

THE 

MAY 2020

# LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR



**WE MIGHT HAVE HOPE**

*Free Lutheran Bible College & Seminary*



## THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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# WHEN WE FEEL EMPTY

BY ELIZABETH NEUFELD

**F**rom the beginning, the invaluable quality of Christ-like selflessness has been difficult to discover in a world consumed with self. The grey area between unwavering martyrdom for the gospel and protection of our own wellbeing is nearly impossible to discern. Yet, the Bible calls us toward a very unpopular form of selflessness. God's Word shows us that when our cups are empty, it's not the self that fills it to overflowing once again, but our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He has redeemed us and called us according to His purpose. When we feel empty, we need not turn inwardly toward ourselves for renewal but to Him, who is the only true source of restoration. "He leads me beside still waters, He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake" (Psalm 23:2-3).

Contrary to the world's lifestyle, our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, sacred vessels to be used by our Sovereign God. The Potter has molded us for a purpose—not for His own practice, and not in vain to be another dust collector on the shelf, but intricately and intentionally to be used for His design—to glorify Him and to make His Name known to the nations.

Of course, it comes as no surprise to Him when we endure feelings of hopelessness and meaninglessness. Those feelings are an expected outcome of the sin which has woven itself into every part of our existence. He knows. He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to die for such moments as these.

Those pressurized life furnaces become the ultimate pathway to a story bigger than self and surroundings. It isn't that hope is lost and our strength has failed us in such moments, it's our eternal vision that is lost, vision for the souls we have the ability to touch—a vision yet to be recovered in a new season of sanctification and joy.

Those moments we feel so extremely emptied are not lost in His plan! In fact, those moments can be used to detail the beautiful masterpieces we become to radiate Him instead of boasting about our own selves.

The Author of our lives loves to see us not only remember Him, but also forget ourselves so that we can live to the absolute fullest potential for which He intended us. Paul expressed anguish on behalf of the eternity of others, representing the epitome of this kind of selflessness by saying, "For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people ..." (Romans 9:3). It is the same selflessness described in John 15:13 that says, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." This love leads us to not only lay down our physical lives to save a friend, but also our time, energy, and resources to save them for eternity.

That is the selfless love of Christ. May you seek restoration in Him alone and witness a rebirth of eternal vision for the lives around you.

*Neufeld is a Home Missions parish builder serving at Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz.*

## By Pastor Wade Mobley

"For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD" (Psalm 112:6-7).

**DURING THE WEEK** of March 9, the news kept on coming. Most of it was bad news. In less than three months COVID-19 transformed from a little-known respiratory illness in China to ending the conventional school year on the campus of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary. On-campus classes were transferred to an online platform, and the Concert Choir tour, cross cultural missions trip to Mexico, and other spring events like Campus Days were canceled.

Students overcame their initial disappointment with class and grace. We are proud of them. This was difficult, and they have done well. We continue to deliver content online, and I am thankful for technology and professors willing to embrace the challenge. It is not the same—our program is built around on-campus, in-person living and learning—but it is good. It is easy to find application for biblical teaching these days.

The Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary is in a strong position for the future. We operate with a business plan that accommodates challenges, though I am quick to tell you that we didn't see this coming any more than you did. We are sharpened and focused. This time has refined us, too. We are staffed with dedicated, motivated workers. The uncertainty of the days ahead highlights the essential importance of dealing with eternal, unchanging truth. Fear and daily news of death turn our eyes toward what matters most: The forgiveness of sins through the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our world is waiting for a vaccine; we want them to call upon the Savior, who is risen, indeed.

My greatest blessing over these past weeks has been the number of alumni whom I observe serving well as lay people and pastors in local congregations. There is no shortcut to pastoral training, and I am proud of the dozens of recent seminary graduates now serving well as pastors in congregations. They are joined by scores of lay people equipped at FLBC to serve their congregations and their communities. This time, when the hearts of men turn to substantial matters, should be the Christian's finest hour.

The content of this issue was planned long before any of these changes swept through our country. Our theme, though, is timely: the endurance and encouragement we find in Scripture, which leads to hope (Romans 15:4).

Next fall will come, and with it a sense of normalcy. Pastors and their families will be trained for future ministry. Bible College students will receive a foundation from God's Word, on which God will build the rest of their lives and ministry. We have a lot of decisions to make soon, especially about the end of the school year and the summer ahead. Events move fast—between this writing and when you read this, we will all know much more. For the latest updates on campus life and schedule modifications, look to [www.flbc.edu](http://www.flbc.edu). Thank you for praying for the Bible College and Seminary as we continue to establish students in God's eternal and inerrant Word, for a life of faith in Jesus Christ and faithful service in His kingdom.

—Mobley serves as President of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary.





VandenBos and Eder talk  
about their testimonies:  
[flbc.edu/lutheran-ambassador](http://flbc.edu/lutheran-ambassador)



# ENDURANCE

**LED BY THE** Holy Spirit, St. Patrick and his wife, Lady Anna Wisdom, set off with their five children to the land of Theology at the Free Lutheran Seminary in the fall of 2017. Despite the beauty of both land and lake, many difficulties awaited them on their journey.

The first stop was the Hill of Despair. On the first night, young Joshua (then 7 years old) decided to seek the thrills of life with reckless abandon. The moment his bike was unpacked, he raced down the campus driveway, known to be an unforgiving hill. Unfortunately, his bike was brake-less. The thrill of his ride quickly turned to fear and pain as the curb stopped his bike and the concrete stopped his body. Off to the Emergency Room of Robbinsdale for stitches. Patrick and family felt as we often feel in our journeys: battered, but not broken.

The second stop was the Valley of Humiliation. Once deep in seminary studies, Patrick quickly learned that his theology was incomplete, flawed, and sometimes on the verge of heresy. The pride that had filled his life began the slow process of dying. He had to relearn the Word as his rule and authority. While in the Valley of Humiliation, Patrick realized that his pride was harming his leadership and decisions—most notably with his family and wife. Although difficult, his time in the Valley of Humiliation was the best thing for Patrick and his family.

The third stop was the Castle of Chaos. Organizing a schedule with now six children—four of whom were in school and involved in many activities—proved to be a challenge. Working two part-time jobs, flipping a house in North Dakota, and preaching on many weekends placed a strain on the entire family. Those difficulties, placed on top of his full-time seminary obligations, often created a feeling of chaos in Patrick's life. Multitasking became Patrick's tool for surviving the Castle. Patrick learned to read wherever and whenever. He learned to do homework on the floor as multiple children practiced gymnastics over his back. And as a family, it became necessary to eliminate the unnecessary and focus on the necessary. The time spent in the Castle of Chaos equipped the entire family for ministry.

\* \* \* \* \*

Relating my time in seminary to John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is a fun way to talk about the challenges my family faced over three years. There have been many difficult stops along the way, but no matter how much pain and suffering we experience, how ill-equipped we feel, or how difficult or overwhelming our situation may seem, He is able. In Romans 15:4-5, we are told that we have a God who is the source of our encouragement and endurance. He equips us with His Word and declares to us that He has taken on our suffering. When we feel ill-equipped, it is through His Word that we may be complete, equipped for every good work (II Timothy 3:17). When we are going through difficult times or are overwhelmed, He tells us to come to the Word and He will give us rest (Matthew 11:28). In His Word, we also have the assured hope for the coming of the New Jerusalem (Bunyan's Celestial City) from heaven (Revelation 21:1). As we go through our own journeys, we rest on the assured hope He has given us through His Word.

—Patrick VandenBos and his family are from Northwood, N.D. He is in his senior year at the Free Lutheran Seminary and will serve his internship at St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D.

“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

# ENCOURAGEMENT

**GROWING UP** I was known as the overachiever. If someone wanted me to do something or asked me for a favor, I typically would say yes immediately. But in the past couple of years I’ve been repeatedly confronted by the fact that I can’t do everything. I don’t have the time, the energy, or the ability. I become tired and overwhelmed and I mess up, getting stuck in my imperfection. It always ends in frustration, exhaustion, and self-loathing. I’m sure I’m not the only one who feels this way.

Romans 15:4, however, is one of the numerous verses that brings us comfort and encouragement. Paul states how throughout the Old Testament we are given a clear account of God’s salvation plan and the promise of eternal life. At FLBC I have loved learning about just how connected the Old and New Testaments are, and it’s exciting to see how intricate and purposeful God’s actions were and still are. But more importantly, the Old Testament tells me that I am a sinner. I will always come up short. I will fail and turn away from God. I can do absolutely nothing to save me from my sins because I am like a corpse, dead in my sin.

Now at a first glance that sounds like a discouraging and hopeless statement, but that’s the backwards beauty of the gospel. In the Scriptures we read again and again about how the Israelites fell short, but God, like a patient and loving Father, showed them love and mercy and promised to redeem them. And then Jesus stepped into our place, fulfilled the very law which we all fail to follow, and died to save us. Simply put, I am shown that I cannot do it, so therefore only God can.

A friend once told me she didn’t feel she had anything to offer God. She didn’t feel worthy and wasn’t a good enough Christian so God could never use her for good. But that is the whole point! We all need to recognize our hopelessness before we can genuinely revel in the hope we are freely given. None of us has anything to offer to God, but He fills us with His strength and love and gives us His ability to serve Him. I don’t have to work to earn salvation myself. The burden is off of my shoulders and I don’t have to worry about messing it all up, especially when I’m worn out and tired of trying and failing.

Pause and really let that sink in. Salvation and my idea of spiritual success does not rest on my head. The message of the gospel is like a breath of fresh air or a colorful sunrise after a stormy and cold night. I am able to have joy and hope and an inner worth in Jesus that does not depend on how productive or helpful I have been that day or how “good” or liked by others I am. I can’t think of a more encouraging promise that gives me greater relief than that.

—Greta Eder, a senior at the Free Lutheran Bible College, is a member of Emmanuel Free Lutheran, Williston, N.D.



# HIS FRESHMAN YEAR

## *An interview with the new dean of the Free Lutheran Bible College*



**RICKE:** Hi, my name is Eliah and I am a first-year student here at the Bible college, and I'm going to be asking our new dean, Adam Osier, a couple of questions.

Pastor Adam, this is your first year as the dean. How would you describe the transition ... not only the physical, geographical transition from that place to here, but also the mental and spiritual change and your responsibilities as a spiritual leader of now not a church, but a school that trains young people in the ways of Christ.



**OSIER:** A very big difference actually. The pastoral role and the dean role overlap in some areas, right? Spiritual care. You come to me with a problem. I want to be there to hear. I want to give you biblically sound advice. I want to talk with you. I want to pastor you through that. But we're not a congregation here, so it's a little bit different. There's also academic pieces and disciplinary issues that are different in a college than in a church.

Probably most of all I miss the congregation. And I miss the people and the role that I had as pastor. There's some of that here, though. And it's with the students.

**RICKE:** How did it, would you say, affect your family? Both positive and negative?

**OSIER:** I think just not being part of a congregation as the pastor is different, especially during this time of year. I mean, looking at Lent and at Christmas time it was very different because you're so engaged and actively involved in the church. Here we have Christmas off, right? It's like all of a sudden I'm a parishioner, not a pastor there at my congregation. It's a different thing and I think that's affected our family. I can't say good or bad, but it's certainly unique. It's been probably one of the biggest adjustments in our family life for sure. But God's been good. He has seen us through it.

**RICKE:** Your first year as dean has been very eventful. Obviously, there are the stresses of coming into this new head position. And on top of that we've had to deal with people leaving the school and the coronavirus, and things being canceled. God is supposed to be our place of refuge, but how do you see yourself wanting to react to the stresses of those problems?

**OSIER:** I think Christians in general care for one another, right? When you see students struggling with different things, either academically or something in their life ... you hurt for them ... you want to support them, you want what's best for them. That's a challenge when sometimes people don't want that help. They're not there and you can't force that. This week in particular with COVID-19 has been a very, very disappointing week for a lot of people. Making the decision to cancel choir tour this year was probably, I would say, the low point maybe of some of that. And this on top of a bunch of other difficult things, too.

And what do we do in those situations is we look to Christ, right? ... We're studying Romans in class together, right? Chapter five, where it talks about how suffering produces character, and character, perseverance and perseverance, hope, ... That suffering should serve as a testing ground, a battleground where we are forced to have a single-minded focus, if you will, on God's goodness to us, His grace, His control, His circumstances, that He's looking out for us all the time. It should focus our eyes on that reality. I hope for our school, I hope for our own personal walks with the Lord, that we would turn there in this time. I would like to say that for myself, too, but in life disappointments are a real thing. We hurt. We mourn with those who mourn and weep with those who weep.

**RICKE:** So you used to go to this Bible school, correct?

**OSIER:** I did when it was a Bible school. It's now a college, but yes.

**RICKE:** Yeah, my bad. It is hard to adjust. ... Well, what year did you come?

**OSIER:** Came in 2003 and I graduated in 2005.

**RICKE:** So I imagine the culture was fairly not the same as it is now.

**OSIER:** Probably true to some degree. I think there's a lot of similarity here still. I mean, you have a unique group of people who come to a Bible college like this, right? Unique people want to study God's Word, which is not necessarily popular today. ... Sometimes you hear the phrase, "Why would you waste your time going there?" You've heard it, right? And the answer is, of course, it's not a waste to be in the Word of God. ... You do walk away with a diploma of biblical studies, but in society that's not viewed as highly is as it is in God's eyes. So that hasn't changed.

No, not a lot of changes as far as the overall ethos of the school. What is our purpose—to be in God's Word—very much has remained consistent. And I see that same passion. ... I want to continue to be excellent in what we do. I want to increase in that. ...

I think we have a unique program here that's twofold. First of all, the core essential curriculum is God's Word. We're digging into that in different ways. Either through exegetical study, digging into the Word verse by verse, systematic study, topic by topic, practical study, how do we minister right to the youth, how do we connect with different [groups]. You're in the nursing home ministry, right? That's another good example from the youth to the elderly. How do we engage in ministry to serve our neighbor, to love our neighbor? All of that stays the same. I want to continue to do that well and find ways to do that more excellently so that ultimately God is glorified and that we are producing students who are capable and fully prepared to go out and engage the world with the gospel.

**RICKE:** What is the biggest hope you have for students and what they get out of this school?

**OSIER:** The biggest hope is they get valuable knowledge of the Word, but I think it's more than knowledge. ... At the end of the day, we are a college and we do have college-level work. ... But I don't want you to leave with [just] the head knowledge. ... there's a heart aspect. ... That's the goal. My thing would be that we would raise students up who have integrity, who have a passion to share God's Word, and a knowledge of how to do it right. ... That's what His Word does when it is preached or proclaimed in any way, shape, or form, it actually goes out and goes to work. ... It's a means of God's good gifts. ... I want you to carry that wherever you go. That would be my hope.

Ultimately what we do here uniquely then isn't just you sit in class and learn about Romans. We study the Word, but then we also have a residential component to our ministry here.

Can they take our program online? Well, no, I don't think they can, exactly. They can learn some of the content that we study here online. But can they get that residential community discipleship piece? I don't think they can. ... I think we can do something different here because it's part of living together, learning life together, learning how to minister together, learning how to love together, learning



Watch the interview between Ricke and Osier at: [flbc.edu/lutheran-ambassador](http://flbc.edu/lutheran-ambassador)

how to, as a community, say, "I've wronged you. I'm sorry." And to have that exchange of confession and forgiveness, that's a model of the gospel in our daily life.

**RICKE:** Yeah. I'd say I definitely experienced that. Dorm life has been very, very good to me and it's brought a lot of growth in my life.

I'm actually interested in your first year. It's not exactly the same, but I'm also first year. I've seen a lot of changes happen in my life. What would you say is the biggest thing that God has been working in your heart personally?

**OSIER:** One of the big things that the God has been teaching me is to trust the gospel. ... It's easy to compartmentalize. ... you're not a Christian [just] eight hours a day. Or more seriously, like this week with the coronavirus or COVID-19—how do we look at that? How do we engage those disappointments in view of the gospel? That's easier to see sometimes when it's more severe.

But sometimes God uses difficulties like this—the stock market crashing, everything falling apart—to [teach us to] say, "I am trusting in you." I want that to be the case for me, that wherever I am, I'm looking to the relationship that I have with Christ as the guide, as the framework, the lens, if you will, through which I view the situations that we are facing in life.

—Elijah Ricke, a junior at the Free Lutheran Bible College, is a member of Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis.



# FAN INTO FLAME

*By Ashley Marschner*

**GROWING UP**, I always viewed attending Bible school (Free Lutheran Bible College) as a given. “It’s just what you do,” I thought. I come from a vast heritage of Bible school attendance, which includes my three siblings, my parents, 21 aunts and uncles, and 21 cousins so far. I do not remember a time when I didn’t want to go to Bible school, and I even remember getting my first application when I was 6 years old! So often I think of attending Bible school as a matter of tradition, you go because so-and-so has gone before you. And I think that for many younger siblings, like myself, that is true. But what about that first person? How does someone who doesn’t have an AFLC background decide to attend the Bible school? I asked this question to a few of my relatives in order to piece together how it all began.

The first person to attend the Bible school from my mom’s family was my uncle, Ron Strand, in 1968. Their family was living in rural Abercrombie, N.D., at the time, and attended the Emmanuel Lutheran (ALC) church in town. But they had family connections at Bethany Free Lutheran Church nearby, and would attend special events, such as Christmas programs and monthly Luther League meetings.

“Fran Monseth, as a seminary student serving Bethany Free Lutheran Church, was influential in encouraging me to attend Bible school in Minneapolis,” said Ron. Monseth went on to become the dean of the seminary.

After Ron attended Bible school, his seven younger siblings each decided to attend. My mom, Elaine, was one of them. Something was behind this development; for eight siblings who didn’t attend an AFLC church to decide to attend Bible school is very unusual. I asked Ron what he learned from his family that made attending Bible school important to him. He said that attending church was an essential part of growing up, as well as the prayerful support and faith of his parents. Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

On my dad’s side of the family, the first Bible school attendee was my uncle, John Mundfrom. This was also in 1968. Three years earlier my grandpa, Pastor Gerald Mundfrom, had joined the AFLC as a pastor. Their family attended the AFLC Family Bible Camp every summer, where John was likely introduced to the Bible school and met many fellow future students. Since his father was a pastor, John was often asked if he planned to go into the ministry, as well. He said that he wasn’t planning to, but he

went to Bible school anyway, knowing that it would lay a good foundation for him, whatever he did in life. John did follow God’s call into the ministry.

My dad, Daniel, was the next to attend, and their other four siblings eventually attended, as well. For their family, attending church, Sunday school, and vacation Bible school were crucial elements of life. They had family devotions every night at the dinner table, and they attended Bible camps and Luther League conventions year after year, meeting and building friendships with other Christians their age, many of whom would become future classmates at Bible school. The Word of God was very much a part of their family life, as instructed in Deuteronomy 6:7, which says, “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”

From these two families came my parents, who met at Bible school in 1972, married, and passed this heritage of faith on to their children. I am so thankful for my time at the Bible school, and how that time of focused study has equipped me to serve the Lord in our local congregations. In my family we are now coming up on the next generation, and my cousins and siblings each have kids graduating from high school. My prayer is that they would choose to attend Bible school, not merely for tradition’s sake, but because they would recognize the value of time spent devoted to the study of God’s Word in an atmosphere of Christian fellowship.

The Apostle Paul wrote to his student Timothy, “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well” (II Timothy 1:5). I have heard the excuse a number of times, from high schoolers who have grown up in the faith, regularly attending church, some even attending Christian schools, that they don’t need to go to Bible school because they are already a Christian, they already know the Bible stories, they already have faith. But Paul goes on to say in verse 6, “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you.” Being raised in a Christian home is a blessing that we certainly shouldn’t take for granted. But attending Bible school is a way that we can “fan into flame” the faith that we already have, to let it ignite and to grow.

*Marschner (nee Mundfrom), a 2010 graduate of FLBC, is a member of Bethel Community Church, Culbertson, Mont.*

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**LAST YEAR**, I found out that one of my favorite places on earth was going through a big change. The Association Free Lutheran Bible School was no longer going to go by the sweet and extended name for which it was known. The Bible school was no longer going to be called the name it has affectionately been called for years—AFLBS. I admit, a world without hearing the word AFLBS seemed foreign to me at first. I had become accustomed to it as I attached it directly to my formative time on campus as a student as well as an employee. I understood the reasons why the administration was going in this direction, but I was unsure what things would look like after the change would be made.

During the summer of 2019, I was at the AFLC Annual Conference in Canadensis, Pa., on behalf of AFLBS, traveling as a representative with the Ambassadors singing team, when the change was made to rename the school Free Lutheran Bible College. Our beloved AFLBS would now be named FLBC.

I have had the privilege of working for FLBC in a variety of capacities in the past two years, including in the admissions department, coaching basketball teams, and as a dorm assistant. This means that I have had a front row seat to the transition to FLBC. I am thankful and excited for what God has planned for our college. Every name change comes with a transition period where people come to understand why the change was made as well as just becoming comfortable with saying the name in this new way.

I believe firmly that the people I have met who have learned of our name change are becoming more comfortable and understanding of our Bible college and who we are. I believe we are connecting with students more confidently from within our AFLC congregations as well as outside of it. I believe our current students are already accepting the change at a fast rate. And our faculty and staff have rallied around the name and helped in this transition period. These things have happened in only a matter of months, really. So, I believe the change will benefit our Bible college as we look to continue in our mission.

Despite all the publicity—which is meant to help us all get used to the name change—the Bible college is not about a name, it's about God's Word and His people. It's a place where God's people dwell in His Word and grow in spiritual maturity. God's Word never changes because neither does our God. The name of a place can change, but that does not mean that its mission does. AFLBS has now become FLBC, yet our mission at FLBC to establish students in the eternal and inerrant Word of God, for a life of faith in Jesus Christ, and faithful service in His Kingdom will stay the same because we know God's Word and His promises to us will always be true.

I have seen Christ's love exhibited by our faculty and staff, and this love has not just stayed the same, but grown. Our staff wants students to come here and be changed, not for their own selfish gain, but for the Kingdom—for Christ's sake. Our mission will always be about Christ and seeing Him glorified. Students are being transformed by God's Word daily. They are growing in community with other believers, and they are going out from here and living out their faith. This is not because we are building a gym or making a name change. Those things are just beautiful additions to help us grow in community here at FLBC and in our mission and goal for our students. I can tell you what each person here would say regarding this, because it is what I have learned to say, as well: All glory be to Christ our King for what He is continuing to do in Plymouth, Minn., at the Free Lutheran Bible College. It's all about Jesus.

*—Caleb Holt, a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn., is a men's dorm assistant.*

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*The name has changed, but not the mission*

# DWELLING IN THE WORD

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## ALUMNI

**“WHAT SCHOOL** did you go to?”

“AFLBS! Wait, now it’s FLBC—it’s hard to explain ...”

For the alumni of what is now formerly known as AFLBS, the name change to FLBC might be a bit difficult to get accustomed to. Change is not always easy, especially when it comes to something personal. For many of us who are AFLBS alumni, our experience there has had a considerable influence on where we are today and what we are doing. When I first learned that the name of the AFLC’s college-level Bible school was going to be changing, I thought to myself, “This makes sense. AFLBS is accredited now and this change will put the school on par with other like-minded schools.” To many, the term “college” refers to a higher-level educational institution compared to “school.”

The position of FLBC in academic circles may change somewhat now, but the focus of the school will not. Find encouragement in knowing this. FLBC will continue in the same tradition as AFLBS, to establish students in the eternal and inerrant Word of God for a life of faith in Jesus Christ and faithful service in His kingdom.

*—Tim Larson, class of 2009, lives in Osakis, Minn.*



# THE CALL TO PREPARE

*By Dr. Mark Olson*

**AT THE FREE LUTHERAN** Seminary we absolutely love serving students who are sensing God's call to prepare to serve Jesus and His Church. For most of our students this will lead to calls to pastoral ministry, yet for others this may be missions or other Kingdom endeavors. We do not expect seminary students to fully understand or discern God's future plans; however, we do ask that they would be humble and open to preparing for a life of servant leadership. Dr. Phil Haugen, in the October 2014 issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*, affirmed that "the call of God to serve, in whatever capacity, is always a gracious call. The call of God to prepare for ministry is also a gracious and beautiful work of the Holy Spirit through His Word."

Our central resource used to prepare students is the Word of God, and it is so exciting

to witness the impact that the Bible has on our seminarians. During their years of training at the seminary they grow in wisdom and maturity as God teaches and uses them in the present even as He prepares them for the future. Our seminary program has been crafted to foster these attributes, depending fully on the "gracious and beautiful work of the Holy Spirit through His Word."

The four-year Master of Divinity program (three years of classroom instruction followed by one year of internship in an AFLC congregation) is primarily designed to lead to the ordination of men who have both received and accepted calls to serve in congregational ministry. There are six outcomes that we prayerfully desire will be experienced by each of the students during their time of preparation. It is our prayer and goal that



graduates of the seminary will be able to:

- Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of Scripture and its doctrines, subscribing to its inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy without reservation, confessing its authority and demonstrating, especially through exegetical and systematic studies, the ability to accurately interpret it.
- Explain the biblical, Lutheran perspective of the Means of Grace (Word, baptism, and Lord's Supper) as the instruments through which God saves and sanctifies by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- Demonstrate growth in spiritual maturity that is informed by the law and motivated and empowered by the gospel.
- Demonstrate the ability to properly distinguish between the law and the gospel in teaching, preaching, and practice.
- Understand and embrace the role of the servant pastor and the New Testament model of the congregation and its commitment to scriptural evangelism, discipleship, worship, education, and stewardship, as guided by the AFLC Fundamental Principles.
- Describe, evaluate, and communicate God's work in the past through His Church, and exhibit a willingness to participate in making disciples today, especially through involvement in the local congregation.

Each one of the seminary courses have been developed and are offered because they effectively help students prepare by learning and growing in one or more of these six outcome areas. The impact of this training is significant.

In the final year of their classroom instruction, seminarians are asked to reflect on how each of these six outcomes were addressed and experienced during their time of training and preparation. It is so refreshing to hear testimonies from these students regarding their growing understanding of Scripture and its doctrines. As students of God's Word they are clearly influenced by it. For them it is true, authoritative, and they are honing their ability to accurately communicate it. These students value and are able to explain the Lutheran perspective of the Means of Grace as precious instruments through which God saves and sanctifies by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. They are also growing in spiritual maturity as informed by the law and motivated and empowered by the gospel. This growth and understanding then helps cultivate their ability to properly distinguish between the law and gospel in their teaching and practice. They have also gained a deeper appreciation and fresh love for the ministry of local congregations. The Fundamental Principles that are endorsed by every congregation in the AFLC are studied and affirmed by our seminarians. They grow

increasingly excited about the New Testament model of the congregation and the importance of scriptural evangelism, discipleship, worship, education and stewardship. During their three years of classroom instruction the call to prepare impacts the hearts and lives of the seminarians and they increasingly look forward to their final year of preparation as they have the opportunity to serve as interns in AFLC congregations.

The internship year is a time to put into practice so many of the teachings that they have been learning in the classroom. The local congregation is a wonderful place to learn and prepare. As a seminary we are so thankful for the partnership that we have with the internship congregations. The mentorship provided by the supervising pastor, the counsel and encouragement offered by the congregational leadership, the opportunity to be welcomed into the life of the congregation by each of the members, and the chance to minister side by side with each of them in the community surrounding the church are all so helpful as the seminarians prepare for life and ministry.

During their years of training at the seminary they grow in wisdom and maturity as God teaches and uses them in the present even as He prepares them for the future.

After four years we celebrate with these students as they graduate. We rejoice with the congregations and other ministries that have been led by God to call these men to minister in their midst. We send them forth. They are no longer seminarians, but they are still students of the Triune God and His Word. They are learning to love their congregations and communities and to grow in their ability to know and reflect God's heart for the people around them. "The gracious and beautiful work of the Holy Spirit through His Word" ever continues by the grace of God to His glory.

*Olson, a member of Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., is the vice president of academic affairs at FLBCS.*

## KEVIN HALL

Hoople, N.D.

I was born Nov. 11, 1983, to Warren and Marilyn Hall of Hoople, N.D. I was baptized on December 4 of the same year in First Lutheran Church of



Hoople, and grew up worshipping there.

I studied at North Dakota State University,

Fargo, N.D., and graduated in 2005 with a Bachelor of Science degree in agricultural economics. After graduation, I returned to the family farm where I farmed with my father and six second cousins. On July 11, 2009, I married Amy Indridason, and we now have three children: Liam (8), Maggie (7) and Jonah (3).

In 2011, Amy and I made the very hard decision to leave the congregation that I had grown up in and soon after joined Bethel Free Lutheran in Grafton, N.D. This move was a key driving force behind a time of strong spiritual growth in my life.

My experience in seminary and on internship has been too incredible to describe in a few short words, with way too many mind-blowing revelations to name them all. The consistent thing throughout these four years has been the power of the Word to create faith, renovate souls, and change lives. This power continues to amaze me day in and day out.

I spent my internship year at Prince of Peace Lutheran, Beulah, N.D. I have accepted a call to serve Westaker Free Lutheran, Newfolden, Minn.

## DAVID HANDSAKER

Radcliffe, Iowa

I was born March 21, 1983, to Paul and Bonnie Handsaker. I grew up on the family farm outside of Radcliffe, Iowa.

I attended Salem Lutheran



Church, which was just three-quarters of a mile down the gravel road from my house. I was baptized as an

infant and have walked with the Lord ever since.

After graduating from high school, I attended the University of North Dakota, majoring in aviation management. I worked as a flight instructor in Nashua, N.H., at Daniel Webster College. I moved to Trans States Airlines in St. Louis, Mo., for training and then was based there as a first officer. I was furloughed 19 months later and went home to work on the family farm while I figured out what was next.

I realized that I valued the life that was available to me there—ministry and a stable home and social life—more than the airline pilot life. I soon became an official part of the farming operation. I met my wife Lydia (Franz) in 2011 after her older brother David accepted the call to serve at Salem Lutheran. We were married in 2012 and now have three beautiful girls: Julia 5, Audrey 3, and Moriah 1.

Seminary was an amazing time of hard academic work and great relationships being built. I am so thankful for the men and the families that we got to know. I was assigned to Spencer Creek Lutheran Church in Eugene, Ore., under Pastor Dick Gunderson for my internship. I have learned a reliance on prayer and seen the effects an encouraging spirit can have on a congregation during my internship.

## ANDREW KNEELAND

Arlington, Wash.

I am the son of Paul and Ruth Kneeland, born on Oct. 22, 1992, in Temecula, Calif., but raised in several different places. God has been working



in my heart since I was baptized, but it wasn't until my time at the Free Lutheran Bible College when He

gave me the call to become a pastor. It was during these years spent studying the Bible when God taught me fresh the depth of my sin and the immeasurably valuable gift of forgiveness provided by my Savior.

I moved to Arlington, Wash., and joined Atonement Free Lutheran Church. I attended Thomas Edison State University where I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history. I married Esther Long in 2014 and we have two children with one more expected this summer. Titus is 4 years old and Leah is nearly 2.

Through my years in seminary the one thing that really stuck out to me was the value and importance of the Bible. It's not like any other book. It has the power to create what it calls for, like faith and obedience. These things aren't mustered up from our own efforts or will-power, they are gifts from God. It is a tremendous blessing to have easy access to this precious Word of God.

I interned at St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church in Salinas, Calif., under the supervision of Pastor Scott Stroud. Following graduation, I will enroll in Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Mo., to pursue a PhD in Historical Theology. I have accepted a call to serve Gloria Dei, St. Louis, during my PhD studies.

## BRIAN LUNN

Ames, Iowa

I was born on Oct. 23, 1992, in Ames, Iowa, the son of Kevin and Deb Lunn. My relationship with Christ began when I was baptized into Christ and clothed in His righteousness.



While my parents raised me in the church and were faithful

to teach me the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, I longed for deeper spiritual things during my teenage years, and I wandered into various forms of legalism. After struggling with the assurance of salvation under my self-imposed legalism, Pastor Earl Korhonen pointed out to me that the purpose of the law is to show us that we need a Savior. This comforted me and encouraged me to cling to grace.

I met my wife, Leeanna (Zahn), at a Bible camp where we both worked as counselors. We were married four years later after I graduated from the Free Lutheran Bible College. From there I transferred to Oak Hills Christian College in Bemidji, Minn., in 2016, and am now near the completion of my studies at the Free Lutheran Seminary.

The highlight of my seminary experience has been studying languages: Hebrew and Aramaic with Dr. Oliver Blosser, Greek with Pastor Phil Haugen, and—best of all—Norwegian with Larry Walker. Another highlight was my senior paper: Isaiah 53 in the Ancient Versions.

For internship we have been delighted to be a part of Living Word Lutheran in Eagan, Minn. God has blessed us with four wonderful children: Erik (4), Caedmon (3), Linnea (2), and Haakon (5 months).

**BRYCE MCMINN**

Bethel Park, Pa.

I was born Aug. 31, 1978, in Lancaster, Pa., to James and Stephanie McMinn, and was baptized at St. Stephen's Lutheran Church in Lancaster.



Along with my family and the congregation at St. Stephen's, my grandparents, Charles and Laura

Flory, played a formative role in my spiritual growth.

I graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 2001 with a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration. I moved to Bethel Park, Pa., and married Erin Dawson in 2004. Seeking to build our marriage on the solid foundation of God's Word, we found and joined Ruthfred Lutheran Church in Bethel Park. God blessed us through the preaching and teaching of His Word there.

In 2008 I graduated from Geneva College with a Master's in organizational leadership. We moved to Harrisburg, Pa., in 2012 where I served as executive director of Morning Star pregnancy center, but we maintained close ties to our family of faith at Ruthfred.

We have five children: Noah (13), Elliot (10), Caleb (8), Lillian (7), and Joshua (5). In 2016 we answered God's call to attend seminary, moving to Minnesota. I served my internship under Pastor Todd Erickson at Rose and Spruce Free Lutheran congregations, Roseau, Minn.

I have accepted a call to serve as associate pastor with Pastor Steven Carlson at our home congregation, Ruthfred Lutheran. The Lord has led us as a family through each step, and we depend upon His guidance and provision.

**SETH MOAN**

Corcoran, Minn.

As I reflect on God's faithfulness throughout my life, I am reminded of the many ways in which He has provided for me. I was born on



Jan. 18, 1994, to Pastor Jerry and Rebecca Moan, who were faithful to bring me up in the Word of God.

I grew up in Corcoran, Minn., and was blessed to attend Solid Rock Free Lutheran Church.

After graduating from high school, I attended the Free Lutheran Bible College, and God used my time there to shape my perspective on His calling for my life. I began to seriously ask myself the question: How can God best use me to impact souls for eternity? Through various conversations, traveling on the Ambassadors summer team, and studying the Word, God led me to prepare for pastoral ministry. In 2016, I completed my Bachelor of Arts in biblical and theological studies at Crown College, and it was there that God brought my beautiful wife Cassie (Maier) into my life. We were married in the summer of 2017, and have been so blessed with the birth of our daughter, Kate, who is now three months old.

Throughout my time in seminary and on internship at Christ the King Free Lutheran (Pipestone, Minn.), God has continued to confirm His call on my life. I have been reminded that in my weaknesses, God shows Himself to be strong, and He is faithful to equip me for whatever He calls me to. Praise the Lord! "The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

**ERIN TORMANEN**

Cokato, Minn.

I was born on Aug. 4 to Richard and Anne Tormanen. I was baptized and confirmed in an Apostolic Lutheran church. Due to limited Bible teaching



along with major life challenges, my wife and I set out to find a Bible-teaching church. That led us

to Good Shepherd in Cokato, Minn., where I grew immensely in my faith.

On March 9, 1991, I married Jennifer (Jen) Niska and God has blessed us with five children. Our oldest, Jordan, lived for three days before he died from a strep infection. We also have four daughters: Markita, Victoria, Whitney, and Natalie. The Lord has continued to bless our family and we have a wonderful son-in-law, Johann Freeberg, and a beautiful granddaughter, Kjaere.

My call to seminary was most unexpected and yet I know my three years of studying here were God-ordained. I had plans to become a biblical counselor, but the Lord's plan was much different. He called me through a variety of ways to become a shepherd of a flock of God's people. During a conversation with now Pastor Matthew Nelson, I asked if the AFLC had an online seminary. He asked me if I would ever consider going to study at the seminary instead. His simple question led me to seminary.

We spent our internship at Our Savior's Free Lutheran and First English Lutheran of Lostwood, Stanley, N.D., where I have accepted a call. This year has been an amazing time of learning, growth, and enjoying the beauty of God's creation! We are excited for all that is to come.

**BRIAN WESTERBUR**

Ihlen, Minn.

I was born Nov. 16, 1989, in Pipestone, Minn., to John and Laurie Westerbur. I grew up in Ihlen, Minn., a town of 60 people. I was baptized



as an infant at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Pipestone. I was confirmed in my faith there and

enjoyed being involved with our youth praise band and youth group. I did all my primary school schooling in Pipestone, where I was involved in track and field, band (euphonium), choir, and boy scouting, achieving Eagle Scout merit in 2007.

I attended Gustavus Adolphus College from 2008 to 2012, studying history and classical studies. I met Allison (Buchnis), an English major, in a Bible study group at Gustavus, where we both helped lead worship. We were married in October 2013. Together we love to read, travel, find new restaurants, and hike.

Following our marriage, I became a youth director in Wisconsin. After two years there we discerned the call to FLS. During seminary, I grew in my understanding of what it means to be saved by grace alone: that God works through His Word and sacraments. We were assigned internship at Ruthfred Lutheran Church in Bethel Park, Pa. Allie and I both have a heart for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others. We enjoy relational ministry, having been involved in mentorship and discipleship programs.

We have enthusiastically accepted the call to serve Bethel Free Lutheran in Grafton, N.D.

## MICAH KLEMME

Starbuck, Minn.

I am the son of Pastor Todd and Miriam Klemme, born July 26, 1992. I grew up in Starbuck, Minn., and was confirmed at Minnewaska Lutheran Church. After experiencing the comfort and assurance



of the gospel during a time of distress in high school, I desired to study Scripture at the Free Lutheran Bible College. With the advice of several mentors,

I then attended Concordia University Wisconsin, learning philosophy and theological languages. I returned to the Free Lutheran Seminary in 2016 and am still training in the Word of God, being taught to preach it with the care of souls in mind.

The fear of failing God is still fresh in my mind. My entire person suffered with the thought of an eternal fate in hell for sins of my head, heart, and hands. But even in those times, the Holy Spirit was working repentance in me through a Lutheran pastor who was answering a student's question about feeling unworthy by using the Book of Lamentations, showing that our fallen world yearns for a savior. My depression was confirmation that I was a part of a bigger problem of sin in this world. We all need a savior.

Thankfully, God provided Christ for me. In that instance, it was because a pastor applied the light of the gospel when my darkened soul needed it. I experienced a supernatural comfort in that amazing announcement of free forgiveness. Baptism and the Lord's Supper, gifts of grace once neglected by me, now became a great comfort for my faith life, giving me Jesus through the promises of the Word.

Lutherans have this beautiful and comforting message of reconciliation to proclaim in today's anxious age. A teacher once said, "there is nothing more certain in this life than the forgiveness of sins." I want to be a pastor who gives that certainty to the local congregation. Having true peace with God and the freedom to serve others is how He wants us to live on this side of eternity. I look forward to giving others Jesus, our Redeemer, by serving as a pastor.



## 2021 CONFERENCE COMMITTEE NOMINEES

### Committee No. 1

(Administration)

Pastor Karl Anderson, McIntosh, Minn.

Four more nominees

### Committee No. 2

(Schools)

Pastor Kevin Czymbor, Armour, S.D.

Pastor Kirk Flaa, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Three more nominees

### Committee No. 3

(Missions)

Pastor John Amundson, New Leipzig, N.D.

Bill Fish, Everett, Wash.

Angela Lombardo, Yorkville, Ill.

Two more nominees

### Committee No. 4

(Publications and Parish Education)

Pastor John Brennan, Oklahoma City

Michelle Brennan, Oklahoma City

Three more nominees

### Committee No. 5

(Evangelism and Benefits)

Dr. Steve Lombardo, Yorkville, Ill.

Four more nominees

\* Incumbents

\*\* Must be elected or reelected to serve on board or committee

X Nominations not named by press deadline

## We are asking the question

My wife and I were at an annual conference a few years ago when Ruth Rautio (Osceola, Wis.), texted my wife to see if I'd be willing to be nominated to serve on the AFLC Nominating Committee. My immediate response was, "No."

When our Pastor, Jon Benson, asked me again, my answer was "no" again.

Then I sensed the Holy Spirit asking me, "Why not?" It was apparent that I could not find any plausible reason to refuse the nomination.

I mention this as an example of what we on the Nominating Committee do: we seek to have people listen to the Spirit of God, and if led, to accept nominations.

But we can't know everyone or call everyone in our districts. That's why it's so critical to have our pastors lend a hand. Pastors, if you would but ask the question of members of your congregations, your question might be the match that lights the fire under someone who has a key gifting or talent to serve.

At one time I worked selling scholastic products to high schools. My supervisor advised me that my problem was in not asking for the sale. There was one case where I went to a college, mistakenly thinking it was a high school. The administration there was kind and gave me a few minutes of their time, but when I realized my mistake, I felt so dumb. I'd asked the wrong people, I thought. Imagine my shock when they called me to come back. By asking the question, I began a business relationship that is still strong after 11 years later. My point is that we don't know who will respond, but if we don't ask, we can certainly expect that no one will respond.

This is what we are asking our pastors to do: Ask the question, even if you are certain that you won't make a sale! Who knows how the Spirit will move.

—Jim Thompson, a member of the Nominating Committee, is a member of Trinity Free Lutheran, Janesville, Wis.

# 2020 NOMINEES

## ARC Board

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One layman, five-year term)

\*Chad Rieschl, Brooklyn Park, Minn.  
X

## Bay Broadcasting

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One layman, three-year term)

\*Ben Dahl, Camarillo, Calif.  
X

## Benefits Board

(One pastor, five-year term)

\*Pastor Ken Moland, Graham, N.C.  
X

## Board of Publications & Parish Education

(One layman, five-year term)

Leeanna Lunn, Upsala, Minn.  
Robyn Pelehos, Cannon Falls, Minn.

## AFLC Evangelism and Discipleship Board

(One pastor, five-year term)

Pastor Patrick Lohse, Morris, Ill.  
\* Pastor Matthew Quanbeck, Laurel, Neb.  
Pastor Ron Smith, Brookings, S.D.

## FLAPS Board of Managers

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One layman, five-year term)

Jordan Rumohr, Monticello, Minn.  
\*Lavon Bohling, Inman, Kan.

## Home Missions Committee

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One pastor, five-year term)

Pastor Andy Coyle, Summerset, S.D.  
\*Pastor Gerald Peterson, Durant, Okla.

## Coordinating Committee

(One layman, five-year term)

Iver Berge, Fargo, N.D.  
David J. Olson, Sioux Falls, S.D.

## Schools Board of Trustees

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One pastor, five-year term)

Pastor Jason Gudim, Golden Valley, Minn.  
Pastor Jon Wellumson, Williston, N.D.

## World Missions Committee

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One layman, five-year term)

\*Stephen Deysher, Fleetwood, Pa.  
X

## Youth Board

(One pastor, five-year term)

\*Dr. Nathan Olson, Savage, Minn.  
Pastor David Ryerson, Ishpeming, Mich.

## CORPORATIONS

## Schools Corporation

(10 terms of five years each)

\*\*Pastor Alan Arneson, Fosston, Minn.  
Scott Bauer, Stover, Mo.  
\*Pastor Brett Boe, Shakopee, Minn.  
\*Cory Buck, Sioux Falls, S.D.  
\*Loiell Dyrud, Thief River Falls, Minn.  
\*\*Gary Erickson, Dalton, Minn.  
Joel Erickson, Oslo, Minn.  
\*Pastor Kirk Flaa, Sioux Falls, S.D.  
Matthew Greven, Newark, Ill.  
\*David Haugen, Pelican Rapids, Minn.  
Susan Hughes, Pittsburgh, Pa.  
\*Pastor James Johnson, Fergus Falls, Minn.  
Pastor Rodney Johnson, Stanley, N.D.  
Andrew Kneeland, St. Louis, Mo.  
Brian Lunn, Upsala, Minn.  
\*Pastor Michael McCarlson, Webster, S.D.  
Pastor Matthew Nelson, Radcliffe, Iowa  
\*Brent Peterson, Valley City, N.D.  
Pastor Ryan Tonneson, Moorhead, Minn.  
Pastor Sam Wellumson, East Grand Forks, Minn.

## ARC Corporation

(10 terms of five years each)

\*\*Roger Benson, Brooklyn Center, Minn.  
Mary Ann Christensen, Laurel, Neb.  
\*Stanley Christenson, Balsam Lake, Wis.  
\*Michael Coyle, Mankato, Minn.  
\*Ernie Hilbert, Wheatland, Iowa  
Donny Jones, Kandiyohi, Minn.  
\*Nancy Langness, Ishpeming, Mich.  
\*Denis Parsley, Pipestone, Minn.  
Robyn Pelehos, Cannon Falls, Minn.  
\*Roger Quanbeck, Hallock, Minn.  
Brian Rice, White Earth, N.D.

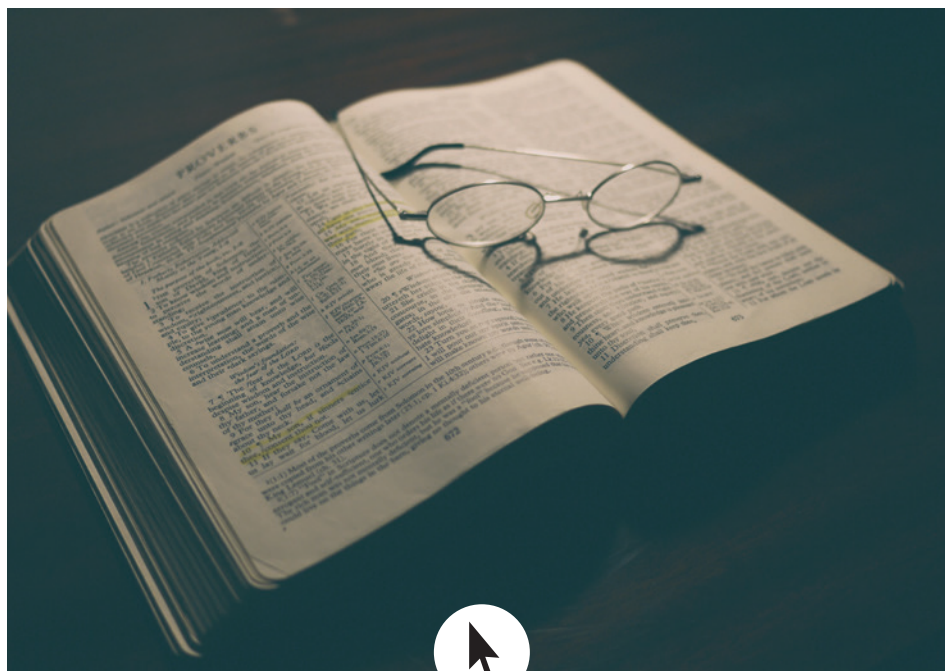
Nine more names needed

## Missions Corporation

(20 terms of five years each)

Pastor John Amundson, New Leipzig, N.D.  
\*Darryl Askvig, Kalispell, Mont.  
Pastor Ray Ballmann, Kopperl, Texas  
\*Vonne Coyle, Mankato, Minn.  
Matthew Green, Greenbush, Minn.  
\*Dr. Peter Dyrud, Plymouth, Minn.  
Pastor Luke Emerson, St. Francis, Kan.

\*Gene Finstrom, Buxton, N.D.  
Karen Hart, Fairbury, Neb.  
\*Pastor Micah Hjermstad, West Fargo, N.D.  
Mary Jo Jackson, Versailles, Mo.  
Michael Jackson, Versailles, Mo.  
\*\*Ron Jorgenson, Lidgerwood, N.D.  
Pastor John Kiehl, Metropolis, Ill.  
\*Vince Larson, Fargo, N.D.  
Brian Lee, Ray, N.D.  
\*Dr. Lyle Mattson, Greenbush, Minn.  
\*Pastor Ken Moland, Graham, N.C.  
\*\*Pastor David Nelson, Badger, Minn.  
\*Phyllis Nikunen, Richfield, Minn.  
\*Pastor Kris Nyman, Hagerstown, Md.  
\*\*Pastor Joe Ocker, Frost, Minn.  
\*Lay Pastor Mark Olson, Winsted, Minn.  
\*Ralph Peterson, Portland, N.D.  
Mark Riley, Bethel Park, Pa.  
Pastor Nick Schultz, Kirkland, Wash.  
\*Wanita Sletten, Duluth, Minn.  
Jessica Smith, Chamberlain, S.D.  
\*\*Pastor Ronald Smith, Brookings, S.D.  
James Thompson, Edgerton, Wis.  
Joan Thompson, Edgerton, Wis.  
Marilyn Wagner, Minot, N.D.  
Eight more names needed



## Annual Conference Schedule Change

**Aug. 10-12:** Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis.

**Theme:** “Will He Find Faith?” (Luke 18:8)

More conference information can be found at:

**[aflc.org/conferences](http://aflc.org/conferences)**

Members of the AFLC Conference Committee have delayed the Annual Conference until August in response to the worldwide health crisis created by the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19. The committee members made the decision on April 6 after consulting with the leadership at the Association Retreat Center, which is hosting the conference. The dates were changed to Aug. 10-12, from their original June dates. Besides delaying the conference, the committee members also restructured the conference schedule, compressing the business by one day.

“The new schedule involves a lot of change, but we feel that this year would be a good year to try this transition,” wrote the committee members. “We realize this will affect many of your corporations and committees, but we ask for your patience as we try to conduct the Lord’s business under challenging circumstances.”

The new schedule, which begins at 8:45 a.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 11, will require AFLC ministries to shorten their reports, and will also remove some events, including the Pastors’ Banquet, Laymen’s Service, and WMF Breakfast. However, corporation meeting times will increase to allow for more discussion of business.

Conference committees will meet at 9 a.m. Monday, Aug. 10. The WMF Day will be held at the same time. The opening service will be held at 7 p.m. Monday evening. The daily schedule will include: devotions to start the day at 8:30 a.m., business from 8:45 to 11:40 a.m., followed by prayer. Corporation meetings and electives will be held from 1:15 to 3:15, followed by a 25-minute break and devotions, then business from 4 to 5:30 p.m. The Mission Festival Service will be held on Tuesday evening, Aug. 11.

“We confess that we certainly see through a glass darkly right now,” said the committee members, “but believe the most helpful thing we can do for our future planning is to set these dates and trust that we will be able to move forward when the time arrives.”

Following the conference, members of the Conference Committee have asked for input on the new schedule, which can be viewed at [aflc.org/conferences](http://aflc.org/conferences).



## Annual Conference Registration

For an online registration form for the Annual Conference Aug. 10-12 at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis., visit [aflc.org/about-us/conferences](http://aflc.org/about-us/conferences).

## Food & housing options

To reserve lodging and register for food at the ARC, call 715-294-2877.

If you are planning to stay off of the ARC campus, hotel options include:

Osceola, Wis. (8 miles)  
• River Valley Inn & Suites: 715-294-2877

St. Croix Falls, Wis. (13 miles)  
• Holiday Inn Express: 715-483-5775

New Richmond, Wis. (13 miles)  
• AmeriVu Inn and Suites: 715-246-4606  
• AmericInn by Wyndham: 715-246-3993  
• Best Western Plus: 715-243-5600

Amery, Wis. (18 miles)  
• Forest Inn: 715-268-4100

Chisago City, Minn. (20 miles)  
• Comfort Inn & Suites: 651-213-3400

Stillwater, Minn. (25 miles)  
• Water Street Inn: 651-439-6000  
• Lora: 651-571-3500  
• Comfort Inn & Suites: 651-275-1401

## WMF suggests change to constitution

The WMF will consider a change to the constitution at the WMF Day meeting:

Article V Officers reads: “Section 5. Officers shall be elected for a term of three years. All officers may be eligible for re-election but no officer shall hold the same office for more than two successive terms. The President and Communications Secretary shall be elected one year; the First Vice-President and the Recording Secretary the following year; the Second Vice-President and the Treasurer the third year. Newly elected officers shall officially assume their duties at the All boards September meeting following their election.”

The suggested change would strike the words “All Boards” as this meeting will be in October this year and may not always be held in September. Instead, newly elected officers shall officially assume their duties at the September meeting following their election.

'M

omma, are you gonna die?"

The poignant bedtime question from my 5-year-old, Lola, struck me silent and left a lump in my throat.

When the hard questions come, we are we inclined to respond with another question. Clearly, the answer was, "yes," but I couldn't say it. Instead, I asked, "Why are you asking me that, sweet girl?"

After an extended pause, Lola's quiet voice stammered, "Well ... I just ... I don't wanna be lonely for you like you're lonely for your mommy."

Sometimes it's in the space of silence that your heart hurts the loudest. Mine sank as it screamed with questions. Why? Why are we having this conversation? I don't want to talk about this! I'm not going to explain what it's like to have a dead mom ... no! Let's not do this tonight. In fact, let's not do this ever. But Lola was waiting for an answer, and I knew it.

"Lola, everyone will die someday, but only Jesus knows when. If we have Jesus in our heart, we don't have to be afraid because He takes us to Heaven."

The second hand passed on the clock along with the ticking in Lola's brain, and I braced for the next question.

"What will happen to me, momma?"

Ugh. Do I really have to explain this? I don't want to tell you that life as you know it will never be the same, or how vastly it will change!

"If momma dies, you will live with Alisha, and she will take care of you."

More pause. Much processing.

"But what if I can't walk that far?"



## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

BY KAYLA BRANDT



Oh. My. Word. Why does she think she's going to walk? Is she imagining I'll just drop dead on the floor, she'll strap on her backpack, and walk 200 miles to Minnesota? Through the snow? By herself? How terrifying!

"You wouldn't walk. Alisha would drive you to her house."

"But how will she know? How will I ring her?"

"If Mom dies, Alisha will know. Do you want me to teach you how to call Alisha?"

She didn't have to think on that question. Her response an immediate, "Yes, Momma."

With all the questions answered, Lola drifted off to sleep while my brain whirled. I remembered a conversation with my mom shortly after she was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Mom had just finished explaining all the data from the diagnostic tests. She knew her girls. I was the daughter that needed to hear the science. I wanted to work through the medical equation, not just be handed the diagnosis.

When she finished, I asked, "Are you sad?"

Fifteen years later, I haven't forgotten her selfless response. "I'm sad for all of you. I'm not sad for me! I'll be great in Heaven! I'm sad for my girls."

It was a reflection of who she truly was ... a mom who loved her girls. But it wasn't just us. If you met

her, she cared about you. Jeannie Marie Brandt compassionately put others first, and loved people like Jesus. As a daughter, I realized that her answer was profound. As a mom, talking about death with Lola, that answer came to life.

I didn't want to have that conversation with Lola. Not because I fear death, but because Lola's heart breaking made mine ache. Naturally, I don't want my daughter to have a dead mom.

The plain reality is this: we should talk about death more. Not just with our kids—with our friends, neighbors, and strangers. We live in world where uncertainty triggers a spectrum of emotions ranging from panic, fear, and hysteria to disregard, selfishness, and complacency. Let's break through that static with voices that speak about the reality of death, and real life in Jesus.

When world events or our life circumstances bring questions, instead of worrying about what we don't know, let's discuss what know for a fact—we will all die someday, and if Jesus is in our heart, He takes us to Heaven.

Whether we're 5 or 40, that's the easy answer to the hard question. So, let's talk about it. Let's talk about when mom dies, because there's rest and refuge when we "ring" Jesus.

"The Lord is near to all who call on Him ..." (Psalm 145:18).

*Brandt, of Sioux Falls, S.D., is a member of Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls.*



*"[Paul's] letters contain some things that are hard to understand which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do other Scriptures, to their own destruction. Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position" (II Peter 3:16-17).*

**H**ave you ever shaken hands with a false teacher? In my decade as a Lutheran educator, I can't say that I have spotted one in my American circles of ministry. But does that speak more to the rarity of false teachers or my own blindness? Otherwise, would we have so many verses about false teachers in Scripture?

Living as a foreigner, however, I sometimes get the chance to see the insidiousness which lurks in another's culture—those subtleties that masquerade among the locals with alarming success.

I can remember a bus ride across Uganda in which two passengers boarded for a brief segment of travel. The first stood up and preached for a minute from the Book of Joel, warning of a coming plague of locusts. The solution, he said, was an offering to God, beginning with an offering to his own pocket. His companion then stood and announced miracle elixirs for sale.

As I watched my fellow passengers produce their shillings to these proffered

# THERE WILL BE WOLVES

BY MICHAEL ROKENBRODT

solutions, I stewed silently. Why could no one else on the bus see what was so plain and evident?

This traveling preacher failed in his mission because, three years later, locusts have been ravaging Uganda.

Pastor Nate Jore's church planting efforts in the village of Nabukosi have recently harvested an abundant crop. Standing on the sparkling banks of the Nile on a February afternoon, I witnessed 20 baptisms. Among the 20 were children—some quite young—an entire family, and a few new converts.

For some not newly converted, these baptisms were long in coming. Their former church backgrounds testified the sad news that the sacraments are out of reach for many Ugandan Christians: some of their churches have been charging 20,000 shillings per head. This is not affordable when you have six children. There are also stark disagreements regarding the manner of baptism, a large percentage insisting on complete immersion. A friend of mine recently shared his unwillingness to do further immersions despite his Baptist background because it meant re-entering that area's only leech-infested waterhole.

False teachers have managed their work well, and there is much work for Christian education to accomplish. Perhaps it should not be surprising then, when, only a couple of weeks following our

Nabukosi baptism, an evangelist should come a-calling, having heard of the "Spirit's work" in our village. Some of our villagers were very impressed by his knowledge and ability to quote from the bibles he was handing out. He taught that baptism with water was of Satan, John the Baptist used water only as a way of closing off the Old Testament, and baptism of the Holy Spirit was the new standard. He offered to provide this new baptism, and several of our villagers were ready to put aside their recent immersions in the Nile, lift their hands, and have the Spirit prayed into them by this visitor.

But some of our villagers have called these new teachings into question. Pastor Nate has shared his hope that this has encouraged the Nabukosi flock to join with the Bereans of Acts 17 in examining the Scriptures to find out if what was taught was true.

Meanwhile, it will be a test for Pastor Nate and the other leaders to decide if Acts 13:9-11 or Acts 18:24-26 is a more appropriate response for our visiting evangelist. We appreciate your prayers. And we will be praying against any hard-to-spot wolves lurking on American soil.

*Rokenbrodt is an AFLC missionary serving in Jinja, Uganda.*



**A**s our nation settles into a new pandemic normal, it's hard for us to imagine what that means for those who serve in law enforcement. It is a noble profession, and those who serve daily exhibit real love for their neighbors as they put on their uniform knowing that today they could be called to lay down their lives for those they have sworn to serve and protect. And if that wasn't hard or stressful enough before, in these days, they don't have the luxury of staying home, not interacting with those who may be virus carriers, or not wondering if they might be bringing home even more baggage from work than they did before. And while we offer our sincere thanks and appreciation, I'm sure that like me, you would like to do more. You would like to know some tangible ways that you can show God's love toward them. Let me offer some suggestions.

To begin, let me encourage you to pray for your local police department. Pray for their physical protection from harm and from the coronavirus, but also for God's love and peace to minister to them

# WHAT YOU CAN DO

BY PASTOR RANDY NELSON

and their families. They are people just like you but called to some extraordinary tasks. Praying for God's care and blessing on them and their families is one of the greatest things we can do as believers. Might I also suggest that when you have interactions with them on a professional level, treat them with the respect their position of authority deserves. And as you have opportunity, let them know that you appreciate their service to you and your community.

One way to do that is by honoring Police Officers Memorial Day, which is May 15 each year, and the week which it falls within is Police Week. During this week, we are asked to honor the service and sacrifice of U.S. law enforcement officers and their families. This would be an ideal time to have your kids make cards of appreciation or some thoughtful gifts or healthy snacks to bring to your local police station. For safety reasons, baked goods are not a good idea, but a

healthy goody bag would be greatly appreciated. Protein or granola bars, packaged nuts or jerky may not seem like much, but when running from call to call with no time for a meal break, these snacks help to keep their energy up and would be well received. Other gift ideas include coffee shop gift cards, mini hand sanitizers, lip balm, hand warmer packets, and especially pens. All of these are things they can really use and will show that you care.

That should be our goal, to show that we care. And in doing so, not only will we honor their service and sacrifice, but it might also lead to an opportunity to share with them the One, who laid down His life for them.

*Nelson, who has served as a police chaplain for more than 19 years, is the director of AFLC Evangelism and Discipleship.*

## Free Lutheran Bible College & Seminary cancels graduation

The leadership of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary announced on April 16 that they have canceled spring graduation, originally planned for May 9. The administration is working on a plan to hold a joint commencement to honor both the 2020 and 2021 graduates next May. For more information, visit [flbc.edu](http://flbc.edu).

## June issue will feature efforts during COVID-19

The editors of *The Lutheran Ambassador* have revised the theme of the June issue to report on the responses our AFLC congregations and ministries have been giving to meet the spiritual and physical needs in their local communities during the COVID-19 health crisis. If you have a unique story to share, please contact the editors at [ruthg@aflc.org](mailto:ruthg@aflc.org) or [lee@aflc.org](mailto:lee@aflc.org) by May 5.

### PEOPLE & PLACES

**Pastor John Abel**, 94, the first AFLC missionary to Brazil, died April 15. A full obituary will be included in the June issue.

**Micah Klemme**, who will graduate from the Free Lutheran Seminary in May, has accepted a call to serve St. Peter Free Lutheran, Melvin, Ill.

**Seth Moan**, who will graduate from the Free Lutheran Seminary in May, has accepted a call to serve as associate pastor of Emmanuel Free Lutheran, Williston, N.D.

**Pastor Jason Holt** and **Pastor Daniel Hurner** each earned a DMin degree in Ministry to Emerging Generations at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Holt is the director of AFLC Youth Ministries. Hurner is the pastor of youth and family ministry at the Dalton Free Lutheran Parish, Dalton, Minn.

**Pastor Wade Mobley**, president of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary, has earned a DMin degree from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

### MARCH MEMORIALS

#### AED

Joel Schram

#### Bible College

Ruth Claus

#### FLAPS

Dan Dyke

#### Home Missions

Joel Schram

Pearl Erickson

#### World Missions

Dean Poynter

Richard Kroepel

Pearl Erickson



## FLY Convention 2021: Restored

Members of the 2021 FLY Committee have announced the theme of the 2021 FLY Convention will be "Restored," taken from Revelation 21:5-7. The biennial youth convention, to be held July 5-10 at the YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park, Colo., will feature a week of workshops, Bible studies, and evening sessions which will draw their topics from the camp's theme. Visit [flyconvention.org](http://flyconvention.org) for information about FLY's mission, convention costs, registration deadlines, and how to volunteer.

## FLY Beyond 2020: Mysterious Hope

FLY Beyond 2020, the biennial youth equipping conference hosted by AFLC Youth Ministries, will be held July 19-23 at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis. Registration for the event is now open. In response to COVID-19, best rates have been extended to June 30. Visit [aflc.org/youth/fly-beyond](http://aflc.org/youth/fly-beyond) for more information on registration, conference schedule, and cost.

### AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-March 31, 2020

| FUND             | REC'D IN MARCH   | TOTAL REC'D TO DATE | PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE |
|------------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| General Fund     | \$23,715         | \$100,082           | \$126,990          |
| Evangelism       | 6,067            | 22,012              | 35,558             |
| Youth Ministries | 5,781            | 24,484              | 31,476             |
| Parish Education | 5,482            | 23,903              | 42,489             |
| Seminary         | 26,176           | 85,562              | 83,554             |
| Bible College    | 30,661           | 110,853             | 132,058            |
| Home Missions    | 29,557           | 81,375              | 100,987            |
| World Missions   | 19,886           | 103,516             | 149,343            |
| Personal Support | 62,778           | 195,890             | 149,154            |
| <b>TOTALS</b>    | <b>\$210,102</b> | <b>\$747,679</b>    | <b>\$851,608</b>   |

For additional financial information for each department, go to [www.aflc.org/giving](http://www.aflc.org/giving)

# LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

It is with a certain sense of sadness that one recalls the 2019 centennial of the Lutheran Bible school movement in connection with the name change of our school to Bible college. There were at least seven Lutheran Bible schools in the U.S. 60 years ago, and now there are none that bear the name.

The name change appeared to occur quickly, but our Board of Trustees had heard for some time from pastors recommending the change, primarily to aid them in promoting the school to parents who were not familiar with the older name. The issue was brought to the last annual conference, and, after no strong opposition was voiced, the new name was approved and later confirmed by members of the AFLC Schools Corporation.

What happened to the other Lutheran Bible schools? Recently someone asked me this question, which caused me to reflect on it. My knowledge of the circumstances is certainly limited, and doubtless the story of each one's closure is not exactly the same as the others. Let me suggest a few possible common factors for our consideration.

- Three of the schools—Minneapolis, Seattle, and Teaneck—tried and failed to make a successful transition to a college. Minneapolis and Teaneck became two-year junior colleges, and Seattle (later located first at Issaquah and finally at Everett, Wash.) adopted a four-year program. All three became accredited, but all three were forced to close their doors, most recently the Washington school, renamed Trinity Lutheran College, in 2016. Among other problems, the first two discovered that they were now competing with nearby and much larger Lutheran colleges that offered more options for study, and enrollment was not sufficient to finance the operation of the small colleges.

- Another factor in the closure may have been the approach to Holy Scripture.

The original Lutheran Bible schools believed and taught that the Bible was the divinely inspired Word of God, but in later years at the three schools above one or more instructors were added to the faculty who had been influenced by a higher-critical approach. Also, as each of the schools tried to offer a complete liberal arts curriculum, the Bible classes which were once the heart of the schools became simply another subject.

Changes in American Lutheranism are related as well to the enrollment issue. Students came to the Bible schools mostly from Augustana, Evangelical Lutheran Church, and Lutheran Free Church congregations. In the late 1950s and 1960s, during the era of Lutheran mergers, a new breed of pastors were graduating from the seminaries, some of whom saw Bible school training as a waste of time and anti-intellectual. An emphasis on conversion, with a personal relationship to Christ nurtured in the Word, was seen as unhealthy and even dangerous.

- Finances were also a factor. The Minneapolis school constructed an impressive new campus, which today is a state school of the arts. California and Washington purchased campuses which they were eventually forced to sell. Student enrollment was not sufficient to handle the load of debt and cost of operation, and deficit financing became a major factor in the closing of the schools.

What do these things mean for the Free Lutheran Bible College today? We have successfully earned accreditation, after a long and not-inexpensive process. One positive benefit is the ability to transfer credits to more colleges and universities. Perhaps the greatest benefit, however, has been to have our school closely studied by Christian education specialists and as a result to make changes that improve our program.

The construction of a large student

center and gymnasium has commenced, and additional faculty and staff have been added. All of this depends on a growing student body in a time when the pool of high school graduates is shrinking, and the jury is still out on the question of whether or not the new name will make a significant difference. Our board and administration are carefully monitoring the receipts and disbursements to prevent us from falling into the trap of deficit financing.

We are still a Bible school as far as our curriculum is concerned, and there are no plans to adopt a liberal arts curriculum. The Bible and related subjects are what students study at Free Lutheran Bible College, just as

*... we still approach the Bible without apology as the inspired, inerrant Word of God ...*

they studied at Association Free Lutheran Bible School, and the name change has not meant any changes in the course of study. It is also important to state that we still approach the Bible without apology as the inspired, inerrant Word of God, which is affirmed annually by each faculty member.

A great advantage that our school has, different from the other Lutheran Bible schools, is a supportive church body. "What I wouldn't give for your constituency!" said the director of another Bible school program several years ago. Our pastors and congregations, alumni, and AFLC Youth Ministries remain the source of the great majority of our students, and for this we are thankful to God.

Will you remember the Bible college in prayer? It's really not ours, of course, it's His, and to Him be the glory.



Pastor Robert Lee

*building the base*

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# FINDING GOD'S WILL: HIS WORD

BY PASTOR DAVID & VICKI JOHNSON

**Y**ears ago, a port city in New England sought to find a way to aid the ships that entered its harbor. The lighthouse at the entrance to their dangerous bay was insufficient, especially during low tide. So they established a system of three lights, all in succession, set up throughout the harbor. When a ship was lined up with those three lights, all in a row, they knew that their course was safe and sure.

Finding God's will is kind of like following those three lights. God has given us three "lights" to guide our way, with which we need to align ourselves: His Word, godly counsel, and the inner prompting of His Holy Spirit. Here we will look at God's Word.

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

That passage is on about every memorization list I've ever seen—and rightly so. These two verses challenge us to make God's Word and His precepts the

basis for all decisions and every action we pursue. But few remember the instruction and promises that come just before this common passage:

Verses 1-4 say, "My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man."

The nay-sayers of the world will accuse the Bible of being only a "book of faith," with limited and outdated information. But we know the Bible to be timeless, speaking to the very core of every real-life situation, to every culture, and for all times. It speaks to the very foundation of every hope, dream, challenge, trial, and joy we will ever face in this life. It is the greatest and brightest of three lights which guide us through the channels of life. It provides all you need to live your life with integrity, wisdom, godliness, and in truth.

"I will instruct you and teach you in

the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you" wrote David in Psalm 32:8.

Sin makes our road dangerous. If God gave us no light, we would never find the path to His will. But God has sent a perfect and powerful light to guide our way. God loves us, and wants to show us His path to safety, success, and eternal reward. In the pages of Scripture, God has addressed every motivation that drives each of our decisions.

"See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse," said the Lord God to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 11:26-28, "the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you today; and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known."

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*The Johnsons live in Boyertown, Pa., where David serves Living Faith Lutheran.*