



# THE COMPASS

## JESUS. REAL. RELEVANT.

*Pastor Joe Johnson*

Where is God? I don't see him? No burning bushes, no parting sea—pretty much life as normal. Things happen. There doesn't even seem to be a reason for it. A wife and mother dies suddenly for no reason. An accident on the road takes a young child but leaves a drunk driver unharmed. The Dow Jones numbers go up and down and we all struggle along in a world of complex forces we grapple to understand. I suppose this is why I like the book of Esther.

The book of Esther is quite different from the rest of the Bible. For one thing the book doesn't even have the name of God mentioned anywhere. In fact you don't "see" God at all in the book. Things just happen! The book even starts with the innocuous phrase, "This is what happened." I dare say that even the most devout atheist would have little to object to in this book. It's as if God is dead and the world is on auto-pilot! But that's the beauty of the book to me.

God isn't dead, but he also isn't always visible. As Romans says, "How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out." (11:33) The truth is that I can't usually discern the hand of God in my life or in the news or even in history. Lots of things just happen. That's true or almost true. Things do happen but things don't JUST happen.

*Continued on page 4*

### JANUARY 2011



#### CHANGE HAPPENS

3



#### AT TRUE NORTH

Confessions of Faith

4



#### EVENTS & WORSHIP

5



#### ON ASSIGNMENT:

Not In Control

6



#### EQUIPPING THE

SAINTS:

The Jesus Challenge

8

ISSUE 1, VOLUME 10

## NOT IN KANSAS ANYMORE by Danielle Kehren

One day, about a month after moving to the Twin Cities, I decided to go for a run along the Mississippi River Boulevard. I changed into a t-shirt and shorts, grabbed my key, and headed out the door. After running for a while, I passed two women pushing strollers. I smiled at them as I ran by, but like most of the people I passed on the path, they didn't return the favor. Although I hadn't lived in the cities for long, I had learned quickly that people aren't quite as friendly here as they were back in Lake City. I still liked to smile and say hello, but I was no longer surprised when there was no reply.

*Continued on page 2*

# JESUS

Real. Relevant. Worth Considering.

## Not In Kansas - Continued from page 1

A few minutes later, I passed more people—this time a man and a woman. As I ran by, the man looked at me for a while, and proceeded to make a strange face. This I was not used to. I wondered to myself why he seemed so angry; if there was something I had done to receive such a look. I thought about this for a while longer, but by the time I reached my destination: Minnehaha Falls, I had already forgotten the incident.

As I was walking towards the falls, a man looked at me for a few moments, and then said “Jesus!” in a half questioning-half exclaiming tone. Confused, I looked down and realized I was wearing my True North t-shirt: “Jesus: Real, Relevant, Worth Considering.” Now I understood why the man had looked at me strangely before—because I was wearing a “Jesus” t-shirt. During my run back, I caught myself over-analyzing the facial expressions of everyone I passed. I had been around unbelievers before, but I had never experienced someone actually becoming angry that I was a Christian. For the first time, I realized that just like Dorothy, I “wasn’t in Kansas anymore.”

Since my experience wearing the True North t-shirt, I have noticed a lot of other reactions to my Christianity. Although over 70% of the students in my class at St. Thomas claim to be Christian, I have met very few students other than those living on the Catholic men’s and women’s floors that would prefer bible studies and church to staying out late. When I tell people that I just got back from bible study, or that I’m going to a party at my pastor’s house, the looks I receive range from confused to indifference, rarely interest.

With so few students truly committed to following their Savior, I wonder how people are able to manage the stress of college. Without church, bible study, and prayer, I don’t know how I would cope. Even spending the first two Sundays at St. Thomas’ Catholic mass, I found myself wishing for a WELS church. Although at home I never complained about going to church, I was also never forced to decide whether or not I wanted to go. Now I realized how fortunate I had been to have pure doctrine available every morning; Catholic mass seemed watered down and lacking of law in comparison. When I made it to True North the following Sunday, I finally felt at home. This was the law and gospel I had grown up with—this was my connection to God.

While many students lose their faith when they go to college, either by choice or by convenience, I have experienced the opposite effect. Through Sunday morning church, weekly bible studies, Christian fellowship, and conversations with PJ, my faith has grown stronger than ever before. I see the huge difference between the people I meet at True North and people I meet on my floor, and I know which group I prefer. I thank God regularly for all the ways he has blessed me through True North, for bringing me closer to Him. Without a connection to God, I do not know how I could ever survive college. For me, Jesus is real, relevant, and worth considering.



*Danielle, Mark, Jonathan, Emilie & Pastor before the 5K Run/Walk at Phalen Park hosted every Fall by Divinity Lutheran, St. Paul, MN.*

# Jesus

Real. Relevant. Worth Considering.

+++++

*Would you like a shirt like Danielle’s? We always have extras of our outreach shirts. Purchase them at cost.*

T-Shirts available for purchase online.

\$8.00 each

**WWW.TRUENORTHWELS.ORG**

*Click on Witness Wear on the sidebar!*

## CHANGE HAPPENS

Change happens. It happens every day. Sometimes it occurs slowly and other times it hits you like a truck. Sometimes it can be seen coming and other times it comes like a thief in the night. Change can be positive or negative. Many people fear change and rightfully so, in some respects, because it might take someone out of their comfort zone or the future might be harder to predict.

Change is a subject that seems to be stressed in college, at least in my college career. I came into college expecting to become an Actuary and make copious amounts of money but ended up deciding that I would be much more comfortable being poor my entire life working in public education. I came into college thinking that I really like working with pure numbers but not people and ended up discovering that I really like working with children and parents and do not like working with pure numbers. My political beliefs slowly changed (for better or for worse) as well as my perception of religion in my life. Many of my personal relationships, that I came into college with, have either drastically changed or ended.

One thing that I have learned throughout my college career, especially because of all this previously mentioned change, is that trust in God is extremely important. I cannot imagine how stressful college and change could be to someone that does not trust in God. Especially when change is unpredictable or the outcomes of the change are unpredictable. However, we have an awesome God who has us in mind during these turbulent times of change. Isn't that the most wonderful and comforting news during moments of turbulent change? That God is watching over you and will not give you more than you can bear? I know it helps keep me going through those difficult times.

True North's motto for the year is: JESUS. Real. Relevant. Worth Considering. Doesn't this motto have a wonderful implication for trust? That God is real and relevant in our lives and that because of this we should trust his plan for us? That God is willing to take personal interest in our lives even though he has larger things to worry about? If we trust God more in our lives and if we are willing to give our lives to his larger plan, he becomes more real and relevant in our life because we start looking to him more as well as giving more credit to him

by Mark Zondag

for what he does for us. We do not go through a single day of our life without God helping us.

Change can be a scary six letter word. However, we have a wonderful God that works in our life every day. He is real and relevant in our lives and not only in an indirect way but in a direct and personal way. It reminds me of my favorite Bible verse that I remember during the difficult or anxious moments in my life.

*"For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you," Isaiah 41:13.*

He will take our hands and help us through the difficult times in our lives. What a wonderful God we have!



*Mark with Hannah Krueger playing Guitar Hero at the annual B & B Night (Bad movie & Brunch) at the Johnsons'. My apologies to Mark that I didn't have a better picture to share. ☺*

**Jesus. Real. Relevant. - Continued from page 1**

It didn't JUST happen that a Jewish girl came to be Queen of Persia. It didn't just happen that her uncle Mordecai was at the right place and time to discover a plot against the king. It didn't just happen that one night the king couldn't sleep and had the records read to him and there was reminded of Mordecai's loyalty—thus saving Mordecai's life.

And it didn't JUST happen that Haman's plot to murder every Jew in the Empire completely unraveled. The guys in Vegas would have put the sure money on Haman. They would have lost big because life isn't really based on cold probabilities but on a living God.

God is working through the probable and improbable, the chance meeting and planned trip. He's working through what seems obvious and what is surprising. And all of it for the good of his people and that means for your good!

As it is written, "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)

So, this is what happened...



*Laura Young was confirmed and welcomed into the True North family during our morning worship on Sunday, December 5, 2010.*

## CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

Pastor has often said that his favorite part of Campus Ministry is the Bible studies. And what a joy to discuss God's word, learn about one another, teach, and see the love of our Savior make a difference in people's lives. This year, in addition to the 3 weekly Bible studies, he has the privilege of meeting with a number of individual students and couples each week for Bible instruction and pre-marriage.

Laura Young was the first to be confirmed this year. As she gave her public confession of faith in front of her family, friends, and fellow True North students, I was reminded of my own beliefs. It was really wonderful to confess in my heart, along with Laura, "I believe."

At this time of year, our world is in confusion. Everything seems topsy turvy. People are hurrying here and there, buying, baking, decorating, and wrapping. They are attending extra parties and get-togethers. The schedule is full of errands and appointments. And what season is it really? Christmas? The Holidays? Is December purely a time for charity and gift giving as much of the world believes?

Is Jesus really the Reason for the season? Sometimes, I have to wonder. As I get sucked into the long list of Christmas "to dos," I have to stop and ask myself, "Why am I doing all this?" Why am I using every spare moment to bake cookies, make Christmas ornaments, and write out cards? It's just a birthday party. And we can't even give the birthday boy a gift. Let's just get a cake and call it a day.

As tempted as I am this year to do just that, Christmas is more than just a birthday party. Jesus is the Reason. But it's not just his birth that is reason for all the celebration.

*Continued on page 5*

**Confessions of Faith - Continued from page 4**

Each and every Christmas we are celebrating our Savior's life. A life lived perfectly. A life given to teach us; to be an example. A life sacrificed in love so that we would have eternal life. The birthday boy WAS the birthday present. And he presented himself as a gift to every person everywhere; to the world! And if that isn't a reason to celebrate, I don't know what is.

Jesus is Real. He has made a difference in my Holidays. He has made a difference in my life. And I'm so thankful to our heavenly Father that He has. And thankful to Laura for sharing her confession of faith with all of us.

+++++

*Do you believe in God the Father Almighty maker of heaven and earth?*

*Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.*

*Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting?*

*Do you believe that this church is faithfully teaching God's Word in its truth and purity as far as you have been instructed?*

*Do you intend to continue steadfast in the faith and to endure all things, even death, rather than turn away from Jesus?*

*Membership in a Christian church is a confession of faith. Having confessed our common faith do you wish to be a member of True North Campus Ministry and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod?*

*We welcome you into membership and stand with you in proclaiming Jesus. May the Father in heaven for Jesus' sake, renew and increase in you the gift of the Holy Spirit, to the strengthening of your faith, to your growth in grace, to your patience in suffering, and to the blessed joy of eternal life. Amen.*

**SUNDAY WORSHIP**

**10am – Morning Praise**

At UTEC – *directions on our website*  
1313 5<sup>th</sup> Street SE, Mpls, MN 55414  
*In the Atrium*

**WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY**

**7pm - Mondays & Wednesdays**

Small Group studies every week.  
Watch for this semester's topic & locations.

**EVENTS**

**Feb. 4<sup>th</sup> – B&B Night**

It's Bad Movie & Brunch time at the Johnsons'

**March 3<sup>rd</sup> – Bowling Night**

Cheap student prices at Coffman

**March 13<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> – No Worship**

Enjoy a fabulous Spring Break

+++++

*Weekly Bible studies & More Events for Winter posted on our Web Calendar as they're planned.*

**WWW.TRUENORTHWELS.ORG**





## ON ASSIGNMENT

### WHY DO YOU THINK YOU NEED TO BE IN CONTROL?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if everything in life went according to our plans? We think we are in complete control of our lives, but then there is a turn of events and things end up falling apart right before our eyes. When I was a student at the University of Minnesota I often struggled with the concept of being in control of my future. And, as a sinful human is prone to relapse, I know this is an area in which I still struggle daily. At that time I wanted control over how my life would turn out as I made decisions regarding what to major in, what career path to follow and the like. Now I have similar struggles, as I still haven't pinpointed a career path, but have put that on the back burner to becoming a wife and mother. At these times when I struggle with being in control I think back to a chat I had with Pastor Johnson at True North. At one point he said to me, "Why do you think you need to be in control?" He was right. If we were solely in charge of what happens in our lives, what a mess they would be! Fortunately for us, we are not the ones ultimately in control of what happens in our lives. God even tells us in his Word, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD." (Isaiah 55:8) There is no better evidence of that blessing of God's control in my life than in my journey to motherhood.

After years of trying to have children and one child lost to miscarriage, my husband and I have now been blessed with a precious baby boy, Matthias. These days, parents are encouraged to make what is known as a birth plan when they are expecting a baby. This is their way of making their preferences for the birthing experience known to the medical teams attending them. Though I never filed an official birth plan with my doctor, my plan was to have the most natural birthing experience possible. Instead of a traditional doctor, I had a nurse midwife. I was planning to labor mostly at home, only going to the hospital in time to give birth in a tub of water, to ease my baby's transition into the world and help relieve my pain. Matthias' birth could not have turned out farther from this plan!

Eight weeks before my due date my water broke. After a frantic call to bring my husband home from



*Sarah with husband Steve and son Matthias.  
Sarah graduated from the University of MN in 2006 with a  
Bachelors of Arts degree and Spanish Major.*

visiting a member in the hospital, we spent the rest of that day and half of the next in and out of the clinic until I was finally admitted to the hospital and placed on total bed rest to await the coming of my baby, which the doctors hoped would wait another 2 weeks to allow further growth and development. The longer the baby had to grow before birth the better, but 2 whole weeks of bed rest in the hospital!? That was not at all what I had planned for that time. My family was coming into town for a wedding and we hadn't even started preparing our home for the baby's arrival. Well, that wasn't to be God's plan for us, either. After spending only 3 days in the hospital I was diagnosed with HELLP Syndrome, a rare but serious condition of pregnancy. The only treatment? Not to be pregnant anymore. So the baby was coming, and right away. At 8:08pm that same day our precious Matthias was born by emergency c-section. He weighed in at 4 pounds, 4 ounces and, after being baptized by his Dad right there in the operating room, was whisked off to his bed in the NICU where he would stay for the next 3 weeks until finally ready to go home. I don't believe his birth could have been more *unnatural*.

Though this birthing experience did not go at all as I had anticipated, God knew the plans he had for me and was always directing events to put me exactly where I

*Continued on page 7*

**Not in Control - Continued from page 6**

needed to be. God may not work miracles in a “supernatural” fashion anymore, as we see recorded in Scripture, but that doesn’t mean he isn’t still working miracles in our lives. One of my favorite books of the Bible is Esther. Nowhere in the book is the name of God mentioned, yet he is always there working through one woman to save the lives of his people. Even if we can’t see God, he is always there guiding our lives and making even what we consider bad events work for ultimate good in our lives. The addition of Matthias to our family has been an amazing gift of God, and I know we wouldn’t have the wonderful little boy that we have without the heartache of miscarriage or the expertise of the medical teams into whose hands God placed us. God is real, and he really works in the lives of his people.

*“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” Jeremiah 29:11*



**WELS**  
Christ's Love, Our Calling.

***For a Campus Ministry near you:***

Contact Karen Marshall, CM Secretary  
414-256-3279

Karen.Marshall@sab.wels.net

**WWW.WELS.NET**

**True North WELS Campus Ministry**

**WWW.TRUENORTHWELS.ORG**

Office 612-378-1346  
Address: 1313 5<sup>th</sup> St. SE #328  
Box 33  
Minneapolis, MN 55414

**Pastor** 612-597-7998 (cell)  
Joe Johnson pastor@truenorthwels.org

**Ministry Coordinator** 612-267-3017 (cell)  
Valerie Johnson coordinator@truenorthwels.org

*The Johnsons’ house was full for our True North Christmas party! Students came over for a traditional holiday meal, Christmas carols, and stories. This year we shared the worst Christmas presents we’d ever received. Emilie won for having received a toilet seat and Mindy took home the other prize since her mother had actually forgotten her gifts one year. ☺*

*Pastor and Val took it as a compliment that the party didn’t break up until 11pm.*

## JESUS NEVER GAVE A BAND AID TO A PERSON WHO WAS DYING!

One time some people, hoping Jesus could help, brought a paralyzed man to him. And what did Jesus do? He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." If we had been there, I think most of us would have thought that paralysis was the main problem the man had. I mean his friends had to carry him to Jesus. He couldn't do anything himself. And yet Jesus talks about sin.



Jesus points out that humanity's true problem is not physical but relational. The true dilemma is that we do not have a relationship with God. Our relationship with God has been damaged and destroyed by sin (sin is breaking God's moral law). When I am rude to a friend, I hurt the friendship. When I lie to a friend, I hurt the friendship. In the same way, when I do things that are wrong, I put a barrier between me and God. Jesus told this sick man that he would cure his greatest problem first. Jesus forgave his sin, removed it from between the man and God. Of all the religious leaders of the world, only Jesus brings a solution and a cure to man's greatest problem. Jesus can help you too! He can handle all your problems, the big and the little. To read about the paralyzed man look in the Bible, the Gospel of Luke chapter 5 verses 18-26.

*True North gives permission to re-use our articles in additional church publications.*

*E-mail Valerie Johnson at [coordinator@truenorthwels.org](mailto:coordinator@truenorthwels.org) if you would like the electronic version of these articles.*

## TRUE NORTH WELS CM

*Partially funded by  
Lutheran Institutional Ministry Association  
P.O. Box 13  
Austin, MN 55912*

NONPROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
MINNEAPOLIS, MN  
PERMIT # 1606

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

