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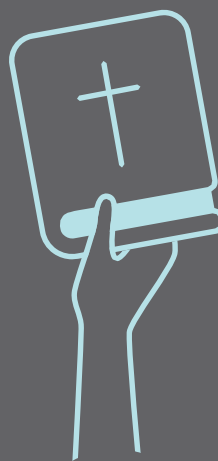
JUNE 2020

# LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR



## CRISIS

IN THESE  
UNUSUAL  
TIMES, OUR  
CHURCHES  
ADAPT





## THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

JUNE 2020  
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# DO NOT LOSE HEART

BY ELIZABETH NEUFELD

I had a long drive toward the mountains recently to collect my thoughts. I had created a music playlist several weeks beforehand called “I need the gospel” for exactly such an occasion, and yet I hesitated. While I drove, all I wanted was to sit in the entitlement of bitterness, but I knew that was not where the Lord wanted me to sit. So, He led me to hit shuffle on that playlist despite my attitude.

“Voice of Truth” by Casting Crowns played, and my heart broke as I heard these words: “Oh what I would do to have the kind of strength it takes to stand before a giant, with just a sling and a stone ...” And as the mountains before me grew larger, I was reminded simply of how small I am, and how much greater than even those gigantic mountains my God is.

I was grateful as the Lord reminded me in that moment that I am not standing before an overwhelming obstacle on my own. Like David, God is there with me. I am incredibly weak, but the giant who keeps pouring lies and ugly reminders of my mistakes into my soul is crushed by the One who has the most effective and unerring sling and stones: my God and Savior, who has the power and authority to conquer all of our giants. I needed to tell Him that I trust Him to do that, admitting both to Him and to

myself that I am very weak and incapable of truly overcoming the lies and awful habits in my life without Him.

To comfort those uneasy feelings of helplessness, He tells us over and over again in His Word that we shouldn’t be afraid to trust Him. This whole thing is for His glory, and who better should my life glorify than Jesus, who rescues me from my giants every day?

I returned home, now facing the sunset, empowered by the words to that special song.

I can stand in confidence while the One who died for me is glorified through what currently appears to be a dark and jumbled mess. I don’t have to be afraid, because my Giant Slayer is the King of kings. Nothing happens without His permission, and indeed, He is trustworthy.

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (II Corinthians 4:16-17, NIV)

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



Our greatest work is still ours every day—the work of prayer. Prayer knows no boundary, no quarantine, no confinement.

—Joshua Bogunjoko

Never in our nation's history has the Church at large been compelled to put on a disappearing act first for several weeks, and now stretching into months.

—Joel Belz

Congregational singing is the main thing that online services can't replace.

—Janie B. Cheaney

This is a time when the fragile form of this world is felt. ... The question we should be asking is, Do we have a rock under our feet? A Rock that cannot be shaken ... ever?

—John Piper

We share our mutual woes, our mutual burdens bear,  
and often for each other flows, the sympathizing  
tear.

—John Fawcett

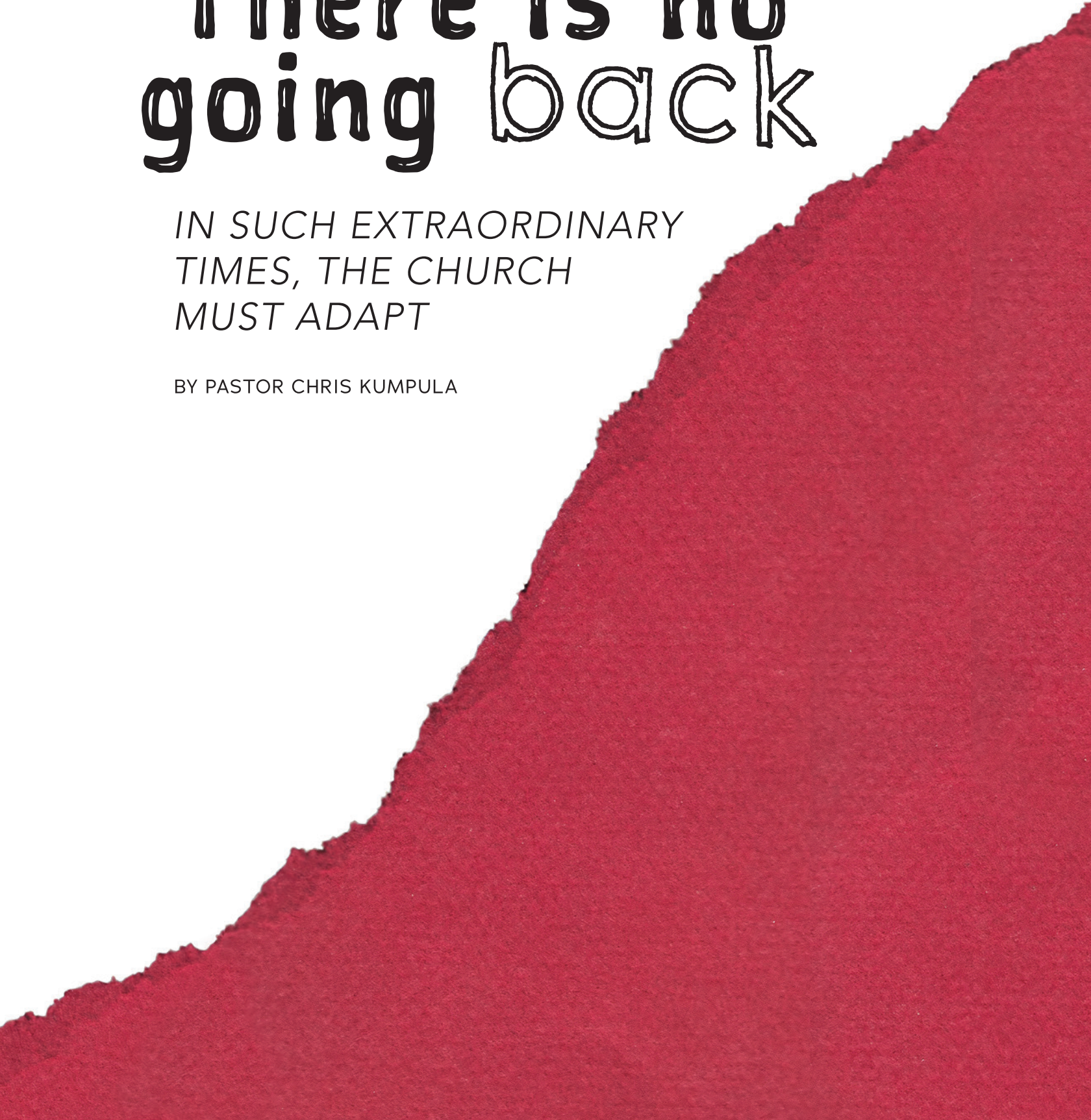
If God sends us stony paths, He will provide us with  
strong shoes.

—Alexander Maclaren

# There is no going back

*IN SUCH EXTRAORDINARY  
TIMES, THE CHURCH  
MUST ADAPT*

BY PASTOR CHRIS KUMPULA







I lost all feeling in my hands. My legs rattled as adrenaline met the work of a sleepless week. I was cold, damp, but glad to look into a line of headlights and windshields across the lawn. When a social church does “social distancing,” you get drive-in church. We’ve missed our building, but we haven’t missed this precious opportunity to minister to siblings in the faith and define our identity in Christ for our community.

Six months after relaunching Living Word in Mankato, Minn., I think we have become accustomed to change, and are even getting used to drive-in services. But then I hear: “When are we getting back to normal?”

Often heard since March, the question tempts us to focus on an idealized future washed up from what is now a distant past. The socio-economic ripple from the coronavirus will cascade into a tidal wave of cultural changes. We cannot know its full force until it breaks on the shore, but fear, death, anger, political resentment, and financial disaster guarantee more than a splash. The host of vanished sporting events, proms, graduations, and other such culturally ingrained rituals has been met by cries of collective lament because they remind us things have truly changed.

Governors are progressively reopening society after shutting it down. Please remember, no matter how well-intentioned, the suspension of individual liberties and cessation of worship will be used by future enemies of the Church as precedent. But it is the irrelevance of the Church to social planners that should give us pause.

In their reopening plans, the ranking of the social order is laid bare as the Church ranks about as “essential” as it is important to the minds of our bureaucratized cultural elite. It makes plain the post-Christian reality of many of our cities. Now 1,700 years since the Christian religion was legalized by Constantine, we can see which side of the curve we are on. So let’s flatten that curve.

Pandemics dispel the illusion of invincible human progress and management. They also undermine theologies of glory that excitedly proclaim special judgment by God, because sickness and suffering invade their membership. Whether the world mocks or prays, the world needs the Church, because it needs the gospel.

Submerged in the world of online video and streaming, the Church has at last dived into the digital age. “Late adopters,” as those new to the technology are called, have made the plunge, and sink or swim, pastors and laypeople are scrambling to introduce themselves to the online community where their congregation now lives and breathes.

We may yearn for the world we knew a few months ago, but the riptide of this cultural moment means we cannot go back. Yes, the frustrating technological learning curve in which some are drowning may tempt us to envy or resent larger churches. We wish we had the specialized resources, personnel, and experience. We are caught in the current, but we are also quickly catching up.

Small congregations are realizing how accessible the technology has become. Without a professional studio or paid staff, we are discovering that we can do this, and some of it rather well. Because quality matters, limitations of time and skill are motivating us to cooperate and pool resources so we can creatively present the gospel and our Free Lutheran movement excellently in a definitively digital age. Longing to return to “normal” risks sinking the Church with an idol of familiarity. How much better it would be for us to set a course, voyage forth, brave the sea, and anchor in Christ alone. We have The Story to tell, so let’s be creative in telling it well.

*Kumpula serves Living Word Lutheran, Mankato, Minn.*



It started at the end of February and beginning of March with a very strong suggestion that we limit our meeting size to 50. For those of us in small congregations like the one I currently serve, this was not a problem. In fact, there was almost an unhealthy levity

in our group as we shook hands and suggested we were not particularly concerned with the spread of COVID-19.

The first executive orders limiting gathering sizes and demanding “social distancing” came somewhat as a surprise. But those orders were a long way from where we live, and I took them more by shock and maybe not as seriously as I might have.

Then our mayor and county supervisors issued their first executive orders, and things changed quickly. The

can view things posted on Facebook, whereas anyone can view videos posted on YouTube. But YouTube policies require a channel have 1,000 subscribers in order to stream live from a mobile device, whereas streaming live from Facebook is relatively simple. One of our pastors discovered an app that circumvents the 1,000 subscriber requirement on YouTube and shared his success within a online group. Others began sharing tips for how we might use technology to take our worship and meetings online.

We soon discovered, though, that these video sharing channels were uni-directional—that there was little interaction and feedback between those who “produced” the worship service and those who “attended” online. The concern was greater when it came to Bible studies, youth meetings, and confirmation. We discovered other online services to meet our needs and then worked through the

# Preach the Word

maximum group size was lowered to 10. We were told to stay home unless we had an essential task, to keep at least six feet apart. We were told to wash our hands regularly, to not touch our faces, and to disinfect hard surfaces.

A conversation among AFLC pastors quickly followed. Should we ignore recommendations and keep meeting? Are there other ways to meet? How do we get our services online? What else can we do to meet the needs of our members—spiritual and otherwise?

I had been a YouTube user for 10 months at that point, so my jump to virtual online worship may not have been quite the hurdle it was for others. We all had to hurdle, though.

Prior to the middle of March, maybe 10 of our AFLC congregations had YouTube channels where they were archiving Sunday sermons. There were also a few congregations using Vimeo or other video outlets. One or two were live streaming their services to Facebook. A good number of pastors were posting audio files of their sermons on church websites. Now, more than 60 of our congregations have used YouTube to provide Sunday worship and daily devotionals to their members, and many others are live streaming services via Facebook.

The circumstances required quick learning as pastors and sometimes sound and video people at our congregations figured out how to use the media available to us. We asked “techy” questions about video and sound recording. We wondered which media software to use and what supplemental programs would make our sharing the gospel online easier. For example, which makes more sense: Facebook, YouTube, or Vimeo; live or recorded; video, sound, or both? We had to figure out by trial and error that only those with Facebook accounts

limitations and quirks of each service like Zoom, Google Hangouts, and Facetime.

We also realized that many of us don’t use the Internet to access information. The telephone and even old fashioned USPS letters were suddenly part of our tools again as we reached out to provide spiritual care for each other and our congregations. Larger congregations assigned more specific outreach tasks to leaders and care teams. Some congregations offered drive-in church, where members could stay in their cars in the parking lot and listen to the service on the radio.

There are some continuing questions about how we do ministry in these strange conditions. Celebrating the sacrament of Holy Communion has generated quite a bit of discussion among our pastors, and the conclusions reflect some of the freedom we have as free and living congregations. A meme of a pastor using a super-soaker to baptize a baby from six feet away puts humor to the question about baptisms. One pastor gave instructions to family members about how to baptize their about-to-be-born baby. Funerals present another very difficult situation with most services being limited to 10 or less attendees or delayed until these health circumstances pass. The same is true for weddings.

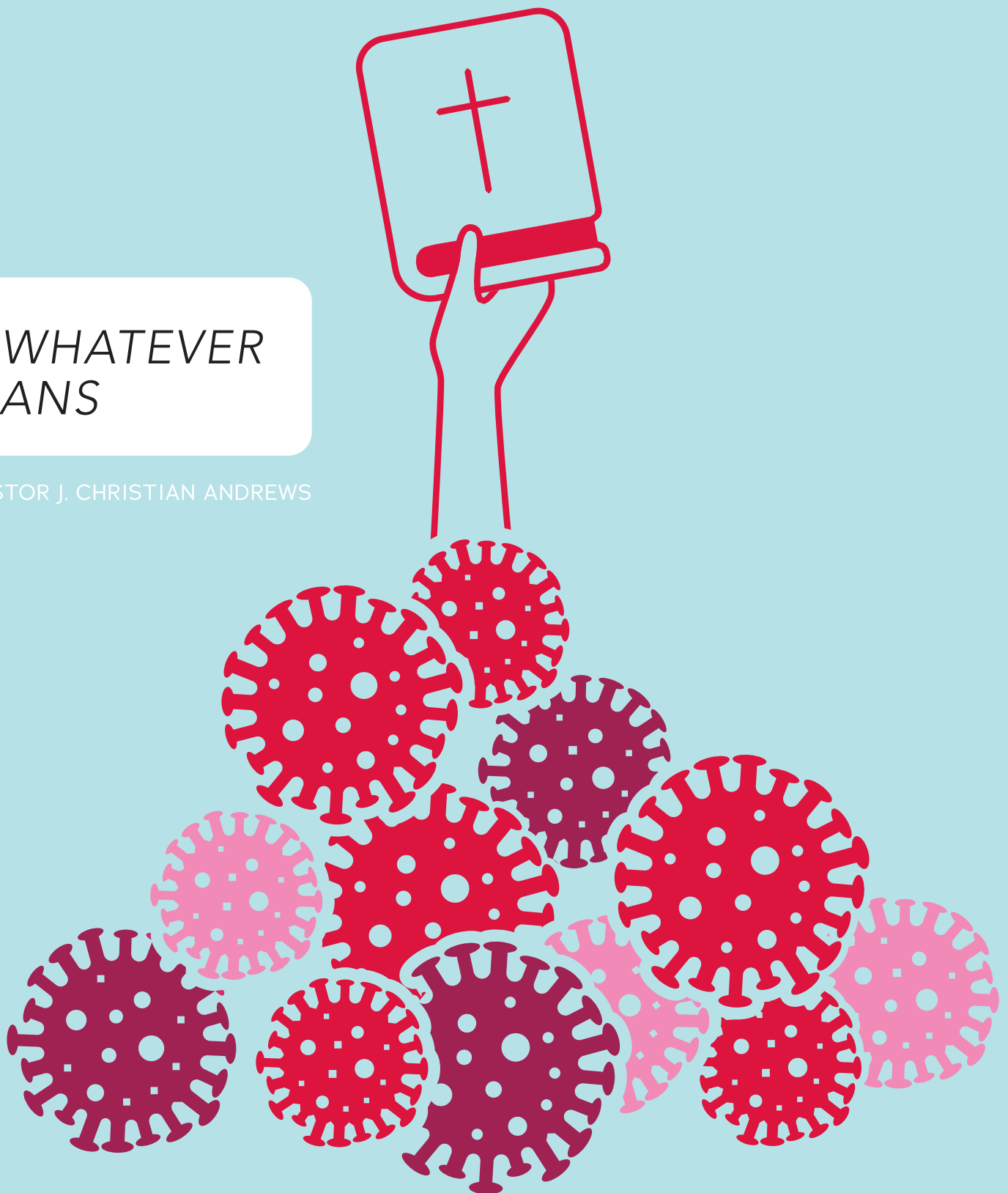
We’ve had to make some adjustments. Some will be temporary. Some may last longer as we look at how we use media to share the gospel. We have discovered that the Church, however, is not limited by how we use media or other tools. The Church is Christ’s, and He will prosper the preaching of His Word by whatever means.

*Andrews serves as an interim pastor at Immanuel Lutheran, Springfield, Mo.*



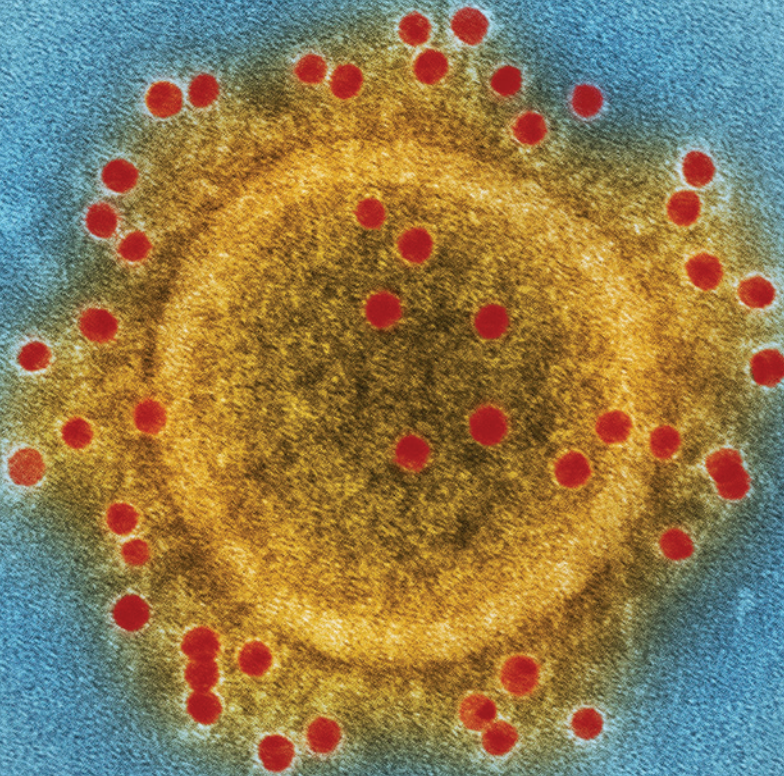
# BY WHATEVER MEANS

BY PASTOR J. CHRISTIAN ANDREWS





**a virus,**





# faith & vocation

BY PASTOR STEVE MUNDFROM



In the year 1527 Martin Luther was asked by a pastor friend for advice on the proper way for his Christian congregation to face an epidemic of the plague. Luther responded with an open letter: *Whether One May Flee from a Deadly Plague*.

Epidemics were both more frequent and more deadly at that time than they are now. Luther had to decide what he would do when a plague came to Wittenberg, Germany, in that same year, forcing Wittenberg University to temporarily relocate in nearby Jena. Luther stayed in Wittenberg to give spiritual care to his friends and neighbors.

Of the plague he says, “By God’s decree the enemy has sent us poison and deadly offal. Therefore, I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine, and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance infect and pollute others, and so cause their death as a result of my negligence.”

Did Luther invent social distancing?

Two ideas summarize Luther’s instruction—faith and vocation. Evil in this world, such as plagues, fires, crime, etc., are both works of the devil and punishments from God. Christians who believe God’s Word can recognize this and respond in faith.

As works of the devil, we should believe that God will protect us. Luther praised Christians who fearlessly face any danger to life and limb. Likewise, the Christian who sees the punishment of God in these events will not seek to escape but accept them as discipline for the body and the soul. He urged Christians to be courageous and bold instead of fleeing, while also reminding us that some have weaker faith than others. Thus, Christians should not judge their brothers who are fearful for their lives and seek safety, recognizing that few are strong, and many are weak.

He said, “If someone is so strong in faith, however, that he can willingly suffer nakedness, hunger, and want without tempting God and not trying to escape, although he could do so, let him continue that way, but let him not condemn those who will not or cannot do the same.”

With two delightful Scripture passages Luther encouraged faith in the midst of an epidemic.

Psalm 41 says, “Blessed is he who considers the poor. The Lord will deliver him in the day of trouble. The Lord will protect him and keep him alive; The Lord will bless him on earth And not give him up to the will of his enemies. The Lord will sustain him on his sickbed. In his illness he will heal all his infirmities.”

And Psalm 91 says, “He has given his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up lest you dash your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and the adder, and trample the young lion and the serpent under foot. The Lord has not and will not forsake His people. We must trust His loving provision. Is not His gracious care more and greater than any plague or danger we face?”

These encouraging words help us immensely with the other theme we find in Luther’s letter, that of vocation. As is so common in Luther’s writings, he holds everyone to the command of God to love his neighbor. Many have responsibilities toward others that enter into decision-making during an epidemic. Pastors have a vocation (a calling from God) to care for the spiritual needs of the sick and dying. Civil servants also have a vocation to see to the order and welfare of the citizens when panic or fear might threaten the community. Medical professionals also have important duties to perform during these times.

Parents must care for their children, adult children for their elderly parents, and so on. According to Luther, no one is exempt from the vocational duty to love his neighbor because of an epidemic. Only he can flee who has taken necessary measures to ensure the welfare of those for whom he is responsible. Some workers may not be needed because there are enough of those who can fill the need; these may seek a place of refuge, otherwise each one must continue in Christian love and compassion.

Those who face the dreaded plague are not left without precious comfort: “But whoever serves the sick for the sake of God’s gracious promise ... has the great assurance that he shall in turn be cared for. God himself shall be his attendant and his physician, too. What an attendant He is! What a physician! Friend, what are all the physicians, apothecaries, and attendants in comparison to God?”

*Mundfrom, Crystal, Minn., teaches systematic theology at FLBCS.*



# my neighbor

It's 9:25 on Sunday morning. Church starts at 9:30, so I'm yelling up the stairs for the boys to get out of bed for our church service. In all my years of parenting, I've never had an easier time getting the kids "ready" for church. All five of us are plopped on the floor and couch waiting for the LIVE online church service to begin.

It's been five weeks since Living Hope Church in Rogers, Minn., started online church services during this time of COVID-19 quarantine. During the first week of services, we all felt a little raw, overwhelmed with all the changes, fears, and unknowns thrown our way. As the first service began, families from the church popped up on the screen with recorded messages of what God was teaching them: a trial endured, a Scripture verse cherished, or a word of encouragement to press on. I cried watching young and old share from their hearts about how God was molding them through this crisis. I cried as they shared stories of heartache that I knew nothing about. Some of these families I know well. Others, I don't know at all. However, this "time" together is knitting us together as a church community in ways none expected.

Isn't this just like God? In this shaken world, He is using this time to remind us that church isn't a brick and mortar building—it's the people. When strategic programming on a Sunday morning, get-a-way retreats once or twice a year, or the weekly Bible studies at church are stripped away, we are left with the people, encouraging one another to live out our faith during all circumstances.

This is church.

I don't know when we will worship together in person again, but in the meantime, I know that God still moves and builds up the Church, the Body of Christ. Our church is growing more connected, not less. Faith is being strengthened, not weakened. Relationships are going deeper through fewer words, but words that are real and honest.

*Julie Monseth is a member of Living Hope Church, Rogers, Minn.*



# my church family

Pastor Tomasz and Miriam Chmiel have been sequestered with their four children in their third-floor walk-up in Lviv, Ukraine. For much of March and April, officials in Ukraine limited movement outside of homes, forcing the Chmiels to find unique ways to care for their fellow workers who serve with Josiah Venture.

"We have made meals for some people where we see that there is a need," said Tomasz, "and even found creative ways to deliver it to them."

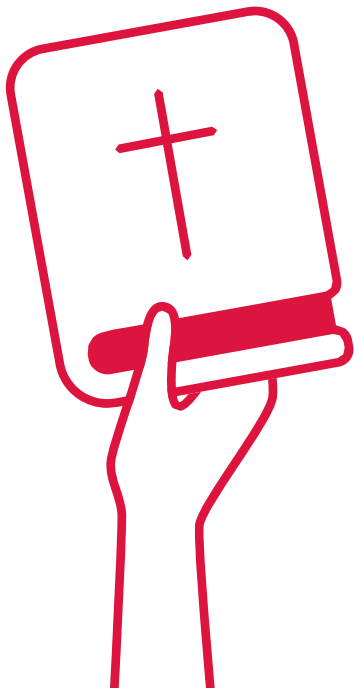
Pictured below, Miriam lowers a meal in a basket from their balcony. They say this is one creative way they are caring for the singles on their mission team.

And recently their neighbor (an older lady who is a Jehovah's Witness) brought them all her most important documents for safe keeping in case she became ill.





# CONSTRAINED BY A VIRUS, THE CHURCH GETS CREATIVE

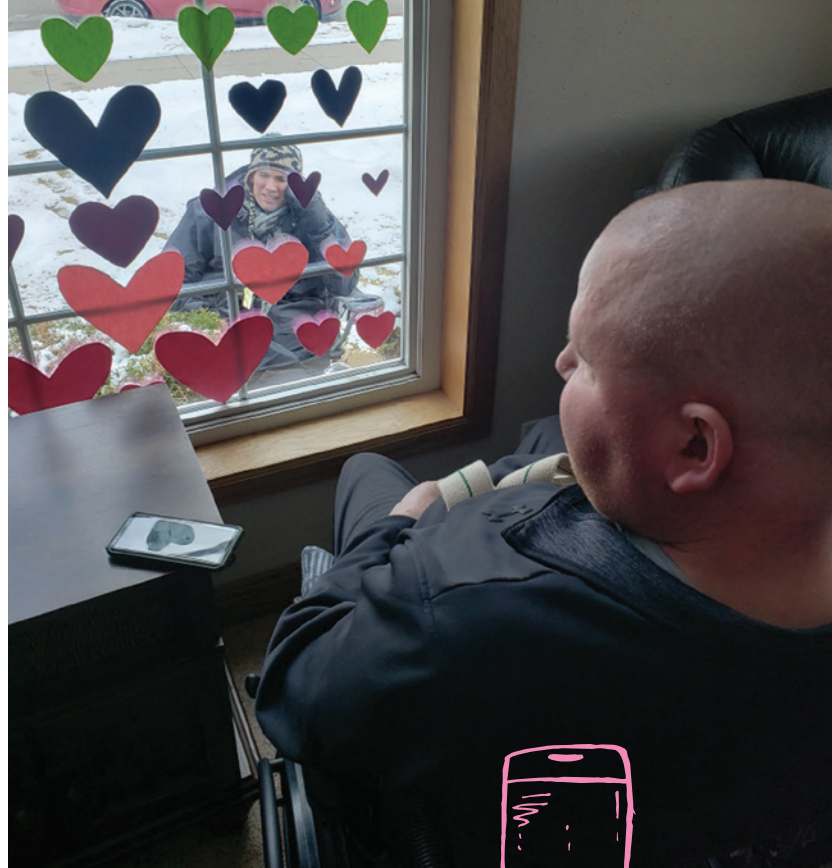


## my Bible study

We sat in lawn chairs evenly spaced six feet apart from each other, our bodies wrapped in blankets as our mittened hands grasped tightly to the beads of disposable hand warmers. We were freezing. But we were together. For the first time in weeks of online meetings, my Bible study group met in person at the end of April in my friend's front yard. Despite the nearly freezing temperature, I can tell you that evening has meant so much to me during Minnesota's stay-at-home order.

Looking back, we can see God's hand in many small details in our lives, including our choice of study. Back in January, as our group wrapped up one study and began talking about our next, we decided on Max Lucado's study, *Anxious For Nothing*, which focuses on Philippians 4:4-8. Our Heavenly Father knew we would need reassurance and His Word of hope.

*Ruth Gunderson is the managing editor.*



## my pastor



For the past 15 months our Pastor (Alex Amiot) has been stopping by weekly to visit with my husband, Jason, who has brain cancer. Since we quarantined our family to help keep him safe, they haven't been able to have their weekly visit ... until April 13. That's our pastor sitting outside our window on a camp chair talking to Jason on the phone. Jason has his phone on speaker sitting on the end table. Check out the heart on his phone from the reflection in the window!

Jason recently transitioned into hospice care. The tumors are not responding to treatment and there is nothing else we can do. Besides his weekly visits, Pastor Amiot has taken Jason to his radiation treatments and visited Jason in the hospital during his first brain surgery in Grand Forks, N.D. He drove eight hours to Rochester, Minn., to visit Jason at Mayo for his second brain surgery. Nine days after that brain surgery Jason was serving Easter breakfast at church. Pastor calls and texts us frequently now that we find ourselves in this COVID-19 pandemic. He has truly been a blessing for our family and our congregation!

*Jenni Miller is a member of Our Saviour's Free Lutheran, Thief River Falls, Minn.*

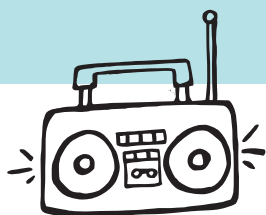
A beautiful bulletin board and lesson plans were prepared for the Easter season. I was excited to teach our small group of kids the important lessons of Jesus being our perfect “egg-sample.” Unfortunately, there would be no church, no kids to teach. I wondered how I could get the important lessons of Easter and the reason to be a Christian to our kids. Social media was the answer. Facebook Live gave Newark Lutheran Church the opportunity to not only have church services viewed safely in our homes, but also our Sunday school lessons. With the help of my sons, we role played the lessons each week telling the story of Jesus’ last days and how He died for us.

God has provided a way for all of His people to share their love for Jesus in a very public way. I feel God’s love every time I teach. And sometimes the best way to learn is from the simplest messages. I pray that sharing God’s Word through the fun Resurrection Eggs lessons on social media brings at least one person or child to Christ. Our church was empty on Easter morning. But more importantly, the tomb was too!

*Jenny Reibel is a member of Newark Lutheran, Newark, Ill.*



## our services



Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran’s answer to our state’s social distancing guidelines was to cancel our midweek Lenten service and to produce a recording of Pastor Tom Olson’s message, posting it on our website, [mnvalleychurch.org](http://mnvalleychurch.org), for Sunday, March 22.

This was done, but people from the congregation were asking for more.

With the help of many hands, two half-hour services were offered to facilitate a “drive-in” church. A temporary pulpit was set up on the sidewalk in front of the church building. With a microphone connected to the short-range FM transmitter the church uses to broadcast the Christmas narrative every year at our outdoor nativity scene, Pastor Tom gave his message and Dave and Deb Fugleberg led music. By tuning in to 88.3 FM we were able to hear and participate in the worship service from our vehicles.

Additionally, our congregation’s president, Dave Fischer, took reservations for two half-hour sessions for prayer and a meditation inside the sanctuary, with no more than 10 people gathered at a time.

God is certainly not surprised by COVID-19, and He will no doubt use this to glorify Himself and teach us to use new avenues to share the gospel.

*Kathy Osthus is a member of Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran, Lakeville, Minn.*





# our worship

The current COVID-19 pandemic, with stay-at-home orders in virtually every state, has made it necessary for churches everywhere to become creative in their ministry to the Body of Christ, and Amery Free Lutheran Church is no exception.

Amery Free is a relatively small congregation located in Western Wisconsin, about an hour's drive northeast of St. Paul, Minn. Since we are a small church, located in a rural area, we lack some of the technological resources available to larger, urban churches. However, we have been blessed with a pastor who is technologically gifted and who is committed to feeding the flock of Christ through the use of those gifts.

One way that the ministry of the Word has been carried on at our congregation is by the use of weekly worship guides. Each week, a worship guide is sent out to each church member via email, to be used as a guide for Sunday morning worship. The guide follows our typical Sunday morning order of worship, complete with songs and hymns, confessions of sin and of faith, Scripture readings, sermon, etc. The songs and sermon are presented via YouTube, with a link for each embedded in the guide. By using these worship guides, our congregation is able to continue to worship together in spirit, even though we are physically apart, thus providing a continuing sense of unity even though separated. Those in the congregation with whom we have talked have enjoyed using these guides, although, I think, we're all looking forward to being able to come together again in real fellowship.

*Paul and Betsy Welsch are members of Amery Free Lutheran, Amery, Wis.*



# our children

Members of Our Redeemer Lutheran have gathered virtually in a few different ways during the COVID-19 outbreak. One of the more unique ways we have been gathering is with our pre-school and kindergartners from Our Redeemer Christian School (ORCS). We have about 120 children who are a part of ORCS, and we normally would have chapel on a monthly basis. In chapel we "talk about how awesome Jesus is, pray, and sing."

With the preschool closed, we have held weekly chapels on YouTube. We still do the same things we did in person—which has provided some normalcy for the children during this unique season of ministry—but we have added a coloring project to the mix. Parents have been given instructions to email the completed coloring to me so that I can show off our awesome pictures to everyone. Then, I am taking all the pictures I receive and taping them up on the windows that look into the sanctuary from our entry way.

We also have been having a separate video each week on Sunday morning for our children's sermon. Since Sunday school has been unable to meet, the children's sermons are longer than a typical children's message, and we picked up where we left off studying the Lord's Prayer together.

*Pastor Nicholas Schultz serves Our Redeemer Lutheran, Kirkland, Wash.*





# providing resources



learning curve

As many congregations during the spring months scrambled to figure out how to continue providing some form of Sunday school and Bible study for various ages during the COVID-19 crisis, we shifted our primary focus to finding creative ways in these unique circumstances to encourage and support our congregations:

- We produced a large variety of teaching resources for all ages such as Bible lessons, correlating student activities, and children's educational videos.
- We shared the weekly devotional articles from the backs of AFLC bulletins since most congregational members were not receiving them directly at their churches.
- We created educational and devotional resources for family worship, especially for Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter, to help families walk through the events of Holy Week together.
- We offered to send free digital copies of any Sunday school lessons requested by individual congregations to supply for students and teachers in their particular needs.

All of these resources and more have been provided online through our website ([ambassadorpublications.org](http://ambassadorpublications.org)), Facebook page, and e-news as a free service to our congregations in their educational ministries. We praise the Lord that our materials have been able to help our congregations during this challenging time!

We recently started a Sunday School Spotlight on our website, highlighting how various congregations are meeting the challenges and finding new opportunities for ministry. Please send us a picture and one to three paragraphs about what your congregation is doing, and we will gladly share the information on our website and Facebook page as an encouragement to others. We also invite you to follow us on Facebook and subscribe to our e-news to stay informed of our ministry.

Looking ahead, what will educational ministries in our congregations be like? There are still many unknowns. Please let us know how we can help and serve you. Also, please pray for the work and finances of our ongoing ministry. In recent months, giving has greatly decreased. April was AFLC promotional month for Parish Education, a time when many congregations take a special offering for us. But since congregations were not meeting, many of these offerings were not taken. We look to the Lord to provide for His work and to guide and bless our congregations and AFLC ministries as we trust in Him.

*Marian Christopherson is the director of AFLC Parish Education.*



As a pastor of a growing and busy small rural parish, the pandemic, and shelter-in-place orders made each day feel like finals week, if you know what I mean: head spinning and intense concentration.

Thirty-three years ago, I was an early adopter of the personal computer. After hand typing most of my papers in seminary, I finally scraped together a small fortune to buy the simplest Tandy computer on the market. My last papers were typed with a word processor. Wow, I was hooked.

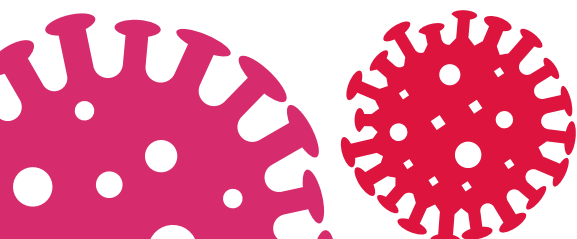
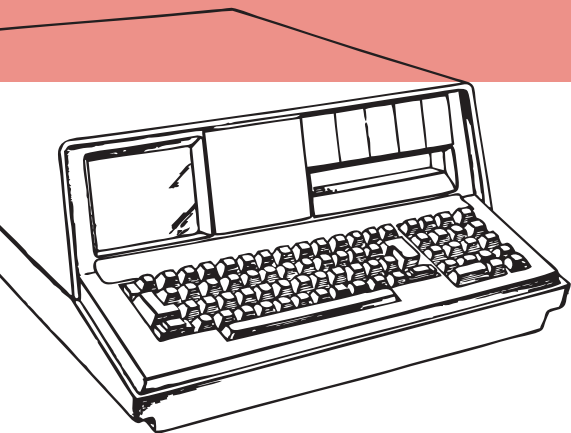
Now however, the technology has left me behind. Thankfully our congregation has some tech savvy people, active committees such as our worship committee, and a talented pianist, all keeping me on top of things.

We were already live streaming our services. But our pianist is the director of nursing at our local nursing home, with strict limits on her outside exposure. I'll never take for granted again the preparation for worship services, even the most basic task of picking out hymns for an evening service. Add to that choosing a prelude and postlude. I had been recording our pianist's beautiful preludes and a few hymns, but they weren't suitable for Easter.

And then there's communion. We thought we had a good plan but it was denied by the health department guidelines. Even communion servers in masks, plastic gloves, and private communion in church would, according to the health department, require disinfecting between families.

So what if we just say come at your own risk? Then that increases the possibility of burdening our medical system. So what to do? I'm still working on that.

*Pastor Tom Tuura serves Christ Lutheran, Stover, Mo.*



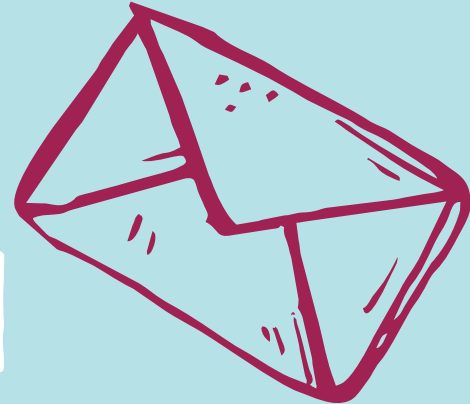
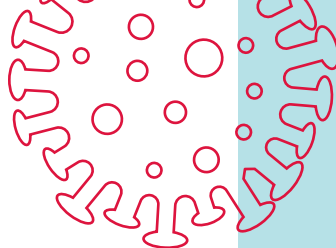
Studies show that parents are perhaps the biggest indicator of whether or not a child will remain in the faith when they grow up. So, to make it easier for me to pass on important things of the faith to my kids, I thought I'd put my love of music to good use and write songs for *Luther's Small Catechism*. While I've been thinking about this for years, now seemed like a good time to start in light of the current pandemic.

At the time of writing this I've completed five songs, one for each of the first five commandments. The goal was to produce singable melodies accessible to children, but which won't drive parents crazy. I put simple videos on Facebook to share with others who may find them useful or encouraging. I used the wording from AFLC Parish Education's *Small Catechism* in case it could be helpful to others in the AFLC, whether it's a family teaching their own kids or middle schoolers working on confirmation memorization.

I've had great feedback from friends and people I've never met before on how they are using these songs with their kids, grandkids, nanny children, and confirmation students. I'm excited to see how God might use these songs as a tool for families and congregations both inside and outside the AFLC.

There is a reason we teach the alphabet to young children by song—it makes it easy to commit to memory. I thought it was about time to have songs to teach the "ABCs of the faith" to my own kids.

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

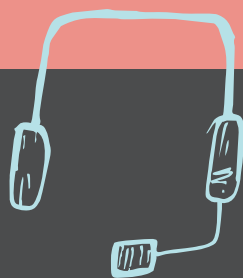


## small things

*"Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin, to see the plumb line in Zerubbabel's hand."*

*~Zechariah 4:10*

## tech support



When Micah Horneman, a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Kalispell, Mont., thought about creating a Facebook group to offer tech support for AFLC churches nearly three years ago, he had no idea if anyone would make use of it. The group discussion was mostly stagnant for the last two years. But on March 19, as the coronavirus pandemic limited in-person meetings, a flurry of discussions were posted to AFLC Tech, questions asked, and answers given via experienced commenters.

The mostly ad hoc group members offer advice from both personal experience and other resources, providing live-streaming video tutorials, reviews on cameras, gimbals, microphones, apps, and more. As the weeks passed, the discussions became more technical as members' experience grew. The group is open to new members by request.

When I saw the notice in the May *Ambassador* requesting articles about what our churches are doing to help the community during the pandemic, I felt a little depressed. I wish I could say that here at St. Paul's in Leitersburg, Md., we are doing great things for the Lord. However, we're small and have many elderly members, so our abilities are limited. Then I realized our size and our resources don't matter—the Bible tells us that even small things can be used in a big way by God. We just have to be willing to give what we have, like the little boy with his loaves and fishes. Here are some small things we have been doing at St. Paul's:

- We have a little free library. The emails I get as a steward of the library mentioned that many library stewards were removing books from their libraries due to the fear of passing infection by books being borrowed and then returned or replaced by many people. Some stewards were turning their libraries into "blessing boxes" by filling them with paper goods or other needed supplies. We decided to put canned and boxed food in ours, adding a note to "take what you need."
- This past year we started a youth ministry for the teens who reside at a local mental health facility. Due to social distancing we are unable to see them, or even send them packages. Instead, we encouraged our members to send notes and cards, asking for their prayer requests and telling them we love and care for them. We are also preparing a goodie basket of snacks for the staff.
- A number of our members carry blessing bags of food, a small Bible, and needed hygienic supplies to give out to the homeless we see as we run our daily errands. I find that I am giving out even more than usual right now.
- We could not serve our scheduled meal at the local mission last month. However, we were able to prepare a dinner and drop it off.
- One of our small discipleship groups is collecting plastic grocery bags so that they can weave them into mats to give out to the homeless.

Of course, we are trying to stay in touch and encourage our own members who are shut-in through cards and calls, and our prayer team is still active and taking requests, although not meeting in person.

I'm sure there are many other churches, community groups, and individuals who are doing little things to help others. They may not seem like much in the face of a global problem, but they mean the world to each person they touch. The gospel, after all, is spread by one person speaking to another. Don't be discouraged. Do the small things you can, and trust God to use them.

*Joan Culler is a member of St. Paul's Lutheran, Leitersburg, Md.*





S

he stood in line waiting to buy a ticket on the scenic train down the mountains

to the beaches of southern Brazil. In front of her was a man looking in his pockets. As soon as he got to the booth, he asked for a ticket on the same train that she was planning to take. Then he asked the ticket agent, "Do you have a ticket on the train to heaven?"

The agent, a little taken aback, asked, "What do you mean?"

Quickly the man told the agent about Jesus, then pulled a tract out of his pocket and gave it to him. He paid for the ticket and left.

The woman behind him was surprised by what he said. It had piqued her interest. After she paid for her ticket, she walked to the corner of the block and there stood the man, waiting to cross the street. She asked him, "Forgive me, sir, but what was that you told the man in the booth?"

He looked at her and smiled, then went on to share the gospel with her. On that corner near the train depot of Curitiba, she gave her heart to Jesus. Sometime later she and her husband moved to Campo Mourão, where they became members of our AFLC church. When her husband was transferred back to Curitiba, she joined my dad's church. That's where I met her. The man who shared the gospel with her on

# A MAN, A MISSION

BY PASTOR JONATHAN ABEL

the street corner was missionary John Harrison Abel, my dad.

He was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for he knew, as Paul did, that it was the power of God unto salvation for all who believe. Therefore, he never lost an opportunity to witness. Since he came to know Jesus as his personal Savior at the age of 17, he was given a burning desire to reach the lost, be it in the church or out. He never lost that vision and that drive until God took him home at the age of 94.

On the morning of his passing, after breakfast, my mom and dad had devotions, as was their custom. The Scripture reading for that day was from John 14:1-3, 6, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. ... I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Later that day he was taken to the Veteran's Hospital in Minneapolis. Two hours later he was in our Father's arms.

During the Second World War, Dad enlisted in the Navy and was deployed to the Orient.

During his leave, Dad would visit missionaries and their ministries. This is what ignited in him the desire to be a missionary. While in college, he made a road trip down to Colombia, and that sparked his interest in South America.

Dad was always concerned that three things happened in serving the Lord, which we find in Jesus' Great Commission in both Matthew and Mark. First, that we are to evangelize; thus the need for crusades, Bible camps, special meetings, and teaching people how to share their faith. Second, to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; thus the need to plant churches for the edification and communion of new believers and ministering the sacraments as a Church body. Third, to teach these new converts to observe all things that Christ commanded us to do; thus the need for Bible schools, seminaries, and Christian schools.

I praise God for the example of my dad. He left very big shoes to fill. He also left a goal: to serve the Lord with gladness, for the work never ends, but we can be of good cheer, "the one who calls you is faithful and will also do it."

*Abel is an AFLC missionary serving in Maringá, Brazil.*



**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)**

## Letter: Small churches need pastors, too

Dear Editor,

I am not usually one to write a letter to the editor of any publication, although I think of it once in a while. This has likely happened for years but it seems to have gotten more common the last while.

Our seminary does an excellent work of preparing students to be pastors and we have excellent men called into the ministry. We in the AFLC have a number of pastors retiring and a number of churches seeking pastors. What has been happening with many of our seminary graduates is that larger churches call them into assistant positions or as youth pastors. This can easily be justified by the numbers in the churches and I sure don't mean that they are not needed. But, how about the small rural church that needs a pastor? Before they have a chance, the larger churches gobble up these new pastors, maybe even where they have interned. Many times they can offer more money, insurance, 401Ks and larger communities to have their children in school, etc.

AFLC Home Missions works to start new works in areas, but the prospect of getting a pastor is taken away by these larger churches. A 500-member church should be able to justify and support 10 pastors compared to some rural churches with 50 members supporting one family. Sometimes these small churches have to close or depend on getting someone in with non-Lutheran doctrine who will influence the church, especially the young people. Not that Lutheranism is everything, but that is what we are. Small churches, many times, have more to offer the pastor and family than what they think. This is just food for thought for seminarians and the seminary.

—Pastor Henry Mohagen  
Slim Buttes Free Lutheran  
Reva, S.D.



### 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

## FLBC cancels summer team ministry for 2020

The Free Lutheran Bible College, Plymouth, Minn., announced on May 6 that all summer team ministry for 2020 had been canceled due to the COVID-19 crisis. Members of the Board of Trustees researched potential adjustments to the summer schedule, but ultimately decided that an unclear outlook into July would force them to end the summer ministry plans.

Twenty-five students representing six teams were affected by the decision. The teams normally travel for ten weeks of the summer, working in AFLC churches and Bible camps around the country, leading vacation Bible school and hosting music programs.

“Closure is going to be hard, especially thinking about the what-ifs,” said senior Brett Erickson. “I pray for the churches and the camps that we won’t be able to go to.”



Author Susan Hunt conveys in her writing that the definition of the relationship of

spiritual mentoring is, "When a woman possessing faith and spiritual maturity enters into a nurturing relationship with a younger woman in order to encourage and equip her to live for God's glory."

The foundation for Hunt's definition is found in Titus 2. Here we find God's desire to knit the hearts of older and younger women in spiritual mentoring relationships. Verses 3-5 emphasize the calling of the older, spiritually mature woman. She is to teach the young women what is right and good. She is to encourage young women "to tenderly love their husbands and their children, to be sensible, pure, makers of a home where God is honored, good-natured, being subject to their own husbands, so that the Word of God will not be dishonored."

From my own personal experience as a young woman, I am sincerely grateful for the

## SPIRITUAL MENTORING

BY ELIZABETH JORE

rich friendships I have with older women. When we share life together, I have the privilege of witnessing women's love for Jesus and how they walk with Him. I see the Holy Spirit's power as they seek to apply the Word in their daily lives when dealing with weakness, struggles, and circumstances.

Susan writes, "When we make an investment in younger women, we will be enriched personally, the sense of community in the local church will be deepened, society will be blessed, and God's Word will be honored." The truth of these words is being realized at Grace Free Lutheran Church. Over the past two years, women in their 20s to 80s, representing many seasons of life, have joined groups to study biblical womanhood and develop relationships. While we continue to meet in small groups, our hope is to begin one-on-one spiritual mentoring. We are excited for all God is doing.

*Jore is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn.*



### COVID-19's Five Cs

- **CLOSER:** We had time to get closer to Jesus through prayer and God's Word. We also had time to get closer to our families with board games, walks, and work projects.
- **CREATIVE:** Cooking, sewing masks, baskets for the needy, and outreach projects galore.
- **CLUTTER BUSTER:** Closets cleaned and gardens and yards spruced up.
- **COMPUTERS:** A treasure trove of services online through YouTube, Zoom, and Facebook Live.
- **COMMUNITY:** Through avenues like calls and cards, the body of Christ is shining across the world. "He always lives to intercede for you" (Hebrews 7:25).



## FLBC Golf Scramble scheduled for July 31

The Free Lutheran Bible College is planning its annual summer Golf Scramble for July 31 at the Refuge Golf Club in Oak Grove, Minn. Check-in begins at 10:15 a.m. with a shotgun start at noon. Proceeds from the fundraiser will support Bible college student scholarships. For more information and to register, visit [flbc.edu/alumni-golf-scramble](http://flbc.edu/alumni-golf-scramble).

## Summer Institute of Theology Aug. 3-7

The Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary will host the Summer Institute of Theology Aug. 3-7 on the Plymouth, Minn., campus under the theme, “The Care of Souls.” Courses will include “Soul Care” by Pastor Jerry Nelson and Dr. Tim Lane; “Pastoral Epistles,” by Pastor Terry Olson; “Church Leadership and Strategy for the Care of Souls,” by Dr. Lucas Woodford; “Studies in the Psalms,” by Pastor Jim Johnson; “Prepare/Enrich,” by Pastor Rich Carr; and “Principles of Congregational Life,” by Pastor Brett Boe.

The cost is \$100/session with a \$300 maximum and discounts for spouses also attending. For more information and to register for sessions, visit [flbc.edu/events/summer-institute-of-theology-sit](http://flbc.edu/events/summer-institute-of-theology-sit).

## FLBC plans summer alumni picnics

The Free Lutheran Bible College is planning four alumni picnics in various locations throughout the country during the summer months. They include Sioux Falls, S.D., on July 12; Everett, Wash., on July 25; Plymouth, Minn., on Aug. 1; and Fargo, N.D., on Aug. 9. For more information, visit [flbc.edu](http://flbc.edu).



## FLBC Student Center construction begins

Construction of the new Student Center at the Free Lutheran Bible College, Plymouth, Minn., began in earnest in mid-April. A month later, the foundation had been laid and three-quarters of the walls were mostly installed enclosing the gym. Site work began last November, which included digging out 13,000 cubic yards of soil. The footprint of the facility is now taking shape as other walls begin to be installed on the west side of the gym. To track updates on the gym project, a live-stream webcam can be viewed at [flbc.edu/slc-cam](http://flbc.edu/slc-cam).

Pictured (at top), three of the gym's four walls have been installed. Above, insulation is wrapped around outside walls which will house locker rooms.





**C**apitalizing on the COVID-19 crisis sounds cold, insensitive, and self-centered.

Examples of this capitalization range from personal profit through the hoarding and then sale of vital supplies such as hand sanitizer and toilet paper, to personal power by leveraging this crisis as campaign fodder to attack political opponents. These self-serving gestures seem obscene.

That being the case, I propose we jump on the bandwagon when it comes to the gospel. Why? Now, more than ever, people are in need of the power of the gospel. And now we have a unique opportunity: the veil of self-sufficiency is being exposed for the flimsy sham that it truly is. In contrast, we can point our neighbors to the One who doesn't disappoint, the One who never fades, and the One who is always faithful.

One passage that has been on my heart during this time as I have served students and families is Isaiah 40:6-9, "A voice says, 'Cry!' And I said, 'What shall I cry?' All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

# CAPITALIZING ON COVID

BY JORDAN LANGNESS

Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, 'Behold your God!'"

Three lessons stand out to me. First, we see the futile nature of the things of this earth. Isaiah notes how beauty is fleeting and short-lived like a flower, while our lives themselves are as hearty as grass, which soon withers away. These past months have shown us just how unreliable our earthly treasures can be. Athletes who have trained for years are suddenly unable to compete, significant milestones like graduations have simply been canceled, and the comfort of a good job and padded retirement accounts are not as comfortable as they used to be. Within weeks, massive investments of time and energy seem to have been all for nothing.

This is the nature of earthly things. In the end, they always end up disappointing because they are not the Lord. Even without this virus, retirement accounts wouldn't be sufficient, state championships would eventually be

forgotten, and those milestones wouldn't seem as monumental as they once had. What this virus has done, though, is rip away this facade abruptly, and the pain from that has left many reeling.

Second, in stark contrast to the reality of worldly disappointments is the eternal goodness of Jesus Christ, God's Word, who stands forever. What refreshing news for us that while things around us appear to crumble, Christ still stands unshaken. His promises are just as true, His glory remains untainted, and the satisfaction found in His presence is undiluted. People need to hear of this Jesus in these unprecedented days.

This reality of Christ's preeminence leads to the third element, which has been my prayer for the Church in these days, that we would faithfully point to Christ and boldly proclaim to our neighbors: "Behold your God!"

*Langness, AFLC Youth Ministries training coordinator, is the youth and family ministry director at Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran, Ishpeming, Mich.*

## PEOPLE &amp; PLACES

**Pastor Ron Brubakken** has resigned as pastor of Cornerstone Lutheran, Argyle, Wis.

**Pastor Paul Kneeland** has accepted a call to serve as a missionary representative for the International Orality Institute. The half-time position includes overseeing current and future ministry areas overseas as well as serving as an ambassador for the ministry in the United States. He and his wife, Ruth, have relocated to Prescott, Ariz., where he will look for supplemental employment.

**Pastor Herb Hoff**, Burien, Wash., is serving as interim pastor at Elim Lutheran, Lake Stevens, Wash.

**Andrew Abel**, media specialist at FLBCS, stepped down from his position at the end of May. FLBC has hired **Ryan Jones**, a 2017 alumnus, to fill the position.



## Pastor John Abel

John Harrison Abel, 94, of Hitterdal, Minn., went home to be with his Lord and Savior on April 15 in Minneapolis. Born Dec. 13, 1925, in Minneapolis, he was the son of Harrison and Norma (Wallin) Abel. He married Ruby Hitterdal on Sept. 3, 1949.

When his father passed away, John moved with his mother and sister, Gloria, to Argyle, Minn., his mother's hometown. Later, they moved to Stephen, Minn., where his mother married Winston Naylor. Although he was not raised in a Christian home, he attended church regularly during his childhood at the invitation of a neighbor. When he was 17 and working in the White Horse Yukon Territory for Northwest Airlines, he came to a real assurance of salvation in Jesus as his Savior. The next day he wanted to save the whole world, a vision he never lost. At 18 he enlisted in the Navy during World War II and served under General MacArthur in the Pacific and the occupation of Japan. After being discharged, John went to Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn., where he met Ruby. John studied theology at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. Upon receiving a call from World Mission Prayer League to begin a work in Brazil, he was ordained for the pastoral ministry at Central Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, in June 1952, and commissioned Sept. 21, 1952, in Stephen, Minn., before leaving for Brazil to begin a pioneer mission work. Throughout the course of his life, he worked with WMPL, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the AFLC, and Evangelism Explosion as a missionary in Brazil. He was active in the founding of the AFLC, helping start St. Paul's Free Lutheran Church in Fargo, N.D., before being called as their first missionary. In Brazil John had a part in starting more than 17 churches, established schools in three cities, and starting a Bible school, seminary, and Bible camp in Campo Mourão, Paraná. His boldness in making friends and his dependence on God as he asked for cooperation in ministry resulted in the acquisition of several large pieces of property to develop mission outreach. John wore many "hats" including teacher, pastor, evangelist, radio preacher, pilot, foreman, husband, father, travel guide, translator, and driver. After his retirement from the mission field, he served as an evangelist and pastor in U.S. churches.

Surviving are his wife; four sons, David (Janet) Abel, Jonathan (Tamba) Abel, Paul (Rebecca) Abel, and Nathanael (Yvonne) Abel; three daughters, Deborah (Fred) Gill, Lydia Abel, and Priscilla (Lucio) Aguirre; 28 grandchildren; and 29 great grandchildren.

Burial was held May 15 at Salem East Cemetery in Hitterdal, Minn. A memorial service is planned for 3 p.m. June 18 at the FLBC chapel. It will also be live-streamed.



## Olson installed at Enderlin, ND

Pastor Thomas Olson was installed March 15 at Hope Free Lutheran, Enderlin, N.D., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, officiating. Pictured (from left) are Wyatt Fernow, Shane Schlecht, Carrie Iwen, Pastor Korhonen, Pastor Olson, Pete Lee, Deb Lee, Hollie Harrington, Jim Harrington, and Debbie Armstrong.

## APRIL MEMORIALS

<b>AED</b>	Pastor George Knapp
Pastor John Abel	
<b>Bible College</b>	<b>WMF</b>
Ruth Claus	Grace Syverson
<b>Home Missions</b>	Raymond Pressnall
Joel Schram	John Lee
Madeline Thorsgard	Ethel Thompson
<b>World Missions</b>	Janice Preitauer
Kent Quanbeck	Lorraine Karch
Pastor John Abel	Barb Wiczorek

## AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-April 30, 2020

FUND	REC'D IN APRIL	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$28,944	\$129,026	\$155,692
Evangelism	8,906	30,918	44,148
Youth Ministries	7,378	31,862	42,392
Parish Education	13,216	237,120	74,011
Seminary	16,817	102,380	104,260
Bible College	39,290	150,144	206,791
Home Missions	21,128	102,503	137,501
World Missions	20,407	123,923	180,638
Personal Support	48,688	244,578	211,855
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$204,775</b>	<b>\$952,454</b>	<b>\$1,157,327</b>

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



# IN TIMES LIKE THESE

The words of the gospel song, “In Times like These” (AH 554), have come to mind quite often during the past weeks as our country—yes, the whole world—faces a challenge unlike anything experienced in our lifetimes. Some compare the current crisis to the worldwide Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-19, which may have resulted in 50 million deaths. Yet today’s



Pastor Robert Lee

massive, daily media coverage makes us so frighteningly aware of COVID-19 in ways that our grandparents or parents could not even imagine.

This special issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador* seeks

to highlight the responses of our congregations and pastors to this pandemic, and we are grateful to each one who was willing to tell us what’s happening with their church families and ministries. Who would have dreamed that suddenly all the schools in America would send their students home to finish the year by means of online classes, and all the churches in America would be closed for worship services and classes? Who would have anticipated the rapid technological response that almost overnight allowed congregations to offer online worship services, and (in shades of Robert Schuller and his Crystal Cathedral) even drive-in services in places like Thief River Falls, Minnesota!

Surely these troubled times have led to the spiritual awakening of men and women who have rested confidently in the assurance that there are no problems that can’t be solved, no crisis that can’t be resolved. People are told to stay home, and the government stimulus checks won’t go very far in covering the cost of living for those who have lost their income. Many are depressed and afraid, self-sufficiency

is shattered, and there has been a spike in suicides.

“In times like these, you need a Savior.” Oh, I pray that the gospel good news might be preached loudly and clearly! Point to Jesus, who is the answer to our heart needs now and for eternity! Nothing is more practical than this! “In times like these you need an anchor,” the hymn-writer declares, “Be very sure your anchor holds and grips the solid Rock!” The solid Rock is Jesus, our Savior and Lord.

“In times like these you need the Bible.” Has the shutdown given you more time at home? Yes, there are probably many neglected projects that can be addressed now (I’ve been going through and trying to organize stacks of old photos), but now you and I actually have more time to spend with the Lord in His Word and in devotional readings. Officially we believe

that the Word is the primary means of grace and that the gospel is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). It should be treasured in our hearts to keep us from sin, and it is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:11 and 105). Let’s act like we believe this.

There’s a portion of God’s Word that has come to mind these past weeks, and it is the story of Queen Esther. There was a plot to wipe out the entire Jewish community, and her cousin Mordecai called upon her to plead with the king for her people. “And who knows whether you have not attained royalty **for such a time as this?**” (Esther 4:14) The last words in the verse have been highlighted as a special word to you and me.

It is unwise and ultimately impossible for us to try to discern the reasons behind this pandemic that our world is facing. But we may know for certain that our wise and loving Heavenly Father has determined, as with Esther, that we should live in “such a time as this,” and we may know for certain that He has placed us in a certain place and among certain people. Did you notice, however, that the Bible says “for” not “in” such a time as this? This suggests to me that our circumstances are not merely to be endured, but instead to be seen as a season of opportunity.

*... we may know for certain that He has placed us in a certain place and among certain people.*

So, what are the opportunities in times like these? First of all, I believe that we are called to prayer. My list is growing longer as specific needs are made known, and the Internet has been a welcome aid in alerting us to what friends may be facing. The scope of our prayers needs to be expanded, too, as we are reminded that our family in Christ is a worldwide one, and brothers and sisters are facing fearful challenges almost beyond our comprehension. Second, we are called to help others as we are able and as the opportunities arise. Finally, we are called to remember that the greatest need of everyone is to know Jesus, and to be ready to clearly point others to Him.

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THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR  
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

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Periodicals

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

*something to share*

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# IN STORMY WEATHER

BY ANGELA LOMBARDO

**J**esus' disciples had a big problem. After Jesus fed the 5,000, He directed His disciples to get into a boat on the Sea of Galilee and go ahead of Him to Bethsaida while He stayed behind to pray (Mark 6:15). They obeyed, and it wasn't long before they went into a fierce, life-threatening storm.

Wait a minute. Jesus tells His disciples to get into the boat, and when they obey, they get into trouble? What's going on? Didn't Jesus know that a storm was coming? Of course He did. Then why did He send them into danger?

God has His reasons. For example, when His followers are disobedient, God may allow or even send a storm. Just ask Jonah. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach repentance to the people. Jonah responded by getting on a boat and going to Tarshish, the exact opposite direction. What happened? God sent a storm. He got Jonah's attention. There are times when

God's children disobey and like Jonah, they run into trouble.

On the other hand, storms also come when you obey God. Remember Daniel? What storm did he face? He was thrown into a lion's den because he was obedient to the Lord. Let's not forget Paul who obeyed God and still faced trials, persecutions, and much opposition (II Corinthians 11:25-28).

Job endured what most people fear. He lost his 10 children to a literal storm, he lost his health, and he lost his wife's support. Then his friends placed the blame for these misfortunes squarely on Job's shoulders. Job never knew the purpose of his suffering, and yet he said, "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him" (Job 13:15a).

The poet Edward Young once wrote, "Affliction is a good man's shining time." Our reaction to trials is telling.

Since God's choice servants endured trials, should we be surprised when trouble comes our way? It seems to me that we are in very good company.

Even though Jesus sent the disciples into the storm on the Sea of Galilee, He didn't leave them alone. He saw them struggling, "making headway painfully" (Mark 6:48). He then came to them, walking on the water. They supposed it was a ghost. In that day if someone appeared in a very unusual way, it had to be a spirit, which meant they were about to drown and they, too, would become ghosts. No wonder they were terrified. "But He said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid'" (John 6:20). He got into the boat and the storm ceased. They responded by worshiping Him. No other response would do.

What an awesome God! We need not battle the storms of life on our own. Allow Jesus to get into your boat. He will show Himself strong on your behalf. In the storm is the sufficiency of God's grace.

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