

Galatians 5:1

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

II Corinthians 3:17

“... where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

Larry J. Walker, Editor

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Quotations from Dr. Martin Luther are taken from *What Luther Says*, compiled by Ewald M. Plass, ©1959 by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO.

Georg Sverdrup

“Is it really wrong, then, when the days are evil and the night is approaching, to lift up our eyes and mind from the confused and dwarfed present, and to turn to the true, real picture of the congregation which the New Testament gives us?”

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History

Rooted in Revival ...

Around the beginning of the 1800s, a Norwegian farmer's son, a layman, began tramping over the mountains and valleys of the country preaching a message of repentance and personal salvation. **Hans Nielsen Hauge** was immediately branded a troublemaker by the government and the state church, and spent 10 years in prison. The fire the Lord lit through him, however, could not be stifled.



Hans Nielsen Hauge



Philip Spener



August Francke



Gisle Johnson

Hauge's message and ministry reflected the spirit of **Lutheran Pietism**, a powerful movement of awakening that began among German Lutherans in the late 17th century, led by **Philip Spener** and **August Francke**. The pietistic emphasis on personal faith, godly living and study of Scripture caught fire among the common people, igniting a spiritual and social revolution whose impact is still evident today. A subsequent wave of awakening in Norway, often associated with the ministry of a theological professor, **Gisle Johnson**, is especially remembered for its influence on a new generation of pastors, ensuring that this renewal would be perpetuated within the church.

Revival fires also burned brightly in Sweden, Finland and Denmark, under the godly leadership of such men as **Carl Olof Rosenius**, **Paavo Ruotsalainen**, and **Wilhelm Beck**. These evangelical movements shaped the convictions of many of the Lutherans who planted the church in America.

Thousands of Scandinavian pietists immigrated to the United States to find a better life during the 19th century. They brought their faith and love of education with them, and they wanted to make sure their children had schools where they could be trained in God's Word and useful skills. Many Lutheran colleges and seminaries which exist today began at this time.

Among those institutions was **Augsburg College** in Minneapolis, which in those days also comprised a preparatory school, an academy and a seminary. Two scholars from prominent Haugean families in Norway came to Augsburg to teach in the 1870s, bringing with them a genuinely

radical view of Christian education, centered on Scripture and the simple doctrines of Christianity. Their names were **Georg Sverdrup** and **Sven Oftedal**.

These two young professors, having witnessed firsthand the opposition of the church hierarchy to the revival movements, had been driven in their frustration to take a fresh look at the New Testament church. Through their study of Scripture, they had come to a stunning conclusion:

“... in the New Testament there is no talk about any bishopric ... nor any church council, or synod. ... There is a congregation in each place where there are Christians, and this congregation has its elders or bishops; but there is no ‘church ruler-ship’ of any sort ...” (Sverdrup).

In other words, the *local congregation* is the right form of God’s kingdom on earth, and no power but God’s Word and Spirit may dictate to it.

This conviction was not only a matter of church government, but a vision of “living” Christianity. The church they sought to plant in the New World would promote a living Lutheran orthodoxy, served by shepherds who lead rather than overlords who dominate, emphasizing an evangelism that would result in changed lives and encourage lay people to exercise their spiritual gifts.

In 1890 several groups merged to form the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. The friends of Augsburg felt uncomfortable in this union, believing their principles were being undermined. In 1896 twelve congregations were expelled from the merged church for their support of Augsburg, which had been determined in court to be a private corporation not subject to control by the new church body. In 1897 a group of like-minded congregations committed to Augsburg’s principles established the **Lutheran Free Church**. This group drafted a set of *Fundamental Principles* (see p. 19) which would guide their operations.

Momentum came in the form of a tremendous spiritual revival which swept the Norwegian Lutheran churches during the 1890s. Many students came to Augsburg as a direct result of it, and through the work



Carl Olof Rosenius



Paavo Ruotsalainen



Wilhelm Beck



Georg Sverdrup



Sven Oftedal

Sverdrup and Oftedal pictures are courtesy of the Augsburg College Archives.

of pastors who graduated from the seminary the Lutheran Free Church began to expand beyond its initial concentration in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota to other areas of the U.S. and Canada.

In time however the vision grew dim, and a new generation of leadership began to question the future of the Lutheran Free Church. They encouraged participation in a new merger, which produced the American Lutheran Church (1960). It took three referenda before the necessary votes were gathered from LFC congregations, and approval was only gained in 1962, not without much conflict and even litigation.

In October 1962, representatives of approximately 70 LFC congregations resistant to the merger gathered in Thief River Falls, Minnesota, to form what became the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, founded on the *Fundamental Principles* of the Lutheran Free Church.

Georg Sverdrup

“Our congregations need to be set free, which is essentially the same as saying that they need to be awakened or revived ... When God’s Spirit comes upon a congregation, the first and most pronounced effect will be a living zeal for the salvation of souls ... When those who have themselves been set free from the bonds of death, arise in the power through which Christ arose from the dead, and begin to labor for the awakening of others, then freedom has dawned in truth. Then bonds are broken, other considerations are brushed aside, and only one thing matters: How can we get those who sleep awakened, how can we get those who are dying saved, how can we get those who are bound set free, how can we get someone along with us on the way to eternal life?”

The AFLC Today

Five principle reasons were stated at the organizational conference for the formation of a new fellowship. Seeking above all to be a spiritual movement, the AFLC:

- 1** Recognizes the Bible as being inerrant and the authority in all areas of life;
- 2** Recognizes that the teaching and preaching of God's Word is the main task of the Church, to be conducted in such a way that the saints are built up in the faith and unbelievers see their need for salvation;
- 3** Believes that the congregation is the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth, with no authority above it but the Word and Spirit of God;
- 4** Believes that Christian unity is a spiritual concept, not a man-made organization or body such as the World Council of Churches or the National Council of Churches;
- 5** Believes that Christians are called to be salt and light in the world, separated from the ways of the world (Pietism), and that this difference is to be reflected in the life of the congregation as well as in the institutions of the church body.

Convinced of the need for a new conservative evangelical Lutheran fellowship, as well as of the relevance of its free church heritage, the AFLC determined at its first conference to continue under the *Fundamental Principles* of the Lutheran Free Church, committed to promoting free and living congregations.

The AFLC is not an incorporated synod, but an association. Each local congregation is a separate corporation, and several additional corporations are sponsored by them to direct our common endeavors:

The **Coordinating Committee** of the AFLC is a corporation consisting of seven members chosen from the congregations, and serves our fellowship between conferences. One of its duties is to maintain the clergy roster, and a pastor or candidate for ordination must be approved by the committee through a colloquy process before he can be recommended for a call to

a congregation. This committee also maintains the congregational roster, which consists of churches who share the AFLC's faith and principles. Other ministries of the AFLC, such as youth, evangelism, parish education and publications, function under the corporate covering of the Coordinating Committee, which also has responsibility for duties not assigned to other committees.

The **Schools Corporation** consists of fifty members from AFLC congregations, and elects a Board of Trustees who are entrusted with the responsibility for the theological seminary and Bible school. The seminary, established in 1964, offers a three-year academic program for the training of parish pastors, plus a one-term internship. The Bible school, which welcomed its first class in 1966, provides a two-year course of studies in the Bible and related subjects for high school graduates. An optional third-year program, the Ministry Training Institute, offers tracks in intercultural, aviation and youth ministry. Both schools share a spacious campus in suburban Minneapolis (Plymouth), Minnesota, with the AFLC headquarters.

The **Missions Corporation** also includes 100 members from AFLC congregations, and elects from its membership a World Missions Committee, a Home Missions Committee, the FLAPS Board of Managers, Bay Broadcasting Board and the Ambassador Institute. Our World Mission outreach currently includes Brazil, Mexico, Uganda and India, and Home Missions subsidizes and nurtures new congregations in the U.S. and Canada.

The **Association Retreat Center** (ARC), located near Osceola, Wisconsin, **Partners in Mission Outreach**, and the **AFLC Foundation** are also organized as separate corporations.

The AFLC schedules an **annual conference** where reports of the various ministries are presented and recommendations made for the future. The primary purpose of the conferences is spiritual edification, and the agenda includes prayer hours and worship services together with the business sessions. A unique feature of an association is that all voting members of AFLC congregations may attend with speaking and voting privileges.

There are two new corporations in the AFLC. The **Women's Missionary Federation** (WMF) serves the women of our church with a program of Bible study and mission emphasis. The **Free Lutheran Youth** (FLY), formerly the Luther League Federation, sponsors a biennial convention, and is available to assist local congregations and districts in strengthening their youth programs.

The official publication of the AFLC is **The Lutheran Ambassador**, published twelve times per year, devoted to Word-centered articles and news of the churches. Our **Ambassador Publications-Parish Education Department** offers The Ambassador Series, a Sunday School curriculum, plus materials for confirmation and new member instruction, Bible study

and devotional reading. The **Ambassador Hymnal** is a worship resource available to congregations and individuals, containing more than 600 hymns and several orders of worship.

The *Fundamental Principles* state that a free congregation “esteems and cherishes all the spiritual gifts which the Lord gives for its edification, and seeks to stimulate and encourage their use.” The AFLC is not “charismatic” in the sense that the term is often used today, and the annual conference adopted a statement in 1965 cautioning against an unbalanced promotion of the charismatic movement, and warning against abuses.

The AFLC continues to see significant growth, expanding from about 40 congregations in 1962 to 285 currently, making it the fourth largest organized and established Lutheran church body in the U.S. While most of the congregations are located in the Upper Midwest, the fellowship extends into 27 different states, as well as three Canadian provinces, and contacts continue to come from new areas of the country where there is interest in free and living Lutheran congregations.

The common endeavors of the AFLC are dependent on the free-will contributions of members and friends, since there are no financial assessments or suggested goals imposed on congregations. The annual conference adopts a budget, and when God’s people are informed of the needs they generously support AFLC ministries as the Lord provides.

Georg Sverdrup

“The important thing is to bring as many as possible to salvation in Christ through sincere repentance and living faith. It is not a question of getting the congregation to grow through a compromise with the world, but of insuring its growth through the drawing and convicting power of the Holy Spirit. The intention is not to turn the congregation into a mission field, but rather to make it an evangelizing force in the world, both at home and abroad.”

Structure of the AFLC

CONGREGATIONS

Coordinating Committee Corporation

Parish Education Board

Youth Board

Commission on Evangelism

Benefits Board

Stewardship Board

Free Lutheran Youth

Women's Missionary Federation

AFLC Foundation

Partners in Mission Outreach

Association Retreat Center Corporation

ARC Board

A family of ministries, accomplishing together what one congregation cannot do alone.

Missions Corporation

Home Missions Committee

World Missions Committee

FLAPS Board

Schools Corporation

Board of Trustees

AFLBS

AFLTS

Executive Officers

**ANNUAL
CONFERENCE**

Conference Committees

Nominations Committee

Budget Analysis Committee

Colloquy Committee

Declaration of Faith

Having a common purpose and seeking one goal, we join together as free congregations for Christian fellowship, mutual edification, the salvation of souls and whatever work may be necessary that the Kingdom of God may come among us and our fellow men. No bonds of compulsion bind us save those which the Holy Spirit lays on us.

No man fully understands the times and the situations in which he lives. At best we see through a glass darkly. Nevertheless, each Christian must decide in the light of God's Word and the evidence which he has what course of action he should take and to what causes his life should be given. It is the same for the Christian congregation. Imperfect as it is, it must decide in what fellowship of other congregations it can best live out its purpose for being. Out of considerable soul searching and prayer we have come to choose to continue as Lutheran free churches.

As we stand at this particular moment of time we give thanks for the heritage of the past. We recognize and confess our indebtedness to many noble souls of the faith, both the relatively unknown who are faithful in their places and the ones on whom God placed the mantle of leadership. Even as it is true that before the Cross of Christ there are no self-made men, so it is true that we have shared in blessings from many and are debtors.

It seems good to us as we join together for common work and fellowship to state our beliefs in regard to the following matters.

I. Doctrine

1. We accept and believe in the Holy Bible as the complete written Word of God and preserved to us by the Holy Spirit for our salvation and instruction.
2. We endorse the statement on the Word as found in the United Testimony on Faith and Life and would quote here the following: "We bear witness that the Bible is our only authentic and infallible source of God's revelation to us and all men, and that it is the only inerrant and completely adequate source and norm of Christian doctrine and life. We hold that the Bible, as a whole and in all its parts, is the Word of God under all circumstances regardless of man's attitude toward it."
3. We accept the ancient ecumenical symbols, namely, the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds; Luther's Small Catechism and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as the true expression of the Christian faith and life.

4. We reject any affiliations or associations which do not accept the Bible alone as definitive for the life and practice of man and the church.
5. We submit all religious teaching to the test of II John 7-11.
6. We endorse no one version or revision of the Bible to the exclusion of others. We recommend all which are reverent and true translations.

II. Christian Unity

1. He who believes in and accepts the sufficient work of Jesus for his salvation and is baptized is a child of God.
2. The Christian is united by the strongest bonds to those who share this faith with him whether they come from his own denomination or another.
3. We believe that Jesus in His High Priestly Prayer prayed that those who believe in Him might find and accept each other.
4. In some situations and in some times it is possible that unions of groups of congregations may be desirable.
5. We recommend that our congregations cooperate with like-minded Lutheran congregations and movements in programs of evangelism and witness.
6. We envision opportunities for our congregations to cooperate with other Protestant churches in the area of evangelism and witness to their communities. However, care must be taken not to compromise the Lutheran understanding of the Scriptures.

III. Church Polity

1. We believe that final human authority in the churches is vested in the local congregation, subject to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.
2. Scripture does not command or forbid any particular organization for fellowship of congregations. In the absence of this we believe it is most safe to operate in a democratic way.
3. Conferences of the congregations of our fellowship do not enact law for the congregations, but simply recommend actions and practices to them.
4. In a free association of congregations such as this, neither its officers or conferences can negotiate the union of any or all of the congregations with another fellowship of congregations. This is an individual matter for the congregation.
5. We accept the Guiding Principles of the Lutheran Free Church as a true

statement of our belief in regard to church polity.

6. The Holy Christian Church consists of those who in their hearts truly believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
7. A free congregation selects and calls its own pastor, conducts its own program of worship, fellowship and service, and owns and maintains its own property.

IV. Practical Life

1. The Christian seeks to refrain from those acts, thoughts and words which are against a stated law of God.
2. Where actions and practices are neither forbidden nor encouraged in Scripture by name, the earnest believer will search the Scriptures for principles to guide his decisions and conduct.
3. He is aware that there is a separation which is necessary between the Christian and the world.
4. Ultimately every Christian makes his own decisions as to life and practice in the presence of his God. But he welcomes the sincere counsel of fellow believers.
5. Every Christian is responsible for his witness by life to others and will govern himself, with the Lord's help, accordingly.
6. The Christian will refrain from belonging to organizations which practice a religion without Christ as the only Saviour. Belonging to such a group places the believer in a hopelessly compromised position and destroys his witness for Christ.

V. Church Life

1. We make no recommendation as to the use of liturgy and vestments except that we encourage simplicity in worship.
2. We believe the earliest Christians were extremely simple in their order of service. Whatever is added to the service carries the danger of becoming only form.
3. Even the simplest parts of the service may become only form.
4. The preaching of the Word of God must be the central part of the service.
5. True Gospel preaching endeavors to meet the needs of all who hear: the believer who desires to grow in his life with God, the seeking and uncertain souls who want to see Him, the hypocrite who must be

awakened from his self-righteousness, and the hardened sinner who must still be called to saving faith.

6. The Sacraments must always be met by the response of faith in the heart of the recipient to be efficacious.
7. Hymn books should be such as will give honor to the Word of God and the Sacraments.
8. Congregations will cherish opportunities for Bible study and prayer fellowship.
9. Congregations are encouraged to have fellowship with one another in various activities.
10. The Lord has given talents and gifts to Christian lay people as well as pastors, and opportunity should be given for the practice of these gifts in the life of the congregations, also in meetings of fellowship outside the congregation, and in service to a needy world.

Submitted to the Special Conference of Lutheran Congregations at Thief River Falls, Minn., October 25-28, 1962.

Rev. John Strand

“The independence of each corporation and of each congregation must be guarded fiercely. If the corporation or the board can be bound by conference action, attempts can be made to bind the congregations. This is completely contrary to the Fundamental Principles.”

AFLC president, 1962-1978

What is the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations?

This article was written by Dr. Bernhard M. Christensen, president of Augsburg College 1938-1962, under the title, "What is the Lutheran Free Church?" and originally published in "The Lutheran Messenger," the official organ of the Lutheran Free Church. All references to the Lutheran Free Church have been changed to "The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations."

I.

The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations is a venture of faith. It is an attempt to build an effective and orderly Christian fellowship with a minimum of human organization. It is an experiment in extreme ecclesiastical democracy and decentralization. It is a searching test of faith in the power of the Spirit of God.

II.

The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations is a fellowship of independent Lutheran congregations bound together by the bonds of loyalty to a common cause and common tasks. It is a specific and direct rejection of the superior authority of every ecclesiastical organization above the congregation. It is an attempt to test seriously the uniting power of Christian love and cooperation. It is a call to a spiritual pilgrimage with no endeavor to organize the pilgrims into the rigid battalions of an army.

III.

The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations is a cooperative venture in building Lutheran congregations by means of a dominant emphasis neither upon organization nor upon the intricacies of doctrine but upon living and personal Christian experience. It is an attempt to carry out in everyday practice the Reformation principle of the universal priesthood of believers. It is a concrete expression of revolt against ritualism and formalism, and of the desire to nourish the spiritual life in utter simplicity upon the Word of God. It is an effort to provide orderly channels for the cultivation of the laity's personal witness for Christ, both in public and in private. Yet it cherishes the ordered ministry of consecrated and trained men, and the noble heritage of Christian worship, that its people may know themselves to be one with Christ of all the ages.

IV.

The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations is not a synod. It does not have the authority, save by consent of its congregations, to unite with Lutheran synods in effort to bring about an organically unified Lutheran Church. It is one of the smaller Lutheran groups, standing deeply in need of the varied contributions of other and larger bodies if it is to do its work effectively in its various fields of endeavor. It is an effort to achieve not a specific form of Church organization but a high quality of Christian life, in the faith that true spiritual life will tend to mold for itself a fitting form of organization. It was conceived to be a kind of ecclesiastical and spiritual leaven in American Lutheranism.

V.

The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations was born of a dream of spiritual power and vitality; yet it has been able to carry on even when its power and spiritual vitality seemed at lower ebb. It was launched under a great and inspiring leadership in a period of intense struggle; yet it has not perished when led through calmer seas and by spirits less flaming. It has been ridiculed as small, impractical, and visionary; yet those who know it best know that none of these words is a fatal indictment. It has been accused of "separatism," yet it has throughout all of its history been earnestly in favor of full spiritual cooperation. Its dissolution has long and often been foretold; but it still lives. *The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations* is an attempt to translate a high spiritual vision into reality, even at the cost of being suspected of turning reality into a dream.

VI.

The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations is sincerely grateful for the work of other Lutherans; yet it desires to have its own peculiar share in the mighty work and witness of the Lutheran Church. It does not seek to pass judgment on the relative contribution to Lutheranism of groups small or large; it earnestly seeks to be kept truly humble because of the imperfection of its achievements, and rightly proud because of the greatness of its heritage. Limited in numbers so that not even its name is known in many Lutheran circles of our country, and conscious that it will probably never be regarded as "successful" in the eyes of the world, it still believes in the continuing urgency of its message. Willing if necessary to find its success in seeming failure, the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations is committed, together with others of like mind, to the struggle for true congregational life in the Lutheran Church in America.

Georg Sverdrup

“The congregation is not organized, unless there is work for all. It is not for a congregation to hire a preacher to work for it, so they themselves can escape their duty. No, the congregation in this way is likened to a choir [which] has to have a song leader to instruct and lead. Shall the instructor sing alone? Shall not all join in? Such is the congregation; it is a gathering of God’s servants who work for God’s Kingdom, for Christ’s cause. The leader is not superfluous, but is the more necessary so that they may sing in unison.”

Fundamental Principles

Guiding Principles of the Lutheran Free Church and Association of Free Lutheran Congregations since 1897.

1. According to the Word of God, the congregation is the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth.
2. The congregation consists of believers who, by using the means of grace and the spiritual gifts as directed by the Word of God, seek salvation and eternal blessedness for themselves and for their fellow men.
3. According to the New Testament, the congregation needs an external organization with membership roll, election of officers, stated times and places for its gatherings, and other similar provisions.
4. Members of the organized congregation are not, in every instance, believers, and such members often derive false hope from their external connection with the congregation. It is therefore the sacred obligation of the congregation to purify itself by the quickening preaching of the Word of God, by earnest admonition and exhortation, and by expelling the openly sinful and perverse.
5. The congregation directs its own affairs, subject to the authority of the Word and Spirit of God, and acknowledges no other ecclesiastical authority or government above itself.
6. A free congregation esteems and cherishes all the spiritual gifts which the Lord gives for its edification, and seeks to stimulate and encourage their use.
7. A free congregation gladly accepts the mutual assistance which congregations can give one another in the work for the advancement of the Kingdom of God.
8. Such assistance consists partly in the mutual sharings of spiritual gifts among the congregations through conferences, exchange visits, lay activities, etc., whereby congregations are mutually edified, and partly in the voluntary and Spirit-prompted cooperation of congregations for the accomplishing of such tasks as exceed the ability of the individual congregation.
9. Among such tasks may be mentioned specifically the training of pastors,

distribution of Bibles and other Christian literature, home missions, foreign missions, Jewish missions, deaconess homes, children's homes and other work of mercy.

10. Free congregations have no right to demand that other congregations shall submit to their opinion, will, judgment, or decision: therefore, domination by a majority of congregations over a minority is to be rejected.
11. Agencies found desirable for conducting the joint activities of congregations, such as conferences, committees, officers, etc., cannot in a Lutheran Free Church impose any obligations or restrictions, exert any compulsions, or lay any burden upon the individual congregation, but have the right only to make recommendations to, and requests of, congregations and individuals.
12. Every free congregation, as well as every individual believer, is constrained by the Spirit of God and by the privileges of Christian love to do good and to work for the salvation of souls and the quickening of the spiritual life, as far as its abilities and power permit. Such free spiritual activity is limited neither by parish nor by synodical boundaries.

Rules for Work

As adopted at the AFLC Annual Conference in 1967.

1. The name of this association shall be “The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.”
2. Its aim shall be to work toward making Lutheran congregations free and living, so that, according to their calling and ability, they may work in spiritual freedom and autonomy for the cause of the Kingdom of God at home and abroad through such agencies and institutions as the congregations themselves may designate.
3. It endeavors to realize this aim in particular by training men and women for Christian work in and for the congregations, by conducting larger and smaller conferences, by distributing suitable literature, by sending out evangelists, and by any other means which from time to time will be found necessary or advisable.
4. The AFLC consists of congregations which, in their constitutions, unreservedly subscribe to the ancient ecumenical symbols, *Luther’s Small Catechism*, the *Unaltered Augsburg Confession*, *Fundamental Principles and Rules for Work of the AFLC*, and report the same to the secretary of the Coordinating Committee.
5. The AFLC shall hold an Annual Conference which usually opens the evening of the second Wednesday in June and which shall elect the necessary committees and officers and determine what church activities in particular it shall recommend to the congregations.
6. The right to vote in the Annual Conference of the AFLC shall be held by all ordained pastors and lay pastors in regular standing in the AFLC and by all voting members of congregations affiliated with the AFLC. Individual Lutherans who are not members of a Lutheran congregation, but who are interested in supporting the work of the AFLC, may be granted speaking and voting privileges by the Coordinating Committee after said committee has received and approved their credentials. Voting members of other Lutheran congregations may be granted the right to vote in the Annual Conference providing they have at least two (2) weeks previously signed and sent to the secretary of the Annual Conference the special blank provided for that purpose, signifying that they approve the *Fundamental Principles and Rules for Work of the AFLC* and will work for the aim set forth in paragraph 2 of the *Rules for Work*.

7. The officers of the AFLC shall be a president, a vice-president, and a secretary, who shall be chosen from the membership of the AFLC and elected by the Annual Conference. Voting shall be by ballot.
 - a. The president shall be elected for a term of three years and shall devote all of his time to the service of the AFLC. He shall preside at the Annual Conference and shall report to it on the work of the AFLC in general, on church dedications, installations, celebrations, etc. He shall be an advisory member of all boards and committees. He shall assist congregations and pastors by giving counsel and guidance when this is desired, and he shall also, as ordainer, assist the congregations in ordaining men with the proper and adequate training who have been duly called as pastors. His salary shall be determined by the Coordinating Committee and shall be paid out of the AFLC General Fund.
 - b. The vice-president shall be elected for a term of one year and performs the duties of the president in the latter's absence.
 - c. The secretary shall be elected for a term of one year. He shall keep the minutes of the Annual Conference and is the custodian of the archives.
 - d. The term of office of the officers of the AFLC shall begin October 1 and shall expire September 30.
 - e. The executive officers after having served three (3) consecutive terms can be elected for additional terms only by a three-fourths majority vote.
8. The Annual Conference shall nominate members of the Coordinating Committee. This committee shall consist of seven members: three (3) pastors and four (4) laymen chosen from the membership of the AFLC. The number of those whose terms expire shall determine the number to be nominated by the Annual Conference each year. No member can serve more than two (2) consecutive terms.
9. Duties of the Coordinating Committee.
 - a. The Coordinating Committee shall seek to make known the *Fundamental Principles and Rules for Work of the AFLC* and further the discussions of the same throughout the congregations, so that the task of the AFLC, in an ever increasing degree, may be more clearly understood and more generally put into practice.

- b. It shall seek to have the congregations as fully and as generally represented at the Annual Conference of the AFLC as possible.
 - c. When desired, it shall assist congregations and pastors by giving counsel and guidance.
 - d. It shall compile parochial statistics and report thereon to the Annual Conference. It shall maintain the clergy and congregational rosters of the AFLC.
 - e. It shall have charge of the AFLC General Fund, from which shall be paid the salaries of the president, secretary, transportation secretary, traveling expenses, and expenses incurred in connection with the Annual Conference.
 - f. It shall elect the editor of the church organ.
 - g. Any duty not assigned to any other committee shall be the responsibility of the Coordinating Committee.
10. The Annual Conference shall nominate members for the following boards and corporations of the AFLC: Coordinating Committee, Board of Trustees and Corporation of the Free Lutheran Theological Seminary, Board and Corporation of Missions, Board of Publications and Parish Education, Youth Board, Stewardship Board, and Benefits Board. The editor of the church organ shall be nominated by the Annual Conference.
- a. No member can serve for more than two (2) consecutive terms.
11. Reports shall be given by the following at the Annual Conference of the AFLC: The President, the Coordinating Committee, Board of Missions, Schools, Benefits Board, Board of Publications and Parish Education, Youth Board, Free Lutheran Youth (FLY), special committees elected by the Annual Conference, and by such institutions and activities within the church as may be given permission to report to the Annual Conference.
12. The president and secretary shall constitute the Annual Conference Committee, whose duties shall be: To fix time and place of the Annual Conference in the event that the Annual Conference did not do so at least two years in advance, arrange the program for the Conference, prepare the calendar for the business sessions, and to make any other arrangements that are necessary for the conduct of the Conference. The Conference Committee shall announce the Annual Conference at least two (2) months previous to the date of the meeting. It shall publish an Annual Report of the AFLC.
13. The manuscript for the Annual Report shall be kept on file by the

secretary at least two (2) years after the publication of the report. The president and secretary shall determine how much of the manuscript of the Annual Report shall be kept on permanent file.

14. The secretary shall send notices to all concerned as to resolutions passed by the Annual Conference, election of committees, etc., by September 1.
15. These Rules for Work may be amended in the following manner: A motion to make an amendment shall be presented in writing to the Annual Conference and shall be voted upon at the following Annual Conference. For the adoption of the motion, a two-thirds majority of the ballots cast is required. All amendments must be in agreement with the *Fundamental Principles*, especially 5 and 10.
16. The *Rules for Work* of the AFLC shall take precedence over all other orders and decisions in effect.

A Statement on the Historical Situation

“... We speak out of the world view which we have and in the light of the Scriptures as we have read them. We are subject to error and human failing, and our work must be exposed to the test of time...”

“We have tried to speak in Christian love ... we have not wanted to charge others with sinning against their consciences in taking a course unlike ours. We have said, ‘This is what we believe we must do and for these reasons, in the sight of God.’

“We have not cut ourselves off from the Lutheran faith or the Lutheran family. We are ready to work together with our fellow Lutherans when we can do so without compromising the principles mentioned in this statement ... We realize that we have no claim to the right of this fellowship from those from whom we outwardly separate now, but for our part will stand ready to act in common witness wherever we can.

“... Let us now confess our sins, let us do what we can to heal the wounds, let us be willing to forgive; where we must differ from others, let it be done in love. And if we can go on to think positively about the work we would like to do together in God’s Kingdom, we have the chance of doing something which can have real value in the world and which would carry God’s blessing.”

*Presented at the special conference at
Thief River Falls, Minnesota, October 1962*

Martin Luther

“It is the duty both of preachers and of hearers first of all and above all things to see to it that they have a clear and sure evidence that their doctrine is really the true word of God, revealed from heaven to the holy, original fathers, the prophets and apostles, and confirmed and commanded to be taught by Christ Himself. For we should by no means ever let doctrine be manhandled according to the pleasure and fancy of the individual who adapts it to human reason and understanding. Nor should we let men toy with Scripture, juggle the Word of God, and make it submit to being explained, twisted, stretched, and revised to suit people or to achieve peace and union; for then there could be no secure or stable foundation on which consciences might rely.

On John 7:40-44

“... For the church is an organism, like the union of body and soul, and has members. A hand that has been cut off does not live, does not adhere to the body. Just so a heretic is also cut off from the Christian Church through false doctrine and unbelief and is dead.

“The Christian Church does not consist of a pile of bishops’ or cardinals’ hats. These may be called a council or may become one, but they are not the Christian Church. It is impossible to bring the Christian Church together at one place; rather it is scattered throughout the world.”

The Word

We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of man's salvation. Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit informs and convinces us that His Word is true, that He will keep all His promises to us, and testifies in our hearts that our faith in Christ is not in vain ...

We bear witness that the Bible is our only authentic and infallible source of God's revelation to us and all men, and that it is the only inerrant and completely adequate source and norm of Christian doctrine and life. We hold that the Bible, as a whole and in all its parts, is the Word of God under all circumstances regardless of man's attitude toward it ...

We acknowledge with humble gratitude the condescending love of God in speaking to men through the agency of human language. We reject all rationalizing processes which would explain away either the divine or the human factor in the Bible.

The Holy Scriptures contain both Law and Gospel, but the primary content of the Holy Scriptures is the Gospel. The Law is brought into the service of the Gospel by working in man a realization of his sinfulness and of his need for redemption ... The Gospel brings to the penitent sinner the assurance of God's pardon and the promise of victory over sin.

We hold it basic to the right use of the Bible as the authoritative revelation of God to man that it must be its own interpreter. All interpretation of Scripture must be in the light of Scripture itself with its central theme: God's loving purpose to save men in Christ.

*The United Testimony on Faith and Life (1952),
a cooperative inter-church statement prepared
by the American Lutheran Conference
and subscribed to in the AFLC Declaration of Faith.*

The Church

It is also taught among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places. It is as Paul says in Ephesians 4:4-5, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”

The Augsburg Confession

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