



[Home](#) > [News](#) > The Freudenburgs Receive Inaugural "Ben and Jennifer Freudenburg Pioneering Award"

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



*President Ahlersmeyer congratulates Ben and Jennifer Freudenburg at a faculty/staff luncheon*

**ANN ARBOR, Mich., August 31, 2009** – The [Association of Marriage and Family Ministries](#) (AMFM) has announced a new award, the AMFM Ben and Jennifer Freudenburg Pioneering Award. Eric Garcia, AMFM co-founded and president, presented Ben Freudenburg, director of the Family Life Program at Concordia University Ann Arbor (CUAA), with the inaugural award at the 2009 AMFM conference in Phoenix, AZ, in early August.

"I was overwhelmed," Ben explained. "Jennifer and I are humbled in receiving this award. It brought much joy and excitement to the Freudenburg home. There are many family ministry pioneers and we are deeply moved that AMFM would choose the work God has done through us to establish this award."

Freudenburg remembered, "In our first meeting with parents of senior high students at Concordia Lutheran Church in Kirkwood, Missouri, our message was that we needed parents to be involved in the spiritual lives of the teens. From that moment on, the family ministry road for our family has had its ups and down, but God has been constant. His promise never to leave us or forsake us and be with us till the end of the age has been more than evident. Thanks to the vision of AMFM and the train of saints that have traveled this same journey, the way has become more defined and better traveled."

In an interview with CUAA, Eric Garcia discussed Freudenburg's efforts, "He saw a need in the church, and started working on the model. Ben's book, *The Family Friendly Church*, represents a new paradigm for church ministry. All too often, parents and families say or do one thing on Sundays, and then act completely different during the week. In this way, future generations are finding it difficult to buy into their parents' faith. So ministry starts with a healthy marriage, and Ben has focused on equipping parents to be faith-shapers within the home." Garcia continued, "The future of family ministry is being shaped by Ben's research."



*Ben Freudenburg speaks at a conference in CUAA's Chapel of the Holy Trinity*

"We put a high value on honoring people that are obedient to God's call," continued Garcia. "Ben and Jennifer have been pioneers of this new way of thinking, and I am so thankful that Ben was able to stay the course despite any challenges or negative feedback that may have arisen along the way. Our prayer is that this new paradigm becomes the norm and not just the exception. I'm not sure the average person understands the power of the change that Ben has been preaching. It's quite significant."

Future recipients of this award will receive the "AMFM Ben and Jennifer Pioneering Award." Garcia explained, "We hope to award this recognition annually. It is important to note that every time we handpick someone for this honor, they will have been measured by the commitment that Ben and Jennifer have had in forging this paradigm shift in ministry."

Asked about the role of higher education in the future of family life ministry, Garcia responded, "It's critical. Every year we see more and more attraction to family ministry; and the more the research bears out that people are leaving church after high school, churches are going to be forced into this paradigm shift. We have got to have pastors and church leaders get this early on, so it is no longer a paradigm shift; rather it's engrained as standard ministry protocol. It is not as easy to reeducate, as it is to educate. Our prayer and our excitement for the future comes in part from Ben's team at Concordia raising up leaders today who have the right paradigm and understanding of family ministry."

Freudenburg commented, "The future of family ministry is an exciting one. Family Ministry continues to be on the front burner of many ministries. Just look around – Focus on the Family and Family Life have been joined by a host of ministries that include: marriage ministries, parenting ministries, ministry to non-nuclear families, intentional ministry in the area of human sexuality, ministries helping families

non-nuclear families, intentional ministry in the area of human sexuality, ministries helping families manage their resources, and a foundational piece that focuses on helping congregations see their role to be intentional in shaping marriages and families that parallel the ideals and beliefs of Christ and His Church.”

Freudenburg concluded his thoughts by saying, “Jennifer and I are dedicated to follow where Christ leads us. We will continue our ministry with the Family Life Program at CUAA, training church workers for a ministry to families. This ministry is humbling in many ways, yet is a great way for God to use us to train the next generation for ministry to families in LCMS congregations and beyond. We will continue to train congregations for ministry to families through The Family Friendly Partners Network—a three year training program for regional groups of congregations who want to become intentional marriage and family training centers. Jennifer and I thank God for Rev. Galan Walther and the Michigan District, where this program was pioneered and is now in Nebraska, Wisconsin, and Ohio. We are excited to go to Singapore in June of 2010 to be with Pastor Matthew Ling as we explore family education in that part of the world. God has much planned and we know He will give us the energy to meet His needs.”

The Family Life program at Concordia University Ann Arbor provides students with the academic and practical training needed to develop and implement programming that equips and supports healthy relationships for marriage and the family. This course of study is design to prepare men and women to serve in the community, hospitals, and the church as Certified Family Life Educators. Concordia offers a Social Services track for students interested in public service, a Child Life Specialist track for students focused on supporting children and families in the hospital setting, and a church work path for students who go on to become Directors of Family Life Ministry in the church.

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Concordia University Ann Arbor is a private, Christian liberal arts institution of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Concordia offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs in an environment focused on the individual student. Concordia is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) and by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Concordia’s Family Life Program is approved by the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR). The athletics program has helped Concordia receive the recognition of a National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) *Champions of Character* institution. Concordia is located at 4090 Geddes Road in Ann Arbor, MI. For more information, visit: [www.cuaa.edu](http://www.cuaa.edu)

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