

Pastor Koester's Biography



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I was born in Spokane and raised in Sedro Woolley, Washington by two wonderful parents who whole heartedly loved their three children. While in High School I led a winning tennis team, was a part of the Debate Team and served as Student Body President as a Senior. After High School, I attended Pacific Lutheran University and later graduated from Lutheran Bible Institute in Seattle, serving as Student Body President there. I graduated with a B.A. in Biblical Studies from LBI and went on to attend and graduate from Wartburg Seminary with a Masters Of Divinity degree.

Over a period of 20 years, I served as solo Pastor of St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Rochester, Wash., Associate Pastor of Hope Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, planted New Heart Christian Church in Monroe, Washington, and pastored HOPE Center, an independent church near Seattle, Washington.

While at St. Marks, we grew by reaching new people, paid off the church mortgage and I was asked to serve on the school district's Sexuality Education Advisory Board which helped write guidelines and choose curriculum for 4th through 12th graders.

At Hope Lutheran I was in charge of Outreach, Small Group development, Adult Bible studies and shared preaching duties. While there I was elected to the Synod Board for Outreach, and later served as a founding board member of the Great Commission Network, a group of evangelical Lutherans. During that time I also led Seminars for Lutherans For Evangelism and Lutheran Bible Ministries (Walk Thru The Bible – Old Testament).

With New Heart, I attempted to plant a cell based church of home groups that we hoped would reach out into the community, grow and eventually multiply. While a bold challenge and a great concept, New Heart ultimately did not succeed in its mission, but planted good seed for the gospel in many people's lives.

God blessed my former beloved and me with two awesome children. Aaron Michael, who led worship at his church and loved God and man until his death in an avalanche climbing Mt. Rainier in the fall of 2004; and Megan Joy, who also loves God and people, is a joy to everyone who knows her and is married to Richard Greenfield. I enjoy tennis, motorcycling, backpacking, basketball, ping pong and racquetball.

In the four years I pastored HOPE Center in the Seattle area, God gave me two key messages that I believe are among the most important transformational truths I have found in my 20 years of ministry. They are the Strong In Spirit Conference message and Transformation Ministry (a way to help liberate believers from past wounds and areas of bondage). Both ministries have been very well received and have proven to be powerfully effective in liberating, strengthening and transforming people's lives to become more fully Christ-like and to enable them to better live out their destinies instead of their histories. I have led over 150 people through Transformation Ministry and have witnessed many radical life-changing results that have come from God's liberating power.

Ultimately, this ministry is summed up in the meaning of the name, which encapsulates the destiny and mission of my life – 'Bruce' means 'liberator.' This ministry is named after the meaning of my daughter Megan's name, and dedicated to my Strong In Spirit son, Aaron Michael for the greater glory of God and the furthering of His kingdom.

Pastor Koester's Testimony



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I was born into a strong church-going family. I was baptized and went to church every Sunday, but in spite of all that, I never knew what a personal relationship with Jesus Christ was, and I didn't know God's purpose for my life. Growing up, I chose to ignore God and run from Him instead of repent and follow Him. Although I was shy during my early years, in high school I began to come out of my shell, was a good student, was elected ASB President, and led a winning tennis team. My outstanding parents loved me and told me so, but while I looked successful on the outside, I didn't feel that way on the inside. I didn't know who I was, or why I should be alive. Within myself, I had no real purpose or direction in life.

In the summer of my 20th year, I fell in love with a wonderful girl named Chris while working at a summer job. We spent those months dating, until one day in August she accidentally fell off a cliff into the ocean and drown. I felt so destroyed at her death that I wanted to die too. I felt lost and alone without her, yet as I thought about what Chris might have wanted me to do for her, something inside me said to get right with God in a personal way. Although I thought hard about it, my pride and independence kept me from repenting and following God's plan for my life – instead I chose to continue living for myself and decided to put God off until later.

After a year, I quit college and moved to Minneapolis, lived with my cousin Paul and struggled to find work, friends, and a reason for life. I felt very lonely and lost and late at night I began to go on walks, crying out to God, asking Him to make Himself real to me, to fill up the emptiness inside and give me a reason to live. On one of those walks, I was so depressed I nearly jumped off a high railroad trestle spanning a river in downtown Minneapolis, but realized that I didn't really want to die, I just needed a reason to live.

A few weeks later, my cousin convinced me to go to church with him. Though I had gone with him before, this time I went reluctantly. We arrived very late into the service and while I sat down wondering what I was doing there, suddenly the last few minutes of the pastor's sermon was as if God began speaking directly into my heart through his words. Following his sermon, the pastor asked if anyone wanted to repent and surrender their lives to God. I felt a strong hunger to do so and that night at the age of 21, I went forward and repented of my self-centered, godless and empty life of running from God, and surrendered myself to Him.

That was the turning point in my spiritual walk that set me on a life course of love and service for God. Needless to say that walk has had many ups and downs, weaknesses and joys along the way – but through it all, God has proven Himself faithful to use all things to transform my life for His glory and the spread of His kingdom on earth. To Him be all the glory.