

Hello! I'm Paul Jonathan Ungerland II, a.k.a. "Jon" or "PJU2." Seeing as you're reading my bio on a website, I'll go ahead and share a bit about myself. I've been an alumni of The Cross Ministry Group "Men at the Cross" weekend since February of 2018. I attended the "MATC" weekend at the Camp Shady Brook facility, in CO. For many years a dear friend of mine invited me to experience a MATC retreat, and I (somewhat arrogantly and foolishly) repeatedly resisted his perennial invitations. The story behind my reticence to attend a weekend is that I *imagined/judged* I didn't need to go to a 'Christian' retreat, because I'd already spent a decade of my life studying philosophy, religion, psychoanalysis, and theology in the university setting. I received my Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Religious Studies from the University of Colorado (2006) and later earned a Master of Arts in Religion with a focus on Philosophical Theology from Yale Divinity School (2009).

My academic and professional pursuits have deeply shaped my understanding of Christian theology and its practical applications in daily life; and service in ministry has brought me closer to the existential truths and beautiful mysteries of Christ and God's Love!

Turns out, I'm also a bit of a mystic! I've always been wired to see a glimpse of the miraculous in the mundane, to sense the eternal in the ordinary and the everyday events of my/our world. Thus, I was unable to ignore the nudging of The Spirit as my weekend approached in 2018. Further, my passion (from a very young age) has been in exploring the mysterious and miraculous relationship between humanity and God, delving into topics such as Love of Neighbor, the radical reality of God in my fellow human, the centrality of Christ as the Word of the Church, and the life of faith in a fallen world. Little did I know God had an unimaginable gift perfectly wrapped and ready to be opened when I stepped into my MATC attendee circle and encountered the Light and Grace of God in a way unlike anything I'd ever experienced - the MATC/TCMG way!

In my daily life, I strive to integrate deep theological contemplations into practical awareness and consistent action. I'm growing in the art of living in the "ever present now." I desire to live as a man, a husband, a father, a brother, a co-worker, and a neighbor who creates, exhorts, blesses, builds, fosters order, promotes thriving, makes clear agreements, and maintains intentional integrity around those agreements. I want to model living from a place of abundance, margin, leisure, and peace. I aspire to live such that the following words might be experienced as true of me: "noble leader," "safe man," "humble disciple," "servant leader," "compassionate sage," "gently strong," and "loving king." Yet, as a simple man - as a fallen, finite, and fragile being - I fail and I fall short. Therefore, the core of my faith and philosophy is GRACE - the perpetual undeserved "yes" to God and to Christ in myself and in my neighbor!

Family has always been a pivotal axis of my story - in wounded ways as well as a redemptive and blessed arc. I live a daily miracle in the sacrament of my marriage (for 20+ years) to my beautiful, wise, faithful, and generous wife, Ann. Together we have a son, Paul Jonathan Ungerland III, whom we affectionately call "PJ." As a father, I find great joy in guiding PJ and learning more about the heart of my heavenly Father as I grow in experience and awareness of fatherly love. As an Eagle Scout myself, I now cherish the opportunities and 'edges' in leading

my son (and his troop) along their Eagle Trails and through their many Scouting adventures. I'm grateful for the pruning, the healing, and the fruit which family and community brings in my life.

Professionally, I've served non-profit, local financial institutions in various ways since 2001. I've worked in and alongside credit unions, and have built multiple businesses in the financial services consulting and financial technology sectors. I'm 'wired' to my core to promote the ideas of financial literacy, local financial sovereignty, democratic and egalitarian access to financial services, and community stewardship of wealth. In the past decade, I've deeply explored concepts like Bitcoin, the evolution of money, the possibilities of money beyond nation states, and I continue to contemplate ways in which Christians and faith communities of those following Christ might build "common purses" to promote sustainability and flourishing of Gospel missions in our world. In addition to my volunteer work for TCMG, I continue to lead organizations which build technology for and serve non-profit financial institutions across the US and North America.

My wife and I are originally from the Denver metro area, in Colorado. We now reside on Cape Cod in Massachusetts, having followed the lead of The Spirit in 2021 to plant roots in a place we'd long loved. We're grateful for God's goodness and beauty in our quiet maritime village along the coasts of New England.

Aware I may one day meet you and learn about your story, I'll share this in closing; I once stumbled across the following excerpts in the writings of one of my favorite theologians, Karl Rahner: "Only where people have a genuine, loving, heartfelt relationship with others can they find God and convince others that this reality we call God Exists."

This is a reason I cherish the work of TCMG and its ministries as a place where extravagant love is real and visible, and because it's also a body aware (in more and less conscious ways) that, "all mere theoretical talk, ritualistic activity, or explicitly religious display no longer has any credibility with people today unless it is carried, framed, and corroborated by true love, a love between one human being and another."

I believe (and have experienced) that, "People today have an almost radical need to demythologize everything, to tear down all facades, to destroy taboos, and to ask what it is that remains when all slogans are deleted and all ideologies destroyed. What truly remains is only what can be lived out in the act of loving another, provided this love is real."

Stated otherwise, I'm pleased to be serving this community because it's a way to live the truth that 'they shall know we are Christians by our love ... by our love!' Thankfully, I also live in a Graced creation and reality, wherein I can trust in the truth that God is present, summoned or unsummoned.

Amen.

Peace of Christ be with you!!

PJU2