

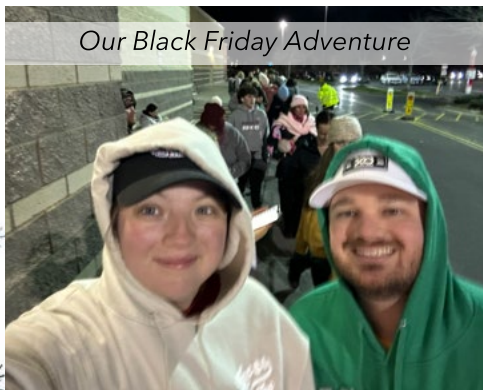


Dear Friends & Family,

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas everywhere you go. Who am I kidding? We live in Fargo; it has looked like Christmas for the last month! Our roads are filled with ice, and our yards with snow—a true winter wonderland! Winter is by far my favorite season, so you won't hear any complaints from me, but if you ask Carmen, you might get a different response! We traveled to Virginia for Thanksgiving with my family. All my siblings were able to be there this year, and it's always such a blessing to have everyone under one roof. Our time was filled with good food, lots of laughter, and of course, games and football! Carmen and I kept our "Black Friday" shopping tradition alive as we embarked on another journey this holiday season. However, this year we were after a big-ticket item... a Taylor Swift vinyl and book! You see, in years past, we normally arrive at the shops after all the crazy people but before all the sane ones. (Not sure what that makes us, but if you figure it out, let me know!) This year, though, I knew we were going to have to embrace the crazies because everyone knows how wild those "Swifties" are. We went to sleep on Thanksgiving night and were awakened by the sound of an alarm. I knew right then that it was game time; I sprang out of bed, not wanting to wake anyone else in the house, and turned off the 3:30am alarm... (Yes, you read that right—I was waking up at 3:30am for Taylor Swift merch...) Carmen and I got ready as fast as we could and began our twenty-minute drive into town to join the crazy line waiting for us at Target. On the way, Carmen asked me how long I thought the line would be. I responded, "Well, we've seen three other cars on the road at this crazy time, and all are going the other direction, so it can't be that long." With excitement in our eyes, we spotted that giant red circle with a dot in the middle. We quickly found a parking spot and leaped out of the car to discover... one whole person was waiting in line for Target to open. Not only did this woman beat us to Target, but she was so passionate about Taylor Swift that she had arrived at 9:15pm the night before and slept in her car to make sure she was there in time. This woman was in a wheelchair, had a glass eye, and various other disabilities; my mind was blown as Carmen sent me into the cold to wait while she stayed in the warm car longer. We talked with strangers about a stranger we had never met before so passionately, but as I type this, I began to think about how messed up we are. Why can we do this for a famous singer but not for the most famous celebrity of all time, Jesus? Would I really stand in the cold for two hours to get a letter he wrote, or psalms that were made into vinyl? Or even share our experiences with random people about how amazing he is and how I would do anything to overpay just to see him from a distance and share his words? If I'm honest, I don't know if I would say yes to all those questions, but I challenge you to ask yourself the same and meditate on your responses. We finished our trip watching the Chiefs, South Carolina Gamecocks, and Eagles win their games. We also took our nieces and nephews to see Moana 2. It was such a great way to wrap up our trip and see the little ones reacting to the movie in the theater. It's time for intermission, so go refill your snacks, use the bathroom, and sit back and relax as you settle into how God has been working in the lives of kids in the Fargo-Moorhead area at the various sites we are located in! Carmen and I will be flying to Orlando to visit Disney



World for a few days with her family, and then spending the rest of the Christmas season with loved ones in South Carolina doing Festivus, Dirty Santa, and the famous Christmas Tea!



I have been at Liberty Middle School for three full years now, and it's amazing to see how God is working in the lives of the kids I encounter. The weekly Bible study at the school has grown in attendance since last year. We started with just two who came faithfully, along with a few others, but now we have five who attend regularly and average about eight per session. At first glance, you might think, "That's really not that many." You're right; it's not, but to God, even one lost sheep is worth leaving the ninety-nine. This year, we were able to pack shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child, and it was such a

bleasing to see those kids fill the boxes. Some of the kids recognized it from their church, while others had never heard of it before. The most exciting part for me was being able to share the message while I walked the boxes out of the school. At most, there were five adults who understood what these boxes were for; the rest assumed they contained shoes and questioned why I had so many. Because of those boxes, I was able to share the truth and the gospel during school hours. God is beginning to move in mighty ways at Liberty Middle School, and it's all because we're simply showing up and letting Him handle the details. Students have been requesting to meet with me this year because it has helped them or provided a safe space for them. I also had the opportunity to coach girls' basketball this year, and boy, was that something else! I could share stories, but we don't have the time or space for that... (Ask me in person, and I'd love to share)! The West Central Regional Juvenile Center is my "other location" that I primarily visit. God has been working through me and others. Mr. Earl has started to volunteer with us and has significantly impacted the boys' lives. He's in his 80s, but the boys gravitate toward him. His goal is to ensure every boy leaves with a Bible and he has even helped us receive an anonymous donation for more Bibles. I have also had some very challenging one-on-one conversations with the boys. There's one boy specifically who is struggling with forgiveness for what he has done. He argues that we don't truly have free will; rather, God has given us the theory of free will because He is all-knowing. While I, and probably you reading this, differ from his viewpoint, it's tricky to navigate how to show him the truth without coming on too strong and shutting him off from God. Recently, during a Wednesday night church service, there was a boy who had never heard the name of God or opened a Bible before. After hearing the message and participating in the discussion, he raised his hand and said, "Hearing this gives me hope in something." When I tell you I had goosebumps, I REALLY had goosebumps. God was not only working in the room but, more specifically, in that young man's heart. I wish I could share every story with each of you, but I simply can't. However, I pray that hearing these stories will spark something in you. These are just kids in Minnesota and North Dakota; I guarantee there are kids just like them waiting for someone to show up and let God work through them. I know not everyone is called to work with kids, but I also know that if we don't give God a chance to use us, we're wasting the gifts and talents He has blessed us with. So, I challenge you to pray and ask God where He wants you to use your gifts and talents. Is it with kids? With adults? Or maybe even with different organizations that fulfill your passions? Whatever it is, let's step out of our comfort zone and into our growth zone, just as it says in 2 Corinthians: "When I am weak, then I am strong."



Here are several ways you can pray for Youth for Christ, as well as for Carmen and me:

- A female full-time staff member
- More volunteers
- More donors (especially, monthly donors to the ministry)
- Safe travels for Carmen and me
- Our cat, Fargo, while we're away for Christmas

Carmen and I love each of you reading this letter more than you know. Thank you for all your support for us as individuals and as a couple. I can't wait to continue seeing God in our lives. Merry Christmas from your favorite lawyers!

William Lawyer  
Youth for Christ Ministry Staff

