able to get back up on your feet again after being knocked down.” He spoke with the authority of one who has been knocked down more than once in life.

We concluded the evening by reading Mary Oliver's poem “In the Blackwater Woods,” which is about learning how to let go of things. It ends this way:

#### *To live in this world*

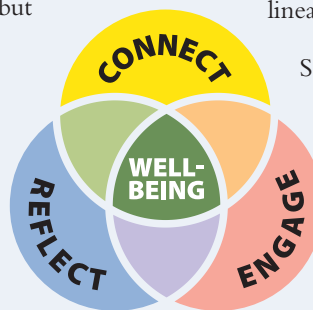
*you must be able  
to do three things:  
to love what is mortal;  
to hold it*

*against your bones knowing  
your own life depends on it;  
and, when the time comes to let it go,  
to let it go.*

Following a calling is about caring passionately about something—holding it close to your bones. That may mean getting angry when you can't do what you know is the right thing to do. Following a call is also about being willing to let it go. Sometimes the letting go is for something new; sometimes the process of letting go is the call itself. Rarely is it a smooth, linear, painless process.

Some version of the two meetings described above happen often through our work at Lumunos. We have a team of gifted facilitators, creating the space for both difficult and relaxed conversations to happen.

Thank you for standing with us, as we continue to stand with others, as all of us seek to find our meaningful place in the world today.



Doug Wysockey-Johnson is the Executive Director of Lumunos. He lives with his family in Richmond, VT, and can be reached at [doug@lumunos.org](mailto:doug@lumunos.org).

I facilitated two different meetings this past week for Lumunos within hours of each other. They couldn't have been more different. And they couldn't have been more the same.

**Meeting #1:** The first meeting took place in a hospital conference room. Around the table sat twenty angry providers: nurse practitioners, physicians, physician assistants. The average age was approximately 45. The average anger level (scale of 1-10, with 10 being red hot) was 8. These providers were upset for a whole bunch of reasons, most of it directed at the administration of the hospital. They were angry because their offices and clinics were understaffed. They were angry because they are spending hours every night doing what they don't have the time to do during the day. They were angry because this year has made a difficult profession almost impossible.

**Meeting #2:** The second meeting took place via Zoom. It was our monthly one-hour men's gathering called “We Should Hang Out.” There were guys from Nebraska, Chicago, Alabama, and Vermont. The average anger level was about 2 and that might be a stretch. It was a fun, easy conversation about how we define success at our respective stage of life.

# Two Philosopher-Poets Walk into a Pub

By Dan Quinlan



*This year, Lumunos is exploring how we “Get Well and Stay Well” through three practices—reflecting, connecting, and engaging. With that in mind, we have been on the lookout for stories and ideas that highlight these aspects of our spiritual lives. This article is a fun but serious take on connecting. More specifically, it’s about friendship.*

Many of you know of John O’Donohue and David Whyte. Before O’Donohue passed away in 2008, the two men had built a deep and abiding friendship. David Whyte later said, “When he went, it was like the other half of me disappeared.”

In his eulogy to his brother, Pat O’Donohue said, “One of the great questions John loved to pose was: ‘When was your last great conversation with someone?’ Good conversation is the enemy of falsity, façade and shallowness. It chases the truth of things.”

Can you imagine what it must have been like to listen in as the two friends rambled on in a neighborhood pub, or hiked through the Irish countryside? Whether a conversation about postage stamps or God, it’s easy to imagine being astonished by the thoughts rattling around in their heads. It would have been wonderful.

So, it seems logical to do the next best thing—make up a conversation between O’Donohue and Whyte (based on text from some of their essential works and audio recordings from the “On Being” with Krista Tippett podcast).<sup>1</sup> Although I’ve taken some liberties with the exact language used, the text is very nearly verbatim. So, come along with me on a little journey into a pub in a rural Irish town...

We walk into a small pub after a day of hiking in the lovely Irish countryside. The stone-walled barroom is dark, especially in contrast to the wide-open spaces we’ve just left behind. As we sit down at a wobbly table with a couple pints in our hands, we overhear two men talking. To our great surprise and good fortune, the two men are David Whyte and John O’Donohue...

**David Whyte (DW):** I think I’m a poet-philosopher, and you’re a philosopher-poet. We’re like two bookends. There is always someone in the world I know who is travelling and speaking from the same place, although using slightly different language and a slightly different accent.

**John O’Donohue (JO):** Our friendship is a wonderful kind of togetherness. You push me toward my outer frontiers—which I think means our friendship is still growing. And, it also has a bit of danger in it, and a risk. Without risk in the world of the soul, nothing really grows.

**DW:** You sometimes talk about how you try to grow by “shaping a more beautiful mind,” and that it’s an actual discipline, no matter what circumstance you’re in. The way I interpret that is that it’s the discipline of asking beautiful questions. And, that a beautiful question shapes a beautiful mind. It seems to me that

“The dynamic of friendship is almost always underestimated as a constant force in life.”

<sup>1</sup> See Reference Section

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# Spirituality in the Time of Covid

By Becca Perry-Hill

Many of us are probably wondering what effect covid will have on spirituality and organized religion in this country and across the world. Like so many other organizations and businesses, places of worship closed their doors in the spring of 2020. As of this writing, many are just now starting to reopen. With these transitions from in-person gatherings to online gatherings and back to in-person or perhaps to a new hybrid model, there are many unknowns.

The reasons are myriad and complex but even before the pandemic hit, the data was clear: churchgoing in the U.S. was in rapid decline. We've all heard the stories of failures of leadership, sexism, sexual abuse, racism, and all-around hypocrisy. From the Southern Baptist Convention to the Catholic Church, things haven't been looking good. My feeling, though, is that these institutional crises are only a part of the story. Traditional church just doesn't feel fun, inspiring, or inviting to many of us, but we're still looking for our own way to find community, transcendence, and to make the world a better place.

I am a Millennial (albeit on the more geriatric end of the generation) and though I consider myself a spiritual seeker, I do not attend religious services. According to a 2019 Pew Research Center study<sup>1</sup>, I am typical of my generation—only 35% attend church services with regularity. Furthermore, in just one decade, the percentage of American adults who identified as Christian dropped twelve percent.

Given this context, one might wonder: Will people return to in-person religious services? Did online or Zoom church open the experience up to people who would otherwise not attend church? Did the anxieties of experiencing a global pandemic open more people up to exploring their spiritual or religious practices?

While there are likely well-researched dissertations using solid social science methods being written on the subject, I went on a slightly more modest quest to record the insights of just a couple people of my generation during covid. I was curious about the

impact of covid on spirituality and churchgoing both in general and for my generation. I interviewed The Rev. Elissa Johnk, Lead Minister of the First Congregational Church in Burlington, Vermont and Misha Allard an actor and voice artist from Toronto, Ontario.

The grandchild of a congregational minister who was himself the grandchild of a congregational minister (and so on for many generations back), Elissa Johnk jokingly says she was “trapped” in her calling. However, in her teens she felt disillusioned by the divide in the congregational church over whether to be open and affirming of gays and lesbians. Though she stepped away from the church for about a decade, she studied religion and decided to attend Harvard Divinity School on an academic track. After receiving ten of her grandfather's most beloved sermons shortly before his death, she decided she ought to complete her MDiv as well so that if she felt called to ministry, she would have the option. Eventually she became the pastor of a church in Montpelier, Vermont and then came to the First Congregational Church in Burlington in 2019.

**“How do you baptize babies if you can't touch them? How do you bury people if they can't have their family around them? How do you remind people that church is not a building when they can't see anything other than the building? Every aspect of everything everyday has to be done in a new way.”**

Though Johnk has been with “First Church” for over two years, she was on maternity leave for three months in 2019 and then of course covid caused the cessation of in-person church services in March of 2020. At the time of my interview with her in early July, First Church had just reopened their doors for their first in-person service so it wasn't clear just yet how the congregation might change post-covid.

According to Johnk, prior to covid the congregation was “mostly older” with a small, but strong youth contingent. The demographic largely missing from the church was young families. This trend was only exacerbated by covid, during which the church put out weekly high-quality, pre-recorded worship services.

While the older crowd was largely able to get online, many young families were too “screened out” with online school and work to watch worship services online. “Families with elementary school aged children... in terms of actual participation in Sunday worship,



that's been our biggest drop-off," said Johnk.

Fortunately, a handful of new people—both young (in their twenties and thirties) and old (retired clergy)—were introduced to First Church through online worship services and have become new members. In addition, folks in nursing homes and others who are homebound have been able to participate through online services.

Other "bright side" covid effects included a rapid increase in the modernization of the church's use of technology. At the beginning of covid, the church struggled to put out a high-quality weekly worship service, but the congregation was supportive through the process. Johnk and her team were able to pivot relatively quickly and figure out the new technology needed.

Another encouraging change was that the congregation showed a greater interest in the pressing social issues of the time and willingness to engage with political issues. According to Johnk, this engagement is ongoing. She also found that by offering committee meetings over Zoom, there was a higher level of commitment and involvement. She expects that these positive outcomes (better technology, engagement in social issues, and greater committee involvement through Zoom) will be lasting.

On a personal level, Johnk relished the time at home with her young baby at the beginning of covid. But, after realizing that adjusting to covid was a long-haul operation, she found herself exhausted.

Johnk describes her struggles as a minister dealing with the covid situation: "How do you baptize babies if you can't touch them? How do you bury people if they can't have their family around them? How do you remind people that church is not a building when they can't see anything other than the building? Every aspect of everything everyday has to be done in a new way. I have felt a lot of decision fatigue... My wife has had to do all of the emotional labor at home because I've had zero resources left to decide."

At this point, Johnk feels positive about the future of her church. She says, "I'm feeling tired, but I'm also feeling like we're in a good spot and like we're going to be able to do good things. The only anxiety I really have is that everybody is tired after this last year. I'm really wanting to ramp up for the fall and I'm not sure who I can call on to do that. Our volunteers are just as tired as we are."

From my interview with a New England minister, I travelled virtually across national borders to my next interview with an actor from Toronto, Ontario. Misha Allard grew up going to church every Sunday with her mother. They attended a Vietnamese Baptist Church, which was not only her introduction to religion and an understanding of God, but also a way for her and her mother to keep their Vietnamese language alive. At around age twelve, Allard lost interest in going to church.

As an adult, Allard climbed the professional ladder and ended up as the Vice President of Operations for an international development firm. Despite her success, she did not feel as though she was following her calling and had little time for spiritual reflection. In September of 2019, she made the courageous decision to leave her high-stress job and follow her passion to become an actor and voice artist.

The experience of covid confirmed that she was on the right

path. While others in her former profession suddenly found themselves unemployed, she was set up financially and spiritually for the quiet, reflective time the pandemic brought. Allard describes this time as, "Having space and time and just the quiet around me—the slowing down of the world—provided space so I could (in hindsight) hear God."

It was during this time she was reminded of The Meeting House Church (once called "the church for people who don't like church") and found that they had pivoted quickly to online services. She got involved in "home church," a small, bible study-like group that meets regularly and discusses spiritual matters. People from all over the world have joined The Meeting House during covid. Because Canada has been much more cautious in opening back up, The Meeting House has not met in-person yet and it's hard to say how it will change long term.

In regard to her new church, she says "It's about being in community, and living the action of peace-making, loving, and being of service... It's love and the Jesus-way over religiosity—over rules. Rules are there for a reason, they're there to teach us and for us to understand. But, if the rule is circumventing love and peace and inclusion, then it's not the right application of the rule."

One issue Allard has faced as she's gone through this spiritual

transformation is the reaction of some of her friends. Although her partner John has been supportive, many of her friends and family have been "cautious." She wants to be able to share her deep-felt spiritual awakening, but has found that when she tells people, especially Millennials, a "defense mechanism" pops up. It's made her realize that so many of her generation "have had negative experiences." Nonetheless, she says, "I have seen some Millennials want to rebalance the crazy, wild consumeristic society that we live in. People are craving more, and some people are turning spiritually to find that 'more'."

And this is where I find myself—looking for a community that loves and values each and every human being, promotes social progress, and provides an opportunity to look beyond our everyday lives. As more of my generation flock to various social media platforms and corporate exercise programs like CrossFit, SoulCycle, and Hot Yoga to find their communities of personal transformation and accountability<sup>2</sup>, I wonder if corporations can really help us find what we seek. I would love for my children to grow up in a community of spiritual seekers and social changemakers. But like so many of my generation, I'm just not sure where to find what I'm looking for and when I would have the time to look.

<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Center (2019, October 17). In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continue at Rapid Pace: An update on America's changing religious landscape. <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>

<sup>2</sup> Thurston, A. & Kuile, C. (Downloaded 2021, July 15). *How We Gather*. [https://sacred.design/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/How\\_We\\_Gather\\_Digital\\_4.11.17.pdf](https://sacred.design/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/How_We_Gather_Digital_4.11.17.pdf)

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# How Do We Care for Our Planet?

*As Lumunos continues to explore this year's theme of "Get Well, Stay Well" through three actions—reflect, connect, and engage—we have been on the lookout for stories that highlight these aspects of the spiritual life. This one comes from Jens Peterson, who at 15 years of age began to write a book called "What We Leave: A Caretakers Guide to an Ill Planet." Now 19 years old and a college sophomore, Jens continues to engage one of our world's most important questions: How do we care for our planet? I spoke with Jens via Zoom while he visited his grandparents in Pennsylvania.*

**Doug:** Thanks for talking with me Jens. Here at Lumunos, we are interested in supporting people's calling, so I'm going to focus less on the technical aspects of climate change, and more on how you got involved in this work and why it is important.

**Jens:** Fire away.

**Doug:** How did this start for you? Do you remember when you had some realization that our planet was in trouble?

**Jens:** I remember when I first heard about climate change from my mom. I was in the backseat of our car on a hot fall day, and I asked her why it was so hot. She explained that the earth has this protective shield called the Ozone layer, which protects us from the sun. And because of fumes that humanmade products were putting out, that shield was breaking down and that's why it was getting so hot.

My first reaction was to ask what I could do to help. I think I suggested building a new shield out of Legos, which will give you an idea of how old I was. But I always felt so indignant with animal mistreatment and especially with things that are kind of abstract and just not the fault of those who are taking the brunt of it. And while I certainly have changed a lot since I was that kid who wanted to build the Lego shield, or even the freshman who started writing the book, I haven't really let go of that sort of basic indignant feeling. It just feels so wrong.

**Doug:** That feeling of injustice and sense of indignation comes through in your book. I appreciated the fact that you are pretty confrontational in the book.

**Jens:** Funny you say that because the first draft of the book was much more so! It was both more confrontational and depressing than the final draft. I think that is because I wrote the first draft out of this high schooler's frustration that we hear Greta Thunberg talk a lot about. You feel as if you are this young kid who has no power in the world. But I think over the course of writing the book, I



changed. First of all, I went from a freshman in high school to a freshman in college, so hopefully I matured. I also was able to dig more and more into the research and what people are doing.

Climate change is a very depressing subject, no doubt about it. But I found a lot of hope in it too. Not that everything was going to get better and that all of it was going to go away, but that people were going to try and persevere. But I didn't want to take out all of the emotion and confrontation. Even if it is high school arrogance, I do think older people need to be challenged about what kind of planet they are leaving for future generations.

**Doug:** One of the things we talk a lot about here at Lumunos is how important community is to help us live our values and beliefs. We think it is hard to live your call without people around you to support you. Other than your parents, do you feel like you have had that support, or has it been a lonely road?

**Jens:** I was homeschooled from first to eighth grade and so all of my friends from the homeschooling community tended to have very similar outlooks on environmental issues. I always felt—not necessarily supported because it wasn't like I was leading any sort of charge or anything back then—more like "Preserving the earth is just what you do." And when I got to our public high school, I immediately joined environmental

clubs and was part of a lot of rallies at the state capital. Of course, I've had my share of run-ins with climate change deniers or those wondering why I would spend all that time writing a

**“ The informed thing is to do both—to make an effort to make big changes that are slower and to make little personal changes that are right in your life. ”**



book about it, but I also got used to seeing so many people who really cared about these issues. My closest friend group from high school, which I'm still in touch with today, are all very politically involved and active. One of my closest friends even ran for state representative when he was sixteen. There's a reason I put myself in that community and that's because we all had similar interests.

**Doug:** Your book is really focused on encouraging behavior change, and I'm curious what you've learned about if and how people change. Specifically, around environmental activism, but just in general how do you get people to change their behaviors around this?

**Jens:** I think it's more of an emotional argument than it is a logical argument. And I think the way you get people to work with that is by leading by example and connecting with them on an emotional level. The main effect that I have seen from my book has been from people who see that I care enough about this to write a book. It's a pretty small operation, and so the people I see and hear from are mostly friends, or a friend of a friend, or family.

For example, my grandparents, who I am visiting now, are both pretty conservative. They watched me write the book over three and a half years. They are 80 years old, but I see them make real efforts to try and be a little more environmentally friendly. They replaced all the lightbulbs in their house with LED's. And just yesterday when we got here, my dad threw a cup in the trash can and my grandmother scolded him because it was a recyclable cup. So that was pretty funny to see. That's just one small example of people who see that someone cares about something so much and then they look a little into it themselves. They do some reading, and they start to see why this person they care about cares about this subject so much.

**Doug:** That is a great story and a good example of how people change mostly through the relationships they have.

**Jens:** It has definitely been true for me. I've changed a lot of over the course of high school when I went from homeschooling to public schooling, as I was exposed to all these other peers and teachers. It wasn't because of all the reading I was doing in high school or anything. It was because of all the people I was meeting. Of course, there was reading to back it all up, but what changed my mind was these people I cared about either as teachers or friends of mine that had totally different ideas politically than me. And that's how my mind was changed on a lot of different subjects.

**Doug:** I'm assuming you're not a perfect environmentalist, so where's the hard part for you? What do you struggle with in terms of changing your own behavior environmentally?

**Jens:** I think one thing that I emphasize in my book is that it's really not just about what you as an individual consumer do. Sure, I can boycott plastic bags or meat, I can go vegetarian and all

these things. I do a lot of those things. But what's really important is trying to change the larger system. That is obviously much harder than something that any one person can do. But I think the hardest part is to see the bigger picture and how your little actions can stack up to affect the bigger picture. Because while going vegetarian is a very significant and often difficult thing for me personally, it's not about to change the world.

The harder thing is trying to advocate to the larger

corporations and businesses to have more environmentally friendly policies, like don't sell all your products in plastic bags. Or, sign that petition for a local nature conservancy. It's quite difficult to see how the smaller things meet the bigger things, but they do. And the informed thing is to do both—to make an effort to make big changes that are slower and to make little personal changes that are right in your life.

**Doug:** One last question, and it is a big one. Lumunos is a spiritual organization. We are always interested in the connection between one's spiritual beliefs and their actions in the world. As a college student, what do you see as the connection between spirituality and environmentalism?

**Jens:** I think a lot of religion and spirituality is very connected to moral and ethical beliefs. And so, I think it just comes down to live my beliefs, even if that is hard, even if it makes life more difficult. Changing behavior for the earth is hard, but if it lines up with your beliefs, then that's what you do.

**Doug:** And here is my two cents: I think that if religion is authentic, if it's legitimate, it has to serve more than me personally. So, I don't care what religion you're talking about, it has to do more than benefit you. And if it only is benefiting you, then I would call it a non-legitimate expression of religion. And so, the environment is the classic case where it requires people to get beyond self-serving notions to care about others.

**Jens:** I thought you were interviewing me.

**Doug:** Sorry, couldn't help it.

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**Jens Peterson** was born and raised in Jericho, Vermont. He is currently studying at Clark University in Worcester, MA. He developed an early passion for the natural world from a childhood of hiking, skiing, and watching the wildlife in the stream that runs by his house. For copies of his book "What We Leave," go to <https://www.whatweleavebook.com>.

*“ Climate change is a very depressing subject, no doubt about it. But I found a lot of hope in it too. Not that everything was going to get better and that all of it was going to go away, but that people were going to try and persevere. ”*



## Call Encompasses the Whole

*Through the years, Faith at Work/Lumunos has remained vibrant in an ever-changing world because of the community of people who have been part of our work. We have been blessed by these “Lumunaries”. Lumunaries are people who embody the values of Lumunos – people who are using their gifts and living their call (or figuring out how to do so); people who value authentic relationships and continue to grow spiritually. Lumunaries are also people who have supported Lumunos and advanced our mission in one way or the other. In this issue, we’re featuring one of the co-creators of our “Sacred Conversations” workbook and series, Brad Bauer.*

**T**he Bauer family loves to travel. They enjoy learning about the history and people of the places they visit and finding beauty in each new museum, zoo, art gallery, and especially the hard-to-find natural features. This love of exploration can be traced back to Brad’s youth when he spent much of his time in the outdoors, hiking, camping, and reveling in the woods and wilds of the greater New England area. Whatever the origin, in their wanderlust, the Bauers love to learn in ways that grow and stretch their gratitude for every aspect of God’s creation.

**Becca:** Tell me a little about your story of call, purpose, and work in the world.

**Brad:** When I was seventeen, someone asked me what I wanted to be. In my innocence, I responded “happy.” Upon further thought, I reasoned that being a “beach bum” would be a good option. This would leave me free to appreciate the mystery and majesty of nature, while not being obligated to the expectations associated with work. Looking back, I now realize that I knew so little about myself and was totally unprepared to answer the question with any level of depth. I had never found the space nor made the time for that level of self-reflection. I had never had a friend, mentor, or authority figure prompt me with the kinds of questions that would help direct me to consider how to discover my particular passions.

As for my skills at the time, well, I was that wonderful combination of being athletically talented, artistically engaged, and academically below average. The outlook on college was questionable as I was drifting along, motivated and driven by the desires of short-term satisfactions. The notion of choosing a profession in which to apply my gifts, while satisfying the longings of my heart could not have been further away.

All of that changed for me between the ages of nineteen and twenty-one. It was during that time that I not only met and got married to Tina, but I also experienced the birth of my first child. Life was no longer just about me, and the stark reality of that began to drive me into deeper thinking. I was compelled into my first encounter with being called to be more than I was, to be of service to others, to be part of something larger than myself. Suddenly my worldview became grounded in the call to be a provider to my family. Little did I know that I was only touching the tip of

an iceberg and at the beginning of a journey of new understanding of meaning in my life.

That was the first of what I now understand to be the many ongoing calls influencing my life. Some might even name that experience my “wake up call.” From that awakening, I have learned that I love to help others discover similar breakthroughs. I love to help people and organizations become the best versions of themselves and loving caretakers of this world. I love to affirm visceral thinking in people and

organizations, leading to new action and concrete change. In my life thus far, these understandings have found expression in the roles that I have served in as teacher, business owner, community planner, father, nonprofit leader, spiritual adviser, and more.

Theologically, I believe that God is speaking into this world, constantly bringing about new creation, and asking us to be stewards of His/Her/Its creation. Therefore, as we mature and age, we are called again and again to apply the unique gifts that we have been given in ways that honor God’s creation. For me, “call”





encompasses the whole of my life and not merely my vocation. In this way, “calling” becomes an ongoing relational journey in which I refine the skills that I can apply to be helpful. At the same time, I hope to grow in the process of helping to bring about God’s new creation on earth.

**Becca:** How did you become involved with Lumunos?

**Brad:** Before I ever connected with Lumunos, I had heard of Doug Wysocky-Johnson through both my parents and our mutual friend-in-faith Dick Broholm. My parents had connected with Doug through their involvement with both the Andover Newton Theological School’s Center for the Ministry of the Laity and with its spinoff nonprofit Seeing Things Whole. Around 2010, at a time when I was building my network, Dick introduced me to a number of people and ministries, including Doug and Lumunos.

Through these introductions, I further discovered that Dick was helping to encourage and enable Lumunos to take up a conversation around the theme of putting faith to work—the very idea behind why I was in seminary at the time. He and Doug were kind enough to invite me into that exercise, and several years, gatherings, and trial focus groups later, Lumunos produced what is now known as “Sacred Conversations”. Working with Lumunos around the creation of that critical resource was so inspiring that I could not help to be moved to also begin contributing to the cause and mission of the organization. I am delighted by the fact that our original working group still meets on a regular basis, lifting up one another in encouragement, hope, and healing in the spirit of our mentor Dick Broholm.

**Becca:** How has Lumunos impacted your spiritual life?

**Brad:** Growing up in an IBM family (the acronym of which really means “I’ve Been Moved,” not “International Business Machines”), I had the privilege of attending many different churches across several denominations. As life continued, so too did my participation in multiple denominational memberships. At one point or another, I have been Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Ecumenical, Congregational, non-affiliated, and in the United Church of Christ.

The strength of this history lies in a deeper and more diversified understanding of faith and scripture. The weakness, however, was that for years, my heart and mind were torn by the arguments each denomination was claiming on my loyalty. How was I to reconcile conflicts in dogma, or even if dogma should serve as a gatekeeper to membership? Was it ok that each Sunday I sat in the pews harboring and nurturing my own mixture of a belief system, appreciating the beauty of the music and space, focusing on the prayers that I was offering, while simply sidestepping all that other stuff?

Working with Lumunos and the Friends of Dick (FOD) group, I slowly began to realize that my religious identity was not a question of denomination, rather it is in being first and foremost a Christian. It is now in this ability to name myself, with confidence for the

first time, that I can fully and comfortably live into the tenants of my faith. I am able to be what I am—Christian—without adding additional layers that otherwise might press upon me.

This has made a meaningful difference in how I do my work, which is to help businesses and organizations create a culture of mutual respect and discern their purpose and mission moving forward. If not for Lumunos and my good friends in the FOD, I most likely would never have found my way to this understanding.

**Becca:** We are grateful for your generosity. What inspires you to give to Lumunos?

**Brad:** The top three things that draw me to any organization are: 1) its purpose and mission, 2) the quality of its people, and 3) the energy it has. Living a fuller and more authentic life by aligning life choices and relationships with sacred values is a journey and a pathway that the world needs more of. So many of us are in need of hope and healing. So many of us just need the right facilitator to bring us together with the right people, posing the right questions at different moments in our lives. Lumunos is

dedicated to helping us become the best version of ourselves, and that is a cause that I encourage everyone to get behind.

Without question, the team at Lumunos are uniquely called and gifted in the work they do. Lumunos is masterful at inviting people in, creating safe spaces for people to speak freely, listening deeply, and forming real relationships. Because of this, Lumunos events are “real” and not packaged in their execution. And when things are real, people get real and real transformation often occurs.

When there is energy behind a mission, I usually find leadership that is humble, transparent, and genuine. Lumunos never tries to be more than what it truly is. It does not suffer “mission creep.” In its humility, I would call it a learning organization, constantly stretching and growing, but never doing so in ways where it is swinging for the fences in arenas in which it has never played before. It appears to have an institutional theology that demands faithful discernment as the cornerstone of its functional foundation. From this solid business model, the energy that is cast in the telling of its vision is truly compelling.

With a wonderful mission set on meeting real needs in the world, top quality genuine people, and the energy to serve as a real change agent, Lumunos is a cause and a community worth supporting. I hope others will agree. And contribute!

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**Brad Bauer** lives with his wife Tina in Groton, Massachusetts. They are the proud parents of two boys Joshua and Jeffrey and are blessed with the addition of their cherished daughter-in-law Rachel. Having spent the first half of their lives together in Wisconsin, along with a brief stay in Albuquerque, Brad and Tina came east in 2010. They did so as Brad began his third turn in life—the pursuit of a master’s in theological studies (MTS) and a Doctor of Ministry (DMin) from Andover-Newton Theological Seminary at Yale Divinity School. Brad currently is on the board of that Seminary and is Chair of the Board of Green Lake Conference Center in Green Lake WI.



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## Connect: Continued from page 3

an ability to ask beautiful questions, often, in very unbeautiful moments, is one of the great disciplines of a human life.

**JO:** It's also an interesting question to ask—when was the last time that I had a great conversation? A conversation which wasn't just two intersecting monologues—which is what passes for conversation a lot in this culture. When had you last overheard yourself saying things that you never knew you knew? That you heard yourself receiving from somebody words that absolutely found places within you that you thought you had lost? Conversation that continued to sing in your mind for weeks afterwards? Those conversations are a kind of food and drink for the soul.

**DW:** I like to remind people that one of the old things the Irish say is: "The thing about the past is, it's not the past." It's right here, in this room, in this conversation.

The dynamic of friendship is almost always underestimated as a constant force in life. A diminishing circle of friends is the first terrible diagnostic of a life in deep trouble: of overwork, of too much emphasis on a professional identity, of forgetting who will be there when our armored personalities run into the inevitable natural disasters and vulnerabilities found in even the most average existence.

**JO:** The trouble is, though, for so many of us, is that we have to be in trouble before we remember what's essential. And, sometimes it's one of the lonelines of humans that you hold on desperately to things that make you miserable, and that sometimes you only realize what you have when you're almost about to lose it. I think that it would be great to step back a little from one's life and see around one. Who are those that hold me dear, that truly see me, and those that I need? The amazing thing about humans is we have immense capacity to reawaken in each other the profound ability to be with each other and to be intimate.

**DW:** Over the years, great friendships reveal the shadow in the other as much as ourselves. To remain true friends, we have to know each other and our difficulties—and even our sins—and encourage the best in each other. I have always appreciated that you don't critique your friends' lives. You address the better part of them.

**JO:** One of the tasks of real friendship is to listen compassionately and creatively to the hidden silences. Often secrets are not revealed in words, they lie concealed in the silence between words or in the depth of what is unsayable between two people. I think we need to all acknowledge that when you open yourself to the activity and sacrament of friendship with someone, you create a unique and particular kind of space with them—a space that you share in the same way with no one else.

**DW:** I'd say, no matter the virtues of being a true friend—of sustaining a long close relationship—the ultimate touchstone of

**“The amazing thing about humans is we have immense capacity to reawaken in each other the profound ability to be with each other and to be intimate. ”**

**“A friend knows our difficulties and shadows and remains in sight, a companion to our vulnerabilities more than our triumphs, when we are under the strange illusion we don't need them. All friendships of any length are based on a continued, mutual forgiveness. ”**

friendship is not improvement. The ultimate touchstone is witness, the privilege of having been seen by someone and the equal privilege of being granted the sight of the essence of another, to have walked with them and to have believed in them—and sometimes just to have accompanied them for however brief a span, on a journey impossible to accomplish alone. Friendship not only helps us see ourselves through another's eyes but can be sustained

over the years only with someone who has repeatedly forgiven us for our trespasses, as we must find it in ourselves to forgive them in turn. A friend knows our difficulties and shadows and remains in sight, a companion to our vulnerabilities more than our triumphs, when we are under the strange illusion we don't need

them. All friendships of any length are based on a continued, mutual forgiveness. Without tolerance and mercy all friendships die.

**JO:** When you think about language and you think about consciousness, it's just incredible to think that we can make any sounds that can reach over across to each other at all. Because I think the beauty of being human is that we are incredibly, intimately near each other. We know about each other, but yet we do not know, or never can know, what it's like inside another person. On the other hand, it's amazing that here am I sitting in front of you now, looking at your face, you're looking at mine, and yet neither of us have ever seen our own faces when we're out in the world. We see everything, except our

own faces. So, that leads to the question—who is it that is looking out from behind these eyes?

**JO:** (turning our way) Speaking of faces, who are you two and why are you sitting so near—listening in on two old friends? Are you as dim as the lights in here? I'd suggest that you go buy us a round, and then come back and explain yourself. And take this blessing with you on your journey to the bar: "May all that is uninvited in you blossom into a future graced with love."

Startled, we mumble apologies and head to the bar.

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**John O'Donohue** was a priest, philosopher and poet. Find out more about John and his writing at [www.johnodonohue.com](http://www.johnodonohue.com).

**David Whyte** is a marine zoologist turned poet and philosopher. Find out more about David and his writing at [www.davidwhyte.com](http://www.davidwhyte.com).

**Dan Quinlan** is Lumunos' Business and Operations Director. He's currently a mystic-in-training at the Center for Action and Contemplation's Living School. He can be reached at [dan@lumunos.org](mailto:dan@lumunos.org).



## Upcoming Events

You can find an up-to-date list of events and register at our website: [www.lumunos.org](http://www.lumunos.org)

Email your questions or comments to: [becca@lumunos.org](mailto:becca@lumunos.org)



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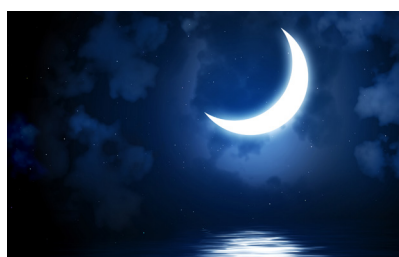
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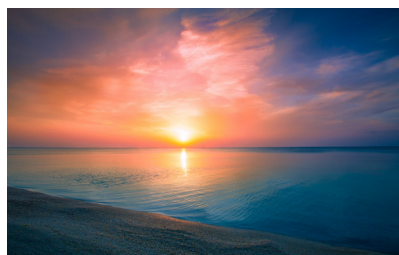
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Email [becca@lumunos.org](mailto:becca@lumunos.org) for more information



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### FINDING A NEW NORMAL

**October 23 from 12 PM ET**

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## The IRS has made 2021 a great year to donate.

Individual taxpayers who *don't itemize* can again take advantage of a \$300 deduction for charitable donations. That increases to \$600 for couples who file jointly. For those who do itemize, there are additional big changes designed to incentivize giving. (Check with your tax advisor to see if that applies to you.)





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*"Our job is to do our job in God's great  
movement of love in this world."*

— Bishop Michael Curry, *Love is the Way*

