



Dear [Name],

Christmas Day 1977 was a day that profoundly changed my life. What do you remember about 1977? I turned 12 that year. Sandy, my brother, was back from a stay at the hospital, and my sister, Debbie, graduated from high school. UNC lost to Marquette in the Final Four at the Omni, while I cried from the stands. Tom Cousins secured tickets for my Dad to take my brother, Sandy, and me.

Jimmy Carter was America's new President that year. By the way, were you moved to tears, as I was, watching Rosalynn Carter's recent funeral? Prior to their 75th wedding anniversary, President Carter said, "For me, my home is wherever she is, whether in South Georgia or South Sudan. Holding her



Sandy, Leighton, and Kevin Ford with Charles Powe in 1977.

hand, reading our Bible together each night, falling asleep next to her, that is my home." What a wonderful story of love and faith for so many years.

In 1977, Dad asked what I wanted for Christmas a few days prior. Without missing a beat, I told him, "A treehouse!!!" I was so eager to wake up on that overcast winter morning. Running outside with my family, I looked in the woods, hoping that somehow Dad had built me a treehouse overnight. As I scoured the trees, it hit me like a ton of bricks — there was no treehouse. I turned to Dad, bewildered. Then I noticed a few things behind him. A saw. A hammer. A stack of 2x4s. A box of nails. I suddenly burst into tears, looking to dad for an explanation. With a twinkle in his eye, he said "**We'll build it together.**" Over the next three months, we built a two-story treehouse, with a trap door and zipline. It became a place for my friends and me to hang out and imagine that we were Robinson Crusoe.

Dad's focus on "building it together" didn't start in 1977, but 1945. Someone dubbed him "the youngest Youth for Christ (YFC) director in the world" when, at age fourteen, he led his YFC chapter in his hometown,

Chatham, Ontario. He heard Billy Graham speak at the annual conference in Winona Lake, Indiana, so Dad invited him to come to one of their Canadian rallies. When Billy gave an invitation to receive Christ, the response was disheartening. Seeing the disappointment in Dad's eyes, **Billy wrapped his arm around Dad's shoulders and said, "Leighton, I can see that you have the heart of an evangelist. I want to encourage you however I can."** A few years later, Billy introduced his sister, my mother, to Dad. Like the Carters, another story was written, one filled with love for each other and Jesus.

Dad later recalled, **"Billy soon became an arm around my shoulder. His steady influence, mentorship and partnership helped shape me into an evangelist. But it also shaped me as a mentor."**

Dad spent more than thirty years with Uncle Billy as an Associate Evangelist. Then, Dad stepped away from large scale evangelistic events — with Uncle Billy's blessing — to launch new ministries to identify, develop,



Our LFM Team gathered with a group of North American pastors in Blowing Rock, NC, this October for a mentoring experience.

Billy Graham with Leighton and Jean Ford. Billy and Jean are siblings.



and mentor emerging leaders. For nearly forty years, he's been an arm around the shoulder to budding evangelists and emerging Kingdom leaders all over the globe.

LFM's Mission is to be a catalyst for mentoring a new generation of healthy leaders who sustain thriving ministries for the sake of the Gospel. We come alongside emerging missional leaders as they journey through life and ministry by creating safe times, safe places, and safe people for their lives.

Kingdom-Focused Partnerships

Our mentoring and ministry should lead to multiplication through Kingdom-focused partnerships.

Consider **Wendy Ramos**, for example, who serves as Executive Director of Unidos en Misión México and Director of Leadership Formation with Open Eyes. She and her husband Ivan live in Mexico City, Mexico.

Over the last 16 years, Wendy has participated in an LFM mentoring group, the Shiggies, and trained dozens of future

Latin American mentors. Wendy shares, “We just had our mentoring retreat at the end of October, and it was a wonderful time to be together, share about our lives, families and ministries, and hear from the Lord together!

This next year we will offer a few spiritual retreats for pastors, missionaries and ministry leaders at our retreat home in Tequisquiapan, Queretaro (Mexico). We have three mentoring groups that we plan to bring together for retreats, two of them focusing on women in ministry leadership and one that focuses on Mexican leaders. **Thanks to support from LFM, our new Mexican Member Care Director just received LFM mentor training in Colombia with Paul and Nydia Johnson this past October.”**

Dad has been fortunate to spend a lifetime sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ around the world – and investing in the next generation of Kingdom leaders, like Wendy.

As we partner with people who love and share the Gospel, we are deeply aware of



The Shiggies Mentoring Group met recently in Charlotte, North Carolina, with Leighton.



Paul and Nydia Johnson met with Latin American leaders in a Mentoring Gathering in October in Medellin, Colombia.

the overwhelming need to provide safe places and safe times where emerging ministry leaders can be received and welcomed by safe people. Well over 500 ministry leaders have been mentored through LFM through more than fifty global mentoring communities.

Our Good Shepherd Was Moving

I’m so excited that **Paul and Nydia Johnson** have the vision for starting twenty new groups across Latin America. The Johnsons recently met with twenty-five potential leaders from seven Latin American countries in Medellin, Colombia. Paul shared with us, “Our hearts were full as we had a clear sense that our Good Shepherd was moving in our midst and confirming opportunities for His deep formative work in leaders in many diverse ministries and locations.”

Their gathering included strategic conversations about how to best make a transformational impact for spiritual formation and multiplication in Latin America.

Paul anticipates how this ministry can continue in places like Argentina, Uruguay,

Chile, Mexico, Costa Rica, and others. He asks, “Pray with us as we anticipate the birth of new mentoring communities in Latin America and new opportunities to see the Lord multiply formative opportunities there.”

Today our team at Leighton Ford Ministries is mentoring leaders who sustain thriving ministries for the sake of the Gospel, which is the reason we do what we do. We believe that the Good News of the Gospel, through Jesus’ death and resurrection, is for sharing — both through proclamation and demonstration. **Beginning with that arm around the shoulder in Chatham, the heart of evangelism continues through our present-day work.**

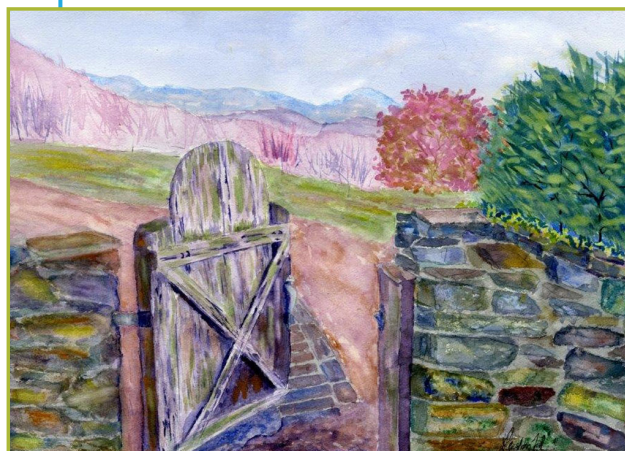
Your prayers and gifts touch lives all over the world — and help strengthen evangelists and ministry leaders who regularly share the Gospel with others.

Thank you for your partnership in this ministry. **Help us update our database! Please see enclosed yellow card.**

The Lord Bless You Abundantly,



Kevin Ford
Chief Catalyst



Leighton Ford painted “Billy’s Gate,” the gate at Billy Graham’s house, opening to the mountains, reminding us of how many people Graham led through the spiritual gate to come to Jesus Christ. View Leighton’s artwork at leightonford.art

Will you consider helping kingdom leaders have deep relationships?

- **Praying** daily for this ministry and the lives it reaches
- **Investing** \$2,000 to train and equip a leader for one of these mentoring groups
- **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



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

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