Advancing the Legacy of Albert Baker
Building Community

Student Learning Community

uring its second year, the Student Learning Community (SLC) program at The Albert Baker Fund (ABF) has provided a dynamic platform for students to connect, share experiences, and grow together. Led by Libby Scheiern, Ph.D., the Scholarship and Student Success Manager at ABF, the SLC meetings offer a wide variety of conversations tailored to student interests and needs. Over twenty students from various academic backgrounds (ranging from freshmen to seniors to those pursuing graduate degrees) have found a supportive community where they can explore relevant topics, such as navigating the challenges of college, application of Christian Science in everyday life, and career development.

As one student shared, **"I always felt very alone with my faith in college and did not know others were having the same thoughts as me! The SLC meetings gave me a perspective that made me feel less alone. I loved this experience!"** This sentiment underscores the program's profound impact in fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie among participants. Each meeting is an opportunity for students to delve into discussion, with Christian Science serving as a cornerstone theme in every conversation. Collaborating and sharing ideas on topics including preparing for finals, navigating challenges of maintaining a Christian Science practice in college, and addressing friendship problems and disagreements, the students (with Libby's guidance) are able to develop valuable strategies for personal and academic growth. They also explore deeper questions such as how to stay grounded in Christian Science amidst social, academic, and emotional challenges; maintain a relationship with God; and handle the belief of contagion when faced with sick peers in their dorm rooms. These engaging dialogues not only provide valuable support but also foster great spiritual and personal growth among participants.

One participating student shared, **"There isn't a big Christian Science community where I live, and I really don't know many others my age that know of Christian Science. So, these meetings have helped me find new ways to approach things like stress and school and also know that I am not alone, that people of my age are also reaching out to Christian Science for help."** Through open dialogue and thoughtful exploration of shared experiences, students have found a space where they can express themselves, find support, and deepen their understanding of Christian Science in their daily lives. With plans to continue and expand the Student Learning Community program in the coming year, ABF remains committed to nurturing holistic growth and fostering an encouraging space where students can thrive academically, professionally, and spiritually.



Annual Meeting of The Mother Church
Libby Scheiern (far right) with a group of ABF recipients at the Annual Meeting of The Mother Church in Boston in 2024.

Odegaard Fields (Class of 2026) – Where Is He Now?

Back in the spring of 2023, we shined the spotlight on Odegaard (Odie) Fields. At that time, he was a freshman at Maine Maritime Academy (MMA) and was in a program that trains students to become captains in the maritime industry. Odie described the program as very structured, with lots of rules, a hierarchy of students and staff, and a lot of leadership-based instruction.

We thought we'd share an update on Odie's third year as he continues his studies.

"I am a junior at Maine Maritime Academy as a marine transportation operations major and will graduate in 2026. I am studying to sail on the ocean as a deck officer on a commercial vessel. Unaffiliated with the Navy or Coast Guard, I will drive cargo vessels around the globe. I enjoy studying and the material I am learning, and subsequently just was honored with a prestigious academic award. The single recipient is voted by the entire faculty in the student's major, based on academic achievement and a love of learning.

"Part of my education includes time at sea, so this past summer I spent 90 days on a liquid cargo vessel transporting gasoline and diesel from the Mississippi River to both of Florida's coasts. The experience was a hands-on, internship-style experience that was incredibly enriching in both my studies and as a leader.

"Christian Science is a part of my daily life and is one of the things I am most grateful for. I have spent two years away from my church community, as my college is in rural Maine. Last summer I was able to spend two refreshing weeks away at Camps Newfound and Owatonna, which helped reinvigorate my daily practice. The love I feel in church and at camp grounds me for the times I am not physically able to attend Sunday School.

"My life is very busy, but the time I take to listen to the [Bible] Lesson or read a Psalm makes my whole experience slow down, giving me all the time in the world to rejoice in the good. I am very grateful for The Albert Baker Fund for their generosity and how much they have been a part of this enriching experience."



Odie driving a liquid cargo vessel.

Other activities Odie has participated in at MMA:

- Delta Company executive officer: a leadership role within the regiment at MMA responsible for the daily accountability and discipline of 119 midshipmen
- Student assistant to the VP of College Relations and Advancement
- Residential assistant
- Host/dishwasher at a local inn
- Yacht club treasurer

Donor Profile

Joy Schwentker: An Open Heart

"Wow, God, that sure was fun! What's next?"

Joy Schwentker has spent a lifetime opening her heart—and home—in support of young people. She finds herself drawn to them, as they are drawn to her.

A few years ago Joy offered her home to a Christian Science male college student for 10 weeks when he was doing an internship in a nearby town. Though she had raised two sons with her husband before he passed, Joy began to wonder what it was going to be like having a college student in the house. Would the student want to talk to her or just go to his room and play video games with his friends? It turns out that she and the young man had a great time together, became good friends, and stay in touch regularly—including the occasional surprise text from him and dinner when she's in his area. After that experience, she said "Wow, God, that sure was fun! What's next?" And her adventure with younger people has continued

Through her involvement with her local branch church's Sunday School, A/U's DiscoveryBound National Leadership Council, the Christian Science Organization (CSO) support team at The Mother Church, The Campership Fund for Christian Scientists, Euphrates Institute, and her natural interest in young people, Joy has contributed to worldwide student support systems and has knit together a community of younger friends, like the young man mentioned above.

It's also why Joy has been a regular donor to The Albert Baker Fund. She appreciates that ABF offers scholarships for academic pursuits but also helps Christian Scientists who are seeking vocational training, CS nurses training, and chaplains training with the US military. Her enthusiasm for ABF and its mission goes beyond financial support, as she recently organized a local event for her branch church members to hear more about ABF through a presentation from Joe Ritter (CEO) and Sue Ellen Coughtry (CAO).

Joy loves to travel, showing that same openness to the world, and especially its more exotic locations. She can now report that she has been to all 50 US states as well as 40 countries!

Which is why she has signed up to be one of our travelers on the ABF "Visions of the Solar Eclipse" cruise in summer 2026 (see the information on the back page). From her many international trips taken with Christian Science groups, Joy finds that she loves traveling with other Christian Scientists. Here's why...

On a trip to France, she had a serious fall down the side of a cliff near an ancient aqueduct. But she knew everyone on the trip was already praying, and she felt that the cliffside "was filled with angels." She felt God's presence. After making her way the rest of the way down the incline with a little help, she contacted a Christian Science practitioner for prayerful support that night. By morning, she got right back on her feet and walked over 12,000 steps that day, completely free. She felt the wonderful prayerful support of her fellow CS travelers and was very grateful.

We at ABF are so grateful for all our donors and their open hearts.

Joy Schwentker
ABF Donor



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ABF Global Travel

Global Travel Update

We are so excited for our first-ever global travel excursion, "**Visions of the Solar Eclipse**," hosted by The Albert Baker Fund! If you haven't yet signed up, there are still a few spots left. Join us July 29 – August 13, 2026 (yes, that's right, **2026**) on a cruise from Copenhagen to Reykjavík with stops in Sweden, Norway, and Scotland. Along the way, you'll not only experience the sights and sounds of these amazing countries, but you'll also get to **meet face-to-face with some of our international ABF students who are attending university in Europe!** You'll also witness the total solar eclipse in Reykjavík, Iceland, on August 12, 2026.

For more information or to register, go to:
https://www.gonext.com/groups/albert-baker-fund



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