

# Edify

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## Unshakeable Hope for 25 Years and Beyond

As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of Waterbrooke Church this year, I thought I would remind you of one of the great verses of the Bible, Romans 8:37. Paul writes “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” The NASB version reads, “we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.” The Greek Word is *hypernikomen* – meaning we hyper-conquer or super-conquer.

The church doesn’t always look like “super-conquerors.” Quite to the contrary, the church often looks like a vulnerable institution in an increasingly antagonistic world. The church advances against the odds. Paul calls us “super-conquerors” because the church advances super-naturally. Lest we think that the apostle Paul is painting an overly rosy version of the truth, remember what Paul writes in the previous verses. He asks, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered’” (Romans 8:35-36).

Paul’s account of the advancement of the gospel is story after story of arrests, persecutions, and hardships. He would preach the gospel and then be chased out of town to the next community down the way through Asia Minor and Greece. We are more than conquerors because the church is a living testimony to the fact that when Jesus said that He would build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it, He personally committed Himself to advance His kingdom through His people. When Paul says we are more than conquerors, his emphasis is really on the phrase “through Him who loved us.” Twenty-five hours or



*Ellie, Kristin, MariAnne, Joaqq, Rowy, and Pastor Kevin celebrate Waterbrooke's 25th anniversary.*

25 years, the only explanation for the existence of any church and its advancing witness in this world is the overcoming and unfailing love of Christ for His church. We live because Christ loves. The church both survives and thrives because nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Friends, as we celebrate Waterbrooke’s 25th anniversary, let us look back and look ahead with this confidence: As long as Christ loves His bride, the ministry and the mission of Waterbrooke Church has a solid and unshakeable hope. The glory for the past 25 years belongs to our God and Savior. The hope for the next 25 years is exactly the same. Let’s rejoice and thank God that His steadfast love endures forever. And let’s celebrate and proclaim that redeeming love to Victoria, Carver County, the southwest metro and to the ends of the earth! To God be the glory! ♦

-Senior Pastor Kevin Dibley



# Waterbrooke Celebrates 25th Anniversary



*Above left are Melissa, Anika, and Julie enjoying the celebration; above right are Michelle and Megan.*



*Dozens gathered to celebrate Waterbrooke's anniversary with dinner and entertainment at the Chaska Event Center on Aug. 1. Special thanks go to Lisa Washington for capturing the event and sharing these images. Above left are Gail and Pastor Kevin; above right are Jason, Jamie, Keegan and Zoey. Below left are Ralph, Ken, Dianna and Molly; below right are Raul and Allyson.*







*Above left are Connie and Lincan. Above right: Russ and Cammy enjoy the special event. Below left are Gary, Alan, Tracy, Lois, and Dana. Below right are Maureen and Bill.*



*Below left are Karen and Andy. Below right are Cale, Aria, Claire, Laurel, Rebecca and Doane at dinner.*





# Planting a Faith Community: the Bonners' Story

By Karen Kowalke, Treasurer

Imagine you're in your fifties, established in your career, your children are on their own, and life is relatively easy. Would you give all that up to plant a church? For Bill and Maureen Bonner, God made it very clear that He wanted them to start a church where a community of believers could experience Jesus in a deeply personal and meaningful way. And so they responded in obedience and never looked back.

## ***Encouraged to Plant***

After a week-long church planting assessment run by the Baptist General Conference in 1999, the Bonners were one of only two couples approved to move forward with the blessing and support of the denomination. On their return, the pastor of their church at the time, Ridgewood, wholeheartedly backed the plan, encouraging them to talk to everyone in the church about joining a new church plant. Eleven families were so excited about the vision that they decided to leave Ridgewood and join the Bonners for the uncertainty and excitement ahead.

As a former city planter, Bill knew that Victoria was expected to explode in growth. He also knew that it lacked an evangelical church that could effectively reach out to all the new residents. At the assessment, they prayed for guidance over a map of Minnesota, and the Holy Spirit confirmed that Victoria was the spot to plant.

## ***Challenges Along the Way***

Although a small congregation provides the advantage of close communion with one another, finances were tight for many years. At times Friday paychecks couldn't be cashed until the Sunday offering was collected! With low attendance at first, all the ministries of an established church could not be immediately implemented; rather, the Bonners looked to see who God led to Waterbrooke, what

gifts and passions they brought, and they formed ministries accordingly. With no permanent home for the first seven years, the church met in three different buildings before moving to its current location on Wassermann Lake in Victoria.

In tough times, Bill and Maureen held on to the conviction that God wanted them in this endeavor. As Bill says, "I figured if God was in it, it would work!" That faith sustained them through many ups and downs. Plus, those times were not without compensating joys.

As Maureen remembers, tearing up at the thought, "I loved the people of Waterbrooke, the wonderful people, all sincere about their faith. There was something deeply spiritual that God was doing in the lives of people."

## ***God Provides***

"Obtaining the land for our building was such a bonus and a thrill," Bill recalls. Maureen had walked past the old farmhouse many times and sensed from the Holy Spirit that God was reserving that spot for Waterbrooke. On a strictly human level, it would be almost laughable to think that a tiny church could afford a property likely to be snatched up by a developer if it ever came on the market. When it eventually went up for sale, the price was out of reach. But on hearing that Waterbrooke was interested, the owners said they'd lower the price for a church. It was still priced higher than they thought the church could handle, so the Bonners

began to pray for guidance. That same evening they heard from a family who knew nothing about the situation but wanted to make a very large donation should the church ever find a piece of land. So miracle on top of miracle, Waterbrooke obtained land for a permanent home!

## ***Looking Ahead***

Bill believes that Waterbrooke should trust God to do something just as bold in the next phase of its ministry as He did in the early years. "Be bold and trust God for great things," he says. Maureen's prayer is that "everyone would be so devoted to following Christ that He would become their foundation, joy and hope no matter what they are going through." As they reflect on how God has blessed this church and turned it into a vibrant community of believers, the Bonners have great faith that God will continue the work He began 25 years ago. ♦



*Bill and Maureen Bonner*





## Church Family Dedicates New Facility for Ministry

Workers from Station 19 and Larson Building recently wrapped up Waterbrooke's building expansion project, and on Aug. 3 the church thanked the Lord and dedicated the new space to the advancement of the gospel.

During the dedication, Senior Pastor Kevin Dibbley preached on Ephesians 3:14-21 and encouraged the church to pray and to embrace God's vision for redemptive community.

"Waterbrooke exists to explore, to embody and to expand redemptive community in the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to the praise of His glory," he says. "We're not there yet. But we want to be a church where you can discover what it really means to be a church, what a church looks like when it is family – where you know each other and care for each other. A building cannot do that, but we call it a *facility* because it can *facilitate* doing that."

He says the facility is meant to help the church pursue what we believe God has intended for us. And God intends for the church to be the family of God, not a religious institution.

Pastor Kevin thanked the many teams of volunteers who worked directly on the project: the building team, communications team, decor team, landscape crew and tech team. He also thanked the hospitality team for keeping events going amidst the construction.

"I want to express sincere gratitude to you as a church family for being in and being united through this building project. It was a joy for me to watch you roll up your sleeves and serve and give. I praise God for that," Pastor Kevin says. "It was a super honor for me to be on the team that was meeting week by week and working through this building project. I want to thank the Lord; I want to give glory to God for shepherding us thus far." ♦

***Above: Helping cut the ribbon on the finished space are Cristina Earley from Station 19, Yvette Hatch, Karen Swenson, Casey Campbell, Steve Kowalke, Pastor Kevin, Ralph Dvorak, Peter Pluimer from Old National Bank, and Karen Kowalke. (Photo by Lisa Washington) Below: The newly expanded facility is ready for ministry use.***





# Non-profit Bookstore to Build Community

By Diana Barto

Maybe you remember The Shop Around the Corner in the 1990s romantic comedy “You’ve Got Mail.” If so, you recall the charm and warmth a local, independent bookstore offers. It’s something unique that online sellers and big box retailers can’t quite replicate. And that kind of place with a personal touch, a place where stories bring lives together, is what Brian and I’Ching Thomas aim to create in the bookstore they are launching.

The Waterbrooke couple is working to open Lakeside Books in downtown Waconia this fall, and they envision the store becoming a hub for outreach, learning, and community building.

With no bookstores within a 10-mile radius, Waconia’s growing community needs a local shop that offers a wide selection of thoughtfully curated new and used books, I’Ching says.

Surprisingly, brick-and-mortar bookstores are making a comeback. In fact, retail giant Barnes and Noble is opening 60 new stores around the country this year – for the second year in a row.

Part of what’s driving this comeback is a craving for connection and a need for a “third space” between work and home, a place where you can linger and meet new people. Third spaces are especially significant for people who work from home, as well as for the digital generation, I’Ching says.

So Lakeside Books is going to be a place that welcomes people of all backgrounds to discover great books, share ideas and feel seen, she says.

“It’s a place for those yearning to connect socially,” she says, adding that those connections will come through special events like book clubs, Bible studies, seminars, and story hours hosted at the store.

What’s more, the new bookstore is a nonprofit, so any earnings will go back into the local community to support causes like youth mental health and crisis pregnancy.

I’Ching has experience working with international book distribution efforts, and Brian is a former



***Brian and I’Ching Thomas are working to open Lakeside Books in the lower level of 9 West First Street in downtown Waconia, just steps from the lake, a coffee shop, and other local retailers.***

college educator with experience running bookstores, so together they make a great team. But they aren’t doing this alone. They invite the Waterbrooke family to be part of this vision for the community.

Some ways you can help are by praying for them and for the bookstore’s launch, telling your friends and family about the new store, following Lakeside Books on social media, or volunteering your time at the store. You can also contribute to the store’s crowdfunding, which goes toward renovation and store setup, book inventory, shelving, community programming, initial staffing, and operations costs.

Visit [www.lakeside-books.org](http://www.lakeside-books.org) for more details. ♦



# Book Review: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*

By Diana Barto

*Convicting.* That's the word my friend Katie Campbell used to describe Dietrich Bonhoeffer's 1939 classic *Life Together*. And she's right. The book is convicting. It's a powerful read for anyone seeking to better understand and embrace Christian community.

But it's wise to keep a few things in mind when reading this book. First, the Christian community Bonhoeffer participates in is an underground seminary in Nazi-era Germany. And second, a German pastor and theologian, Bonhoeffer writes as a part of the Confessing Church. This was a movement for revival within the German Protestant churches in the 1930s; it developed in resistance to Adolf Hitler's attempt to use churches as instruments of Nazi propaganda and politics.

That said, Bonhoeffer's reflections on the characteristics of Christian community are unique, profound, and edifying for readers.

"Christian community means community through and in Jesus Christ," Bonhoeffer says. "Everything the Scriptures provide in the way of directions and rules for Christians' life together rests on this presupposition."

Although the book is concise, only 122 pages, *Life Together* offers an inspiring vision for fellowship here at Waterbrooke. Bonhoeffer highlights the privilege of living among other Christians, the elements of time together and time alone, the significance of serving and listening to one another, and the practices of confessing sin and taking communion.

As Paul does in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Bonhoeffer points to the physical body as the appropriate metaphor for the Christian community and its members.

"Every member serves the whole body, contributing either to its health or to its ruin, for we are members of one body not only when we want to be, but in our whole existence. This is not a theory, but a spiritual reality that is often experienced in the Christian community with shocking clarity, sometimes destructively and sometimes beneficially."

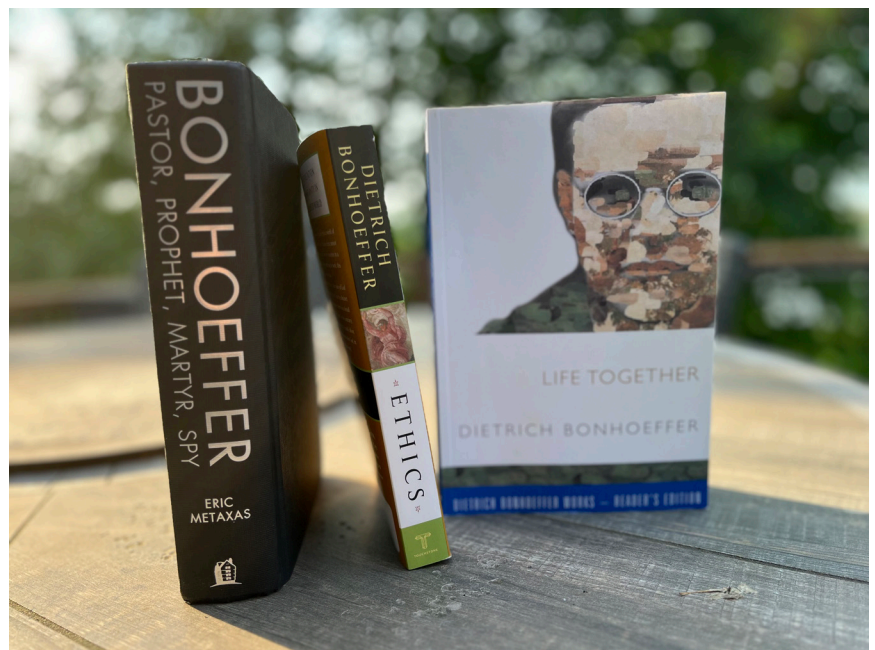
Regularly praying for one another is vital to the community, Bonhoeffer notes.

"A Christian fellowship lives and exists by the intercession of its members for one another, or it

collapses," he says. "I can no longer condemn or hate a brother for whom I pray, no matter how much trouble he causes me. His face, that hitherto may have been strange and intolerable to me, is transformed in intercession into the countenance of a brother for whom Christ died, the face of a forgiven sinner."

Reflecting on the book, Katie also points to how Bonhoeffer warns about complaining and setting unreasonable expectations for the Christian community.

"If we do not give thanks daily for the Christian fellowship in which we have been placed, even where there is no great experience, no discoverable riches,



but much weakness, small faith, and difficulty; if on the contrary, we only keep complaining to God that everything is so paltry and petty, so far from what we expected," Bonhoeffer says, "then we hinder God from letting our fellowship grow according to the measure and riches which are there for us all in Jesus Christ."

In conclusion, for those who follow Christ in 2025, *Life Together* offers a thought-provoking wake-up call – a call to consider your own role in Christian community, the local church's eternal reality in Christ, and how our community's strength is shown in our concern and care for our weakest members. ♦

Diana Barto is married to Michael, and she serves Waterbrooke as editor of *Edify*. When she isn't visiting their two daughters and new son-in-law in Louisville, Diana enjoys tea parties and flower photography. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in theological studies from Southern Seminary.

# Quotables

**“The person who loves their dream of community will destroy community, but the person who loves those around them will create community.”**

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

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**“Jesus’s promise that the gates of hell would not prevail against His church (Matt. 16:18) was not given to any particular church but to the church universal. No local church is promised that it will remain until Christ’s return. Rather, from the days of the apostles, new churches have been birthed and rebirthed, died and disappeared to this day. But though not given to any particular church, Jesus’s promise to the church universal will not be fulfilled apart from the local church as members faithfully pass the torch of the gospel from one generation to the next.”**

—Caleb Morell, *A Light on the Hill: The Surprising Story of How a Local Church in the Nation’s Capital Influenced Evangelicalism*

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**“The life of Christian faith should be altogether different: a long obedience, a slow burn, a quiet diligence to pursue Jesus faithfully, with others in community, in good times and bad, for better or for worse. Will this form of plodding, old-fashioned Christianity go viral on Instagram or get featured in GQ? Probably not. But it will actually grow Christians to maturity and help them run a long, steady, and fruitful race, as it has for countless saints over two millennia. I pray that I—and you, too—will be counted among them.”**

-Brett McCracken, The Gospel Coalition

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**“Community is good. God designed us to need others. But it’s important to recognize that we don’t just share space and experiences with others. We’re shaped and formed by those around us, and we shape and form them... To faithfully navigate the Christian life, we need more than good advice. We need gospel friends who help us walk in wisdom... We need gospel friends who remind us that this life was never meant to be our all—there’s a better life to come. We need friends who compassionately confront us when they see habitual sin in our lives. We need friends who point us again and again to our sure and future joy, reminding us that our hope isn’t in the things of this world. As we do this together, we’ll all grow in wisdom.”**

-Courtney Doctor, The Gospel Coalition

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**“The church is the focused domain where all God’s presence, promises, and purposes are unveiled and eternally realized.”**

-Dustin Bengé, *The Loveliest Place: The Beauty and Glory of the Church*

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