

Dear {{first_name}},

On behalf of all of us here at Concordia University Chicago, *Happy New Year!* We pray God blesses you with all that you need and more in 2024.

Reflecting on 2023, we are incredibly grateful for the many and various ways God has blessed CUC. In October, we welcomed our new university chaplain, Rev. Simeon Raddatz BA '13, who faithfully administers the Word of God every day to our students, faculty, and staff. We also launched our four-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program, cutting the ribbon on our brand-new Nursing Simulation Center. 2023 also marked 100 years of choral music, 100 years of football at Concordia, and the start of our 160th academic year.

During this season of reflection, we give thanks to God for these [milestones and many more](#) as we look forward to a blessed 2024, standing tall for truth, freedom and vocation.

I encourage you to continue praying for the Concordia-Chicago community as we embark on this new year. Please enjoy and share the following stories with family and friends.

Blessings,

Jeff Hynes
University Foundation President/CEO
Sr. Vice President University Advancement

Alumni Spotlight

Jennifer Swets MA '98



This month we are excited to highlight **Jennifer Swets MA '98**, whose trajectory has been shaped by a dedication to Standing Tall for healing, serving, and answering God's call faithfully.

Swets received her undergraduate degree in Psychology and Human Aging from Valparaiso University, followed by a master's degree from CUC in **Gerontology**. Passionate about working in the field of human aging, Jennifer joined the Department on Aging in Cicero where she worked as a case manager for seniors, ensuring they received state-supported services. After finishing her master's degree, she became a case manager for DuPage County, and afterwards, worked as the supervisor of Cicero's Senior Center for two years.

After the birth of her daughter (who is now a student here at CUC!), Swets entered into the vocation of motherhood, homeschooling her four children. During this pause in her career in gerontology, Swets **discovered** her passion for yoga, eventually leading her to establish **Mending Nets**—a unique ministry combining faith, trauma-informed yoga, recovery support, and mental health advocacy.

"I transitioned from using my education to help underserved people in Cicero and DuPage County to helping those who are underserved in the community through yoga, offering it to people in recovery, people who are recovering from trauma or who have trauma currently in their life. So even though I'm not using my master's degree in a traditional way right now, Concordia's Lutheran principles of what the Cornerstone is still applies. I see it as, we're doing God's will, and we're doing God's will wherever he places us. He has placed me to serve those who are overlooked and underserved in my community through yoga."

As the founder of Mending Nets, Swets uses her education and experience to mend the metaphorical nets of individuals who have faced trauma or are on a journey of recovery. The ministry extends to recovery houses, online workshops, and teachings for social workers and advocates.

"We are His nets, the followers of Christ. He throws us out into the ocean to bring in fish— people who need to hear his word, to hear the gospel. And when we keep getting thrown out and come back, it's all great. But we get a bit tired, we get a little frayed, there's some rips, there are some holes, right? And so I believe He wanted me to have this ministry, where I was going to mend through his work— to mend those nets so that everyone can be thrown back into the ocean and catch more."

Beyond her work at Mending Nets, Swets is in the process of authoring her first book on trauma, mindfulness, and everyday life.

[Center for Gerontology](#)



Chicago Bulls Game: CUCougars Connect Gathering

Join us in cheering on the Chicago Bulls at **7:00pm on Tuesday, January 30th** as we gather alumni and students at the United Center, where the Bulls will take on the Toronto Raptors!

Secure your tickets today by clicking the link below. Don't miss the opportunity to connect with fellow alumni and students as they kick off the Spring 2024 semester!

[Tickets](#)



National Lutheran Schools Week

National Lutheran Schools Week is NEXT WEEK from **January 21-27!** We are excited to celebrate Lutheran Schools across the country as well as our Lutheran Teacher Alumni.

To help promote this impactful week to the Concordia community, we need your help!

Please take a few moments to fill out a short [Google form](#) answering the question: **Why Lutheran Schools?** In our current educational landscape, what makes Lutheran education so valuable? What is special or unique about the Lutheran Educational experience?

Please share your thoughts with us so that we can highlight your quotes on our social media pages, in celebration of NLSW! **Click or tap below to fill out the form.**

[Google Form](#)

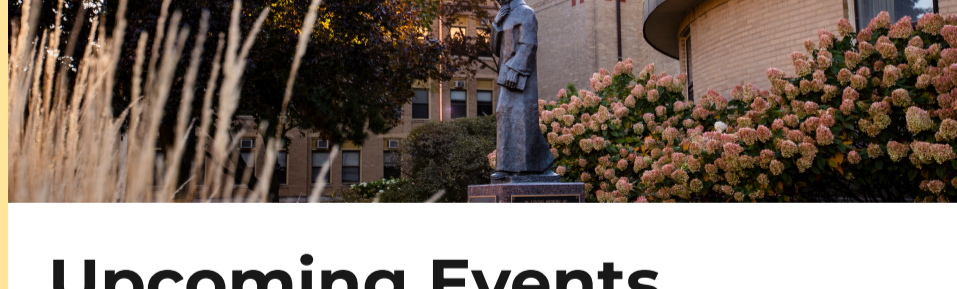


CIT 2024

The Concordia Invitational Tournament (CIT) is just around the corner from **January 26 - 27th**, and this year, the Concordia Cougars are heading to **Concordia University Wisconsin** for a weekend of competition and fellowship.

This year marks the 71st CIT, and we hope to see you there cheering on CUC men's and women's basketball, cheer, and dance!

Alumni! Please join us during CIT weekend for an alumni gathering on **Saturday, January 27th** in the Terrace Room on CUW's campus from **3:30-5:30pm!**



Upcoming Events

Senior Student Capstone Exhibition

Visit the Ferguson Gallery to experience the latest art exhibition featuring the senior capstone project work of CUC seniors.

Dates: January 8 - February 24, 2024

[Read more](#)

Best Practices in Ministry (BPM) Conference

Are you attending BPM at Christ Church Lutheran in Pheonix, AZ? Join us for an alumni gathering on Friday, February 23rd at The Porch - Arcadia. More details at our event booth!

Dates: February 22-24, 2024
Christ Church Lutheran | Pheonix, AZ

[Read more](#)

NADCE Conference

If you'll be attending the National Association of Directors of Christian Education Conference, stop by our booth and say hello!

Dates: January 31 - February 2, 2024
Houston, TX

[Read more](#)

Frederick Douglass Jazz Works

Jazz vocalist, composer and music educator Ruth Naomi Floyd presents "Frederick Douglass Jazz Works," created in honor of Frederick Douglass (1818-1895).

Date: February 15, 2024
Chapel of Our Lord | 7:00pm

[Read more](#)



Alumni Relations