



Dear [Name],

“I have not felt alone”

“We were deeply devastated and heartbroken. He has been a part of our family for nearly nine years.” That’s how my dad recently described losing their beloved Tibetan Terrier, Buddy. If you know my dad, you know that he has always had a very special bond with his dogs. So this was a devastating loss, both for Mom and Dad. They wanted another one like Buddy, and would you believe that Dad found a 1.5 year-old Tibetan Terrier of the same breed and same color online near Portland, Oregon? And the new dog’s name is actually Buddy!

MaryKate Morse, one of LFM’s mentors, lives near Portland and teaches at Portland Seminary. My father has deeply invested into her life for many years. She recently shared with me, **“Leighton was my mentor, and I owe where I am today to his friendship, advocacy, encouragement and prayers.”** Because of his support and the mentoring communities he brought her into, she wrote, **“I have not felt alone.”**



Leighton Ford enjoys the “New Buddy”

As a result of their friendship, MaryKate and her husband Randy offered to drive the “Buddy 2.0” across the country to my parents in North Carolina. MaryKate

Mentoring relationships go far beyond a ministry assignment or job. They become a deep part of the fabric of one’s life.

said, “We wanted to do something generous to show our love and appreciation for their friendship and support since 1995. At the end of the road trip, when we delivered Buddy, we believed we were part of God’s story in bringing a new friend into the home of two amazing, faithful people.”

Mentoring relationships go far beyond a ministry assignment or job. They become a deep part of the fabric of one’s life. They help address the isolation and loneliness that so many ministry leaders experience at a deeply personal level.

“Overall . . . pastors feel worse and worry more than they did a decade ago. The overall 10-year lookback tells us that clergy well-being, which was a problem a decade ago, is an even bigger problem today.”¹

A third of surveyed pastors show symptoms of depression and feel isolated, and more than half

have trouble sleeping. Almost every measure of spiritual-physical-emotional health worsened during the past decade.²

Loneliness and isolation are real hazards of ministry. The need for deep relationships, where ministry leaders feel accepted, loved, supported, and cared for is great.

“The most important week of my year”

During the spring and summer months, several of our global mentoring groups meet for their regular gatherings of safe times, safe places, and safe people.

LFM equips mentoring groups all over the world to help sustain healthy leaders of thriving ministries. In July, **the Resilience Community** met in Somers, Victoria, Australia. Led by Wei-Han Kuan, this group has met for ten years. Each member is some type of evangelist, and they lead a diversity of Gospel ministries in Australia in local churches, universities, and a prison.

One member shared, “**This is the most important week of my year.**” Another one said, “**This is the one group that’s kept me in ministry.**” Together, they share a high trust and vulnerability combined with deep spirituality.



The Soul Friends Mentoring Group met to encourage one another in Ohio in July.

The mentoring community, **Space4Grace**, met in early August in Grants Pass, Oregon. MaryKate Morse leads the group. She shared with us, “This year we had deaths of three parents in the group, so

it was a hard time, but we also were able to tell stories and celebrate their lives.”

Rich Hurst’s **Soul Friends Mentoring Group** met in Ohio recently. One member shared, “This year for me was extremely powerful in that I had a tough year physically and spiritually. I really felt listened to, cared about, and honored on our retreat. One of the things I struggled with was our family’s calling, and the group helped me navigate that. **Change is always hard, but having some soul friends help me with clarity is life-changing. Thank you, Soul Friends, for this kind of support in a safe place.**”

After their group met, Rich, who serves as LFM’s Executive Director of Ministry Teams, flew to Germany with his wife to celebrate their 40th anniversary. On their trip, they visited Rike Huettmann, who began LFM’s 50th global mentoring group last year in Marburg, Germany. A long-time member of her own LFM mentoring group, she is now passing that investment on to others.

Rike shares, “**My heart burns for creating spaces where people in our city have a possibility to meet people and God.**” She hopes her missional group can encourage these women to step out of their safe circles and build relationships with people who do not yet know the Gospel. Rike hopes to see them create spaces, formats, and ideas that connect with people in our post-Christian society.

They met this year at a cottage in Germany with the theme, “Putting God at the Center.” Eleven women came from across Germany - plus one from Spain. These gifted women bonded deeply together as they shared their life map stories, did Bible study, shared openly and honestly, and prayed for each other... plus cooking together and relaxing! Rike asked them for a 10-year commitment and they all agreed, which is very rare. Single women and married mothers learned from each other.

The Resilience Mentoring Group gathered this summer at Somers, Victoria, Australia.



They enthusiastically wanted to know each other, listen deeply to one another, and support each other in their ministry callings and various roles. All of them expressed their deep gratitude for such a “safe space” where they could cry together and cheer each other on in their callings of leadership and evangelism.

As with all LFM groups, they chose a name for their group, “Stella”, which is a German feminine word for “star.” Rike was in Lon Allison’s **Star Mentoring Community**. This word comes from a Latin word for star and the Greek word for star (*stelios*) which means “pillar” — something supporting a ceiling like a pillar in the Greek temples. **These “stars” shine the light of Jesus and also carry so much in leadership and evangelism!**

“Let us draw from your well!”

Your prayers and gifts are also touching leaders in other parts of Europe, like France.

“Alain, we would like to develop a culture of mentoring to accompany our pastors and leaders. You are the benchmark for mentoring in France. Let us draw from your well!”

Recently, several heads of major church unions in France contacted our friend Alain Stamp with the above request. Alain reached out to my father, Leighton Ford, asking for prayer, counsel, and if LFM will assist them in starting more mentoring communities.

Dad remembers when Alain came to our LFM mentor experience several years ago. His wife had recently died after a long illness, and he was a bit lost, finding his way in a new season. **Attending our gathering in his sixties, Alain recalls, “I received God’s call to dedicate myself to mentoring for the last part of my active ministry.”**

That call opened a new life and ministry for him. Alain developed a mentoring initiative training 100 evangelists in France for ten years, which included launching mentoring communities in a dozen French-speaking African countries.

Today Alain pours his life into high-caliber men and women who have become influential mentor-leaders serving in key positions in their



LFM recently earned a 2023 Platinum Seal of Transparency from GuideStar, a nonprofit that provides the most comprehensive data and insights about the social sector.

This award reflects upon a non-profit organization’s transparency and integrity in managing and reporting financial information. The Platinum Seal is GuideStar’s top level award. The Candid Seals of Transparency on GuideStar help an organization demonstrate their transparency to potential funders and donors.

countries. **They are lasting fruit of his ministry and an invaluable gift to many churches.**

The French-speaking world comprises 321 million people and growing, of whom the majority are unreached. Those who are considered reached are experiencing a discipleship crisis due to the lack of trained leaders, mentors, and materials. Alain's trained mentor-leaders are taking initiative to meet that Kingdom need.

Alain is a marvelous example of someone deeply touched and transformed through the ministry of LFM. And now the ripple effects of that impact have become mighty waves for the Kingdom. Alain calls it "a real cultural revolution for our country."

We are so excited how God is at work around the world using LFM as a catalyst for mentoring healthy, connected leaders. The Lord uses your gifts and prayers to daily make a Kingdom difference.

Will you consider helping kingdom leaders have deep relationships?

- **Praying** daily for this ministry and the lives it reaches
- **Sharing** \$100/month to help support our ongoing mentoring groups around the world
- **Investing** \$2,000 to train and equip a leader for one of these mentoring groups
- **Giving** \$5,000 to cover the first year of a new mentoring group
- **Providing** \$15,000 for the three-year launch of a new group
- **Offering** \$30,000 to cover the costs of a three-year church cohort for church planters, small churches, and churches in communities of color

God bless you as you do,



Kevin Ford
Chief Catalyst



Alain Stamp gathers with his mentees who are not mentoring others in French-speaking nations

1. Kelly Wittich, Director of Health and Well-being at Wespeth, shared these findings in a report studying 1200 pastors from one North American Protestant denomination.
2. Bob Smietana, "United Methodist Pastors Feel Worse and Worry More Than A Decade Ago." julieroys.com/united-methodist-pastors-feel-worse-worry-more-than-decade-ago



**LEIGHTON FORD
MINISTRIES**

2048 Carmel Road
Charlotte, NC 28226

 @LeightonFordMin
 @LFMConnect

LFMCONNECT.ORG

Are you interested in helping launch more mentoring communities to support ministry leaders?

To donate, visit:
LFMCONNECT.ORG

Or email us at:
INFO@LFMCONNECT.ORG