



THE 

AUGUST 2020

# LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

THE  
BOOK  
ISSUE



## THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

AUGUST 2020  
VOL. 58 NO. 8

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### THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

(ISSN 0746-3413) (USPS 588-620)  
is published monthly by the  
Association of Free Lutheran  
Congregations,  
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.,  
Plymouth, MN 55441  
Phone (763) 545-5631  
Periodicals postage paid at  
St. Paul, MN and additional  
mailing offices.

### POSTMASTER

Send address changes to  
The Lutheran Ambassador,  
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.,  
Plymouth, MN 55441.

### SUBSCRIPTION CHANGES AND INFORMATION

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.,  
Plymouth, MN 55441.  
763-545-5631  
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### SUBSCRIPTION RATES

\$24 a year, Group, U.S.  
\$25 a year, Individual, U.S.  
\$27 a year, International

# OUR OMNIPRESENT LORD

BY ELIZABETH NEUFELD

**I** have felt humbled this year, and so helpless as the chaos of this world has appeared much closer to home. I know that I am powerless to control the chaos, and in the depths of my heart I find I need Him to remind me of His presence more than ever. “You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek You; I thirst for You, my whole being longs for You in a dry and parched land where there is no water” (Psalm 63:1, NIV).

All of our souls are desperate for Him. We need Him when we are overflowing with gratitude and quite steady, and we need Him when we’re hurtling through the waves and altogether crumbling. He is our strength when we are weak, He is our joy in the morning and offers grace upon grace when we walk through thorns.

I discover that I cannot fix things, and often I make things worse when I try to do so on my own. I am comforted by the fact that even when we are wrong, even when we are to blame, He offers His gracious hand. When we have broken His heart, He is there, reminding us that His Son was sent for this. And when we are right in the center of His will, He is there, beckoning us to build an altar and collect those precious reminders of His faithfulness.

There is no moment in history when we haven’t needed Him. In the rainy seasons we need Him as our shelter, where we may peer out

to see brilliant growth. In the dry seasons, when things have seemed to wither, He is our well of living water. When dreams die, when mountains fall, He is our hope for tomorrow and our God in whom we trust.

He is there the moment we call upon Him, and He is present in the shadows. Behind us and before us, we do not need to fear, for He tells us not to worry; tomorrow will take care of itself.

He is there because we need Him to be at every moment, though we stray, though we fall, though we disregard Him or push Him away, though we lose our focus on Him altogether. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

He ceaselessly draws us to Himself; His calls to us are relentless. We may think we’ve failed Him, or maybe that it’s too late, but He is there. “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (II Peter 3:9, ESV).

We may be in a place of rest, comfort, and plenty, and too often forget about Him altogether, but even there He calls us, again and again. I praise God that He is there, and that He will not forsake us in this chaos.

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

She reads books as one would breathe the air, to fill up and live.

—Annie Dillard

I can't imagine a man really enjoying a book and reading it only once.

—C.S. Lewis

You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them.

—Ray Bradbury

When you read to a child, when you put a book in a child's hands, you are bringing that child news of the infinitely varied nature of life. You are an awakener.

—Paula Fox

Books are the train, the plane, and the road. They are the destination and the journey. They are home.

—Anna Quindlen

But beyond this, my son, be warned: the writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body.

—Ecclesiastes 12:12

**M**y love affair with books began at a very early age, almost from birth. When I was born, my parents received several children's books as gifts. Amazingly, through all the moves our family made, one of these books stayed with us and is one I still read almost every Advent season. The book, *The Little Lost Angel*, by Janet Field Heath, tells the story of a young female angel who came to earth with the heavenly host when Jesus was born. Falling asleep with the sheep, she gets separated from the others and tries to find her way back to heaven. Seeking help, she encounters several individuals along the way, sees the need of each one, and unselfishly gives away her most precious possessions, her harp, her crown, and her wings, making her return to heaven impossible. Taken in by a family, she remains on earth and sees how lives were changed by her sacrifice. As a young child, I didn't really like the ending, so hoping the little angel could return to heaven ... my idea of a happy ending. Yet as I grew older, I was inspired by the selflessness of the angel's gifts and realized this made a much better story.

My dad was the one who read to us and fostered our love for books. I know having a parent read to a young child is not so unusual, but perhaps what was different in our family was that my father continued to read to us throughout our years at home, even in high school. His book selections ranged from fun books that fostered a love of family when we were younger like *Cheaper By The Dozen*, *The Five Little Peppers*, and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, to inspiring books about missionaries like *God's Smuggler*, *Through the Gates of Splendor*, and *Something Beautiful for God*. He read books that fueled our imaginations like the *Chronicles of Narnia* and *Pilgrim's Progress*, and books that caused us to see the world from another's point of view like *The Hiding Place*, *Walk in My Moccasins*, and *Black Like Me*. After reading a chapter or two, we would often discuss the book together, listening to one another's perspectives.

My husband tells the story of his first vacation with my family shortly before we were married. My parents had rented a cabin on the Pacific coast at Ocean Shores. Upon arrival, we all ran down the beach while it was daylight, returning to the cabin for dinner. After the dishes were done, we each picked a chair or spot to sprawl out and pulled out the current books we were reading. Not being one who loves to read (opposites do attract!), my fiancé looked around the room incredulously and said, "Is this what you do for fun?" Sheepishly, we put our books away and pulled out a board game to play

to include him. My dad was such a lover of books that he carried one with him almost everywhere he went, saying, "You never know when you might be stuck waiting somewhere." Dad also loved to engage in conversations with people and would often ask, "What are you reading these days?"

Continuing in my father's footsteps, reading books has brought so much depth and richness to my life. Passing through seasons of life starting as a young adult, the books that have spoken to me are almost like friends. When I start a new book, I often have a sense about the author that C.S. Lewis spoke of in regard to friendship, "What? You too? I thought I was the only one." When my parents died as the result of a car accident, a friend sent me a book titled, *A Grace Disguised*, by Jerry Sittser. Sittser had lost his mother, his wife, and one of his four children, a daughter, in a car accident. His writing put words to many of the emotions and questions I had regarding this sudden loss and helped me see "a grace disguised" in the tragedy. As Sittser said, "The Joseph story helps us see that our own tragedies can be a very bad chapter in a very good book ... I simply do not see the bigger picture, but I choose to believe that there *is* a bigger picture and that my loss is part of some wonderful story authored by God himself."

I read because I love stories. Stories give us experiences we would otherwise have not had, expand my imagination, allow me to travel back in time and live in another place, expose me to new ideas and enlarge my knowledge and understanding, give me an escape from the pressures of life, increase my vocabulary, and are good company. I've always loved the way Jesus used stories (parables), to convey spiritual truths and theology. A book that gave a fresh perspective to one of those spiritual truths and challenged the way I view others was *What's So Amazing About Grace?* by Philip Yancey. Yancey quotes Helmut Thielicke who said, "When Jesus loved a guilt-ridden person and helped him, he saw in him an erring child of God. He saw in him a human being whom His Father loved and grieved over because he was going wrong. He saw him as God originally designed and meant him to be ..." Oh, how I long to see myself and fellow sinners like that!

I could go on sharing books that have resonated with my life. But the book impacting my life most of all is His Word, the Bible, which my father called "the grandest of books!"

*Gilbertson is a member of Elim Lutheran, Lake Stevens, Wash.*



*By Gracia Gilbertson*

# THE LOVE OF BOOKS

# RAISING THE NEXT GENERATION

*By Jason Holt*



**O**ur oldest child was married this summer, and the English rhyme, “something olde, something new,” has come to mind frequently. The invitation to review a book for this edition brought that rhyme into view with the idea of exploring two texts that have encouraged and engaged me with respect to youth ministry.

I will briefly review *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* by Eugene Peterson and *The Heart of Your Teen: An Insider Look at the Parent-Teen Relationship* by Lissy Rienow. My prayer is that a sampling of both will be helpful as you seek to pass on the faith to the next generation in your congregational context.

### Something Old

In 1980, Eugene Peterson released *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*. A second edition came at the turn of the century. In reading it for the first time two decades later, I think the tone remains very current. The subtitle captures its value for youth ministry: “Discipleship in an Instant Society.”

The biblical stance of standing with the Lord and walking in His ways provides a rich ground for making teenage disciples of Jesus.

Peterson turns to the Psalms, and specifically to the Songs of Ascents, to provide the discipleship training. The well-known translator for *The Message* version of the Bible utilizes his own wording of Psalms 120 through 134 for the passages. His insights on common Christian concepts of repentance, providence, and perseverance are given good treatment in

their own chapters. Themes that were particularly strengthening for my soul were on worship and on joy. Worship starts from the solid nature of God, which leads to the solid nature of our faith and, as a result, our life as worship. The Christian’s focus delivers joy by depending on the Lord’s ability to “bring rains to our drought-stricken lives.”

We join the psalmist in asking for the Lord to bring life and peace to us once again, and in the process, invite teenagers into the sphere of our influence to encounter Christ with the same prayer.

### Something New

*The Heart of Your Teen* records the recommendations of a young adult to parents of teenagers. Written when the author was 19 years old, Lissy Rienow takes a view that respects parents and their influence while expressing the common concerns and frustrations of today’s teenager.

Rienow tackles the areas of honor, siblings, technology, and dating with a surprisingly even-handed approach. She is willing to point out her

own faults during the adolescent years, while not allowing parents to simply dismiss this stage. Rienow forwards a depth of engagement that recognizes the spiritual influence of a parent.

“Stay aware of the launch angle of your teen,” she writes. Rienow’s terminology provides an impactful image. Whether you are a fan of NASA rockets or finger rockets, the ending trajectory is a direct result of the starting angle. How many of us as parents of teenagers have allowed the priorities of the world to overshadow the priorities of the Lord? How will our teenagers grow into godly wisdom if we refrain from training them in God’s truth?

Parenting is a road in the middle of two ditches. We need to be vigilant against the ditch on one side, deciding everything for our teenager. Rienow reminds readers that this external effort ends in a young adult bereft of internal convictions. The ditch on the other side of the road is offering zero guidance for our teenager. Rienow highlights that the passive parent is not a biblical parent. On the strong road, parents find communicating Christ and His truth through the relationship the Lord has given.

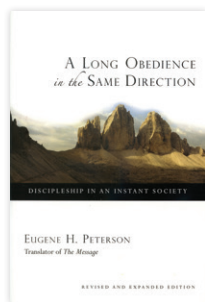
### Something Now

It is intriguing to me that both texts direct the reader’s attention to a “now” emphasis. Peterson, with pastoral posture, directs the gaze of the reader to the immediate impact of the Lord for an integrated faith in every area of one’s life. “The Author of the book is writing *us* into *his* book, we aren’t writing *him* into *ours*,” writes Peterson.

In a parallel way, Rienow appeals to parents to give proper attention to a relationship with their teenagers. The young adult’s perspective seeks to demonstrate that the efforts of fathers and mothers to share Jesus with their children is rooted in what Rienow terms a “heart connection.” The proverb that she returns to multiple times is that “relationship has to come before discipleship.” I am excited to see that the 2021 FLY Committee has invited Rienow to share a workshop with this focus at next year’s national youth gathering.

Originally written almost 40 years apart, these books by Peterson and Rienow both invite the Body of Christ to actively engage this new generation of young people with what the hymn writer Katherine Hankey called the “old, old story of Jesus and his love.” We know this timeless truth never changes.

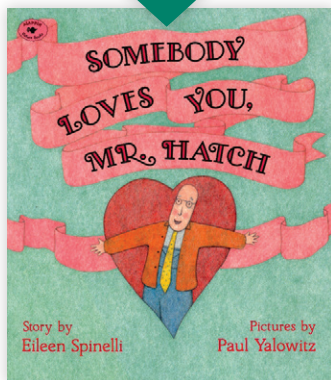
*Holt, a member of Living Hope Lutheran, Rogers, Minn., serves as the director of AFLC Youth Ministry.*



InterVarsity Press, 2019



Randall House, 2019



Simon and Schuster, 1996

## THE POWER OF TRUE LOVE

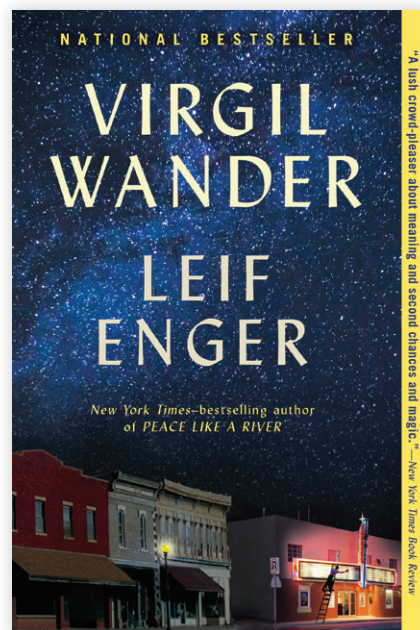
With five young children in our house, story books are an integral part of daily life. *Somebody Loves You, Mr. Hatch*, written by Eileen Spinelli, and illustrated by Paul Yalowitz, is a family favorite. We can't help smiling at the pictures and getting caught up in the tender story of Mr. Hatch's longing to love and be loved.

Meet Mr. Hatch. He's a grumpy, stingy, reclusive gentleman whose predictable world gets turned upside down by a heart-shaped package that arrives in the mail with an anonymous message: "Somebody Loves You." The words tumble around in his lonely heart until he feels like smiling! Mr. Hatch steps out of his house with newfound confidence.

Knowing he is loved transforms Mr. Hatch, week-by-week, into a generous, compassionate neighbor, whose smile befriends young and old. Until that awful day when Mr. Hatch discovers the package that changed his life was delivered by MISTAKE. Nobody loves him after all! Mr. Hatch deflates. When friends and neighbors catch wind of Mr. Hatch's sad heart, they cook up a surprise, to let him know the truth that he is indeed ... loved.

*Somebody Loves You, Mr. Hatch* is a secular book about human love. To that extent, it has limits, because human love fails us. But it delightfully brings up conversation about a higher love that has the power change us, freeing us to think beyond ourselves and live joyfully. "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Every time I turn the pages of this delightful story, I can't help tacking on a final phrase to the ending, just for my kids, as Mr. Hatch wipes the tears from his eyes, "Mr. Hatch remembered that most of all, God loved him."

—Christie Friestad, Camarillo, Calif.



Grove Atlantic, 2018

## Enger's long-awaited story is one to savor

Sometimes, with the best novelists, you have to wait a while between books. It's been 10 years waiting for Leif Enger's latest, *Virgil Wander*. And well worth it.

Virgil, the titular narrator, owns a crumbling movie theater in the moribund community of Greenstone, Minn., once a mining town. He's recovering from injuries sustained when he went over a cliff and into Lake Superior in his car. He now deals with minor, probably temporary, brain damage. This has changed some of his behavior, not always negatively.

Realizing he needs supervision, Virgil invites a new acquaintance, Norwegian Rune Eliassen, to move in with him. Rune came to town to find his son, whose existence he recently discovered. Unfortunately, the son disappeared a few years back, lost flying a plane over the lake. Rune makes fanciful kites, which he likes to fly over the same lake.

Rune's lost son left behind a beautiful wife (whom Virgil loves from afar) and a troubled son. Other characters include a little boy obsessed with catching a legendary big fish and an alcoholic handyman trying to win his wife back. There's also a celebrity son of the community, a scandalous filmmaker who has moved back home, purportedly to settle down and help the community. He even agrees to appear at the upcoming local festival—Hard Luck Days.

Meanwhile, Virgil has recurring visions of a man walking on the lake—and it's not Jesus.

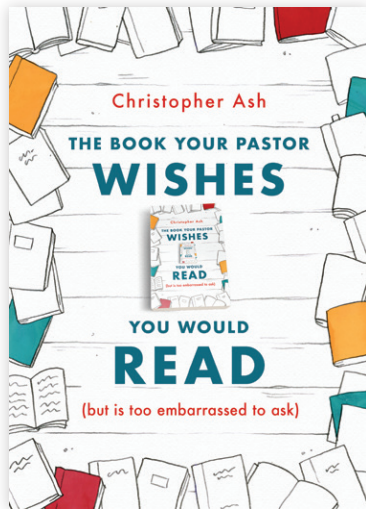
Most novels (and there's nothing wrong with this) are for following to find out what happens next. *Virgil Wander* is a book where you can savor each line and paragraph for its own sake, because the writing itself is a pleasure.

There's Christian content here, too—but it's parabolic, for those with eyes to see and ears to hear.

—Larry Walker, Robbinsdale, Minn.

# Caring for your pastor

(practical help)



The Good Book Company, 2019

Pastors and their wives can be some of the loneliest and most misunderstood people on earth. I don't think this is due to a lack of care or even indifference from a congregation, but rather is due to a not knowing *how* to demonstrate that care. This is why I am grateful for the little book by Christopher Ash, *The Book Your Pastor Wishes You Would Read (But Is Too Embarrassed to Ask)*.

Coming from the standpoint that your pastor is a person too (imagine that!), *The Book ...* is packed with practical advice and wisdom on how to care for the person ministering to you. More than just suggestions for what to buy when Pastor Appreciation Month comes around next October, Ash explores the ways we can bless and support our pastors on a deeper level.

My favorite chapter is titled, "Thoughtful Watchfulness." In this chapter, Ash says, "We want our pastors to make progress, both in their godliness of life and in their doctrine. We do not want them to be static, stuck, stationary. We long for them to be visibly growing." Ash goes on to exhort churches to keep watch over their pastors by providing them the resources they need to be encouraged and refreshed in their faith. These resources could include adequate time off, financial help to attend conferences, simple accountability for the pastor's personal goals, and considering a regular sabbatical schedule.

I recommend *The Book ...* to anyone who knows a pastor (hopefully, that is everyone reading this review!). While you read, ask God to help you better understand the heart of the man who is caring for you and how you can respond in kind.

—Andrea Christenson, Plymouth, Minn.

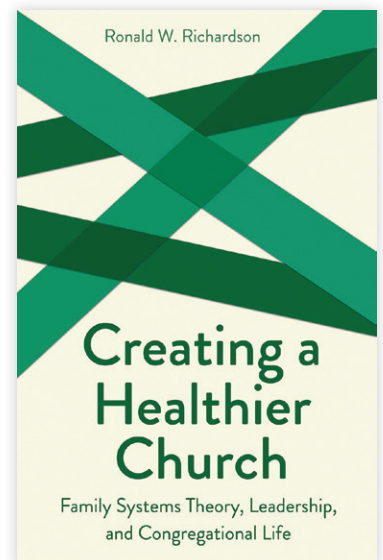
## NAVIGATING STRESS & CONFLICT

It's not too hard to imagine waking up on a cold winter morning and finding out the furnace went out and the sewer backed up at church. Now what? If you are a leader at the church what would be your response? Richardson takes the reader on a journey of two different responses from two different churches experiencing this scenario. He does so utilizing a systematic approach originally designed to look at how families react and function in the midst of stress. The originator of this approach was Dr. Murray Bowen, a physician and pioneer of family systems therapy. Dr. Richardson, a pastor and family therapist, recognized that congregations function in the same manner as families and adapted Bowen's work to help churches assess and better function in the face of stress and conflict.

This book is meant to be read by all who are either official or unofficial leaders in the church. *Creating a Healthier Church* is meant to be a tool to help leaders think about how they function in relation to others. Since human relations involve many seemingly complex facets, Richardson spends the majority of the book defining and illustrating various terms and concepts within this system. He does this using the reactions of congregational members from the two churches. He also uses Scripture to help illustrate the concept he is presenting.

At the end of each chapter Richardson provides helpful questions meant to stimulate your thinking, as well as for group discussion. The terminology can be a bit overwhelming if you're not familiar with this approach. However, a careful reading of the concepts presented will yield a constructive approach to stressful or conflict situations.

—Pastor Jerry Nelson, MS Marriage and Family Therapist



Augsburg Fortress, 1996

# Lutheran youth revival

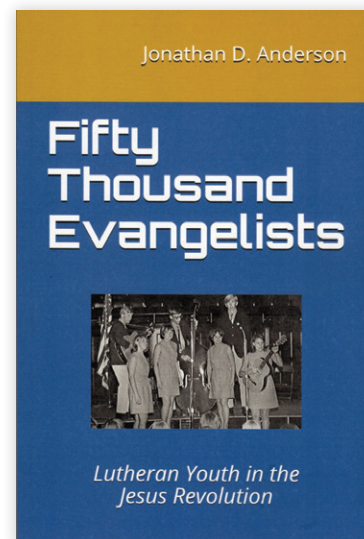
Civil unrest, distrust of the establishment, masses of young people defecting from the church—some of the headlines from 1960s America sound surprisingly familiar again today. But into that bleak landscape of more than 50 years ago, God unexpectedly intervened, raising up a dynamic youth culture known as the Jesus Revolution.

During that Revolution of the 1960s and '70s, young people in the Lutheran church experienced a substantial spiritual revival of their own. Across the nation, as if driven by an invisible impulse, thousands of them formed traveling gospel teams that shared the love of Jesus through music, witness, and one-on-one contact. Reaching out especially to their peers, these teams of young evangelists radiated from hundreds of Lutheran churches, scores of colleges both Lutheran and secular, and several organizations like Lutheran Youth Encounter and the Lutheran Evangelistic Movement. This unprecedented phenomenon continued for an entire generation until the cumulative task force of volunteer lay evangelists numbered well more than 50,000. The Free Lutheran Bible College's gospel and summer teams were just a few of the teams that originated during this era (and they are among the very few still in existence).

It's been my privilege to chronicle this story of the Lutheran gospel team movement in a book entitled *Fifty Thousand Evangelists: Lutheran Youth in the Jesus Revolution* (available on Amazon—search “Fifty Thousand Evangelists”). Whether you were part of that movement or belong to a younger generation, my desire is that you would be uplifted and edified to learn about the unique and tremendous work God did. Most of all, I hope you'll join me in praying that He would move in extraordinary ways again today.

—Jonathan Anderson, a freelance Lutheran historian,  
is a member of St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D.

(a movement)



Independent pub., 2019



Thomas Nelson, 2015

## THE ROOT OF CONFLICT

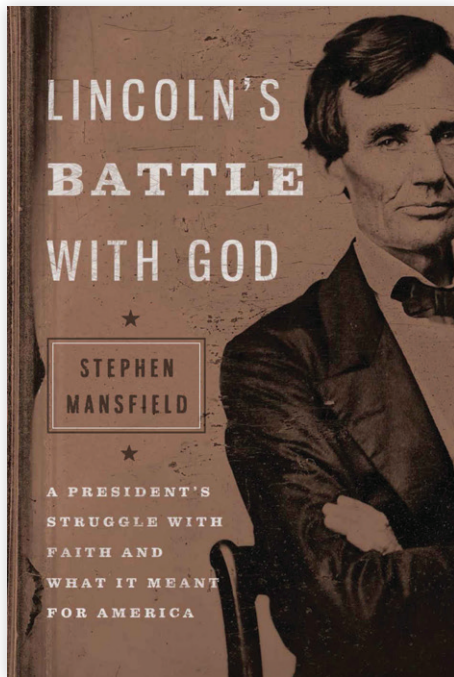
The congregation is a beautiful thing. Unfortunately, its beauty is often eclipsed by the petty arguments, frustrations, and personalities that don't seem to jive together. Let's face it, there's conflict. As you're reading this, you're probably still trying to figure out why “that member” did it again! You would never have done that! Brant Hansen, in his book *Unoffendable: How Just One Change Can Make All of Life Better*, addresses the root of that very conflict, sin. Even though it's literally in our nature, the moment someone sins against us we're both offended and surprised because: “I'm different. I'm better. I'm righteous.” But we're sinners, too.

This book is a necessary read for all. It exposes the depth of our own sin for the ugliness it is. But then we're reminded of God's grace, what God has done, who God is, and how God loves. The gospel is applied to you, the sinner, and gives you hope.

Hansen writes, “Yes, the world is broken. But don't be offended by it. Instead, *thank God* that He's intervened in it, and He's going to restore it to everything it was meant to be. His kingdom is breaking through, bit by bit. Recognize it and wonder at it” (40).

The author has a way of making you laugh until you realize you're laughing at yourself. As you begin to appreciate the work of God in Christ for you, you soon find yourself extending that same grace to your neighbor, yes, even “that neighbor.”

—Pastor Jon Langness, Deshler, Neb.



Thomas Nelson, 2012

# Endeavoring to understand God

## A president's religious journey

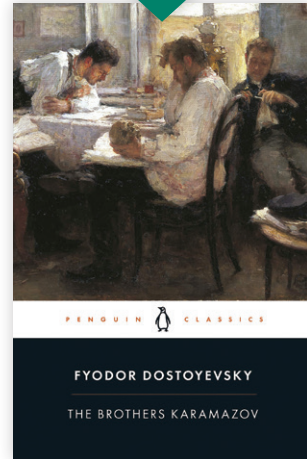
More than most people in history, President Abraham Lincoln has something for almost everybody to applaud, especially when it comes to his religious beliefs and practices. He was very knowledgeable about the Bible, referring to it often in speeches and looking to the Scriptures for direction. On the other hand, he was not a member of a church and he occasionally spoke disparagingly of churches and church leaders.

Stephen Mansfield writes about the complexity of Lincoln's spiritual beliefs in his book: *Lincoln's Battle with God: A President's Struggle with Faith and What It Meant for America*, published in 2012. Mansfield's portrayal of Lincoln is refreshingly honest. He is shown to be someone to whom many of us can relate.

Lincoln's younger years were difficult with many trials and much sorrow and loss. It resulted in him having doubts about whether God existed and, if He existed, whether He was good. Mansfield describes Lincoln's wrestling with God and what he believed. Mansfield also introduces his readers to the people and books that helped Lincoln work through his struggles. Lincoln remained skeptical of some of those who claimed to speak for God, but he grew in his faith in the grace and goodness of God.

Mansfield's book does an excellent job of helping us understand some of Lincoln's spiritual beliefs. It also gives an encouraging illustration of God working patiently in the life of someone with doubts and questions, and helping that person grow in faith.

—Pastor Craig Johnson, Astoria, Ore.



Penguin Classics, 2003  
Constance Garnett, trans.

## WHEN READING IS A LABOR OF LOVE

Sum this book up in 250 words? Not possible. It's too rich, too complex in its depth of exploring the nature of the human mind. But then again, that's what Fyodor Dostoyevsky does so well. Here is a novel written close to 150 years ago, and in it the struggles of man so closely mirrors ours today. You realize that man's flaws don't change, it's all about self. The characters highlight the complexities of man, from the obnoxious and self-centered father Fyodor Pavlovitch; to the older brother Dimitri whose passion is both his downfall and his saving grace; to the middle son Ivan, who believes in God so much that he claims to be an atheist. And then the youngest son, Alyosha, who lives his faith beautifully, but feels the most spiritually empty of all the sons.

Aside from the contrasts within the characters, there are the contrasts within the story as a whole. The absent father Fyodor pitted against the loving nature of Ilyusha's father, Captain Snegiryov. Or the petty and vengeful Smerdyakov who resented his (half) brothers for what they had, even though they didn't want what they had. And then the most wonderfully constructed of all the contrasts, the court case dealing with Dmitry's innocence or guilt in the murder of his father. The way the prosecutor takes individual facts and attempts to weave a conclusion from those, versus the way the defense attorney uses the story as a whole in his defense strategy, makes this one of the most compelling court dramas I've ever read.

I loved the *Brothers Karamazov* and will read it again, but I understand that it's a labor of love. The labor is worth it, though, to be able to partake in Dostoyevsky's observation of human nature.

—Pastor David Ryerson, Ishpeming, Mich.



B&H Publishing, 2018

## FREEDOM FROM COMPARISONS

*Why Her*, a short Bible study book written for Proverbs 31 Ministries, discusses our human propensity for comparison. In 12 quick chapters, author Nicky Koziarz guides readers through the Bible story of Leah and Rachel. Using the impact of the rivalry that overshadowed their story, Koziarz gives readers insight into our modern dissatisfaction with our own life circumstances and tendency to compare our lives with others.

I was drawn to this book because of the discussion about comparisons. I personally have noticed the numerous times I have thought, “It must be nice ... ]” about a blessing another has been enjoying or feeling as my meager attempts at service do not rise to the level of others in my circle. The opportunity to consider a little of God’s perspective was welcome.

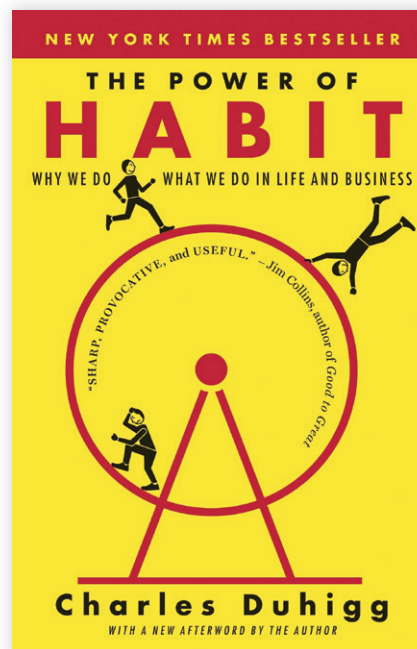
Koziarz offers six truths to study:

- You need to be honest.
- See it like it really is.
- You don’t always have to be okay.
- You didn’t do anything wrong.
- Her gain is not your loss.
- Let the success of others encourage, not discourage you.

With two chapters devoted to each truth, readers are given excellent examples that are backed up with Bible verses and some very searching questions for the reader to ponder as well as Bible verses to study and think through.

I thoroughly enjoyed Koziarz’ honesty as she shares lessons she has learned in writing this book. If you are looking for a seriously impactful Bible study to help you stretch your faith and attitudes, I recommend this one.

—Lois Grothe, Astoria, Ore.



Penguin Random House, 2014

## Success can be built into the everyday

How do habits work? Why are habits powerful and what does it take to change one? How can we seek to have a new desired behavior become a habit? These are a few questions Charles Duhigg navigates while encompassing why we have habits and how they are formed.

While I read this book, I often set it down to consider my own personal habits, or lack thereof. With my goals in mind, what routines could I put in place to help me be successful? How could I successfully develop or change current habits? Duhigg’s approach, paired with examples from many facets of business and life, help to open the door on why previous attempts at exercise, weight loss, productivity, etc., may have failed because of the fundamental misunderstanding of what needs to happen to break a habit or add a new one.

Much of our Christian lives are dedicated to devotion and habits. I don’t always want to read my Bible, pray, or journal, but having a solidified routine in place helps to continue this devotional practice. In the same vein, I don’t always want to exercise, but having a familiar habit makes me feel “off” when I miss a day.

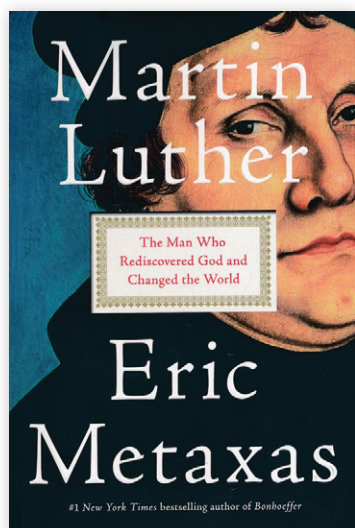
Are there changes in your life you want to see take place? Are there bad habits you want to break or new behaviors you want to instill on a more regular basis? Or maybe there are ways you want to reach your congregation or community. Duhigg gives multiple examples of organizations bordering on failure but achieving success by focusing on patterns which shaped everyday aspects of life. For your context, are there underlying patterns that could help you meet people in a new way?

Duhigg does an outstanding job leading the reader to understand why it’s vital to understand habits as we desire to achieve success. Whether in your life or ministry, this book gives you an incredible advantage as you navigate changes in life, church, or business.

—Jon Nelson, Golden Valley, Minn.

# Luther's life & legacy

(audiobook)



Viking, 2017

I listened to *Martin Luther* by Eric Metaxas during my morning walks and in the car. It was a great experience as it was narrated by the author himself. I enjoyed one of his other best sellers, *Bonhoeffer, Pastor, Prophet, Spy* in all three formats—eBook, Audible, and hardcover. I decided to use my Audible credits to listen to this work, which I now have in hardcover, as well.

I'm not by any means the Luther scholar I should be, which is why I wanted to listen to this book. I was not disappointed. Not having anything to compare this to, I can't say how it measures up to other Luther biographies. But Metaxas was certainly detailed and his insights were helpful to me. It was like watching his life on film, as I pictured Luther's childhood, his education, and his time as a monk at the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt, Germany. Metaxas' description of Luther's trip to Rome was so detailed, I could picture the journey in my mind. Later in the book, I was delighted to read the author's re-creation of Luther's time in Wartburg Castle, where he lived in disguise as Junker George. Metaxas skillfully brings forth many visual pictures of Luther's life. It was heartwarming and emotional to listen to the author describe Luther's relationship with his wife, Katherine, and their children.

Using his excellent talents of writing, and putting together other accurate biographical works, I felt Metaxas did an excellent job. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in a very detailed picture of Luther's life, family, and legacy. I would also recommend the Audible format.

—Pastor Tom Tuura, Stover, Mo.

## SUSTAINING A HEALTHY CHURCH

"Is your church dying from self-inflicted wounds?" "Leading a church would be a lot easier if we didn't have to deal with people." "God did not put the church at that address by mistake, there is a plan." "Cultural Christianity is dead."

These are just a few of the most thought-provoking quotes from the book *Scrappy Church* by Thom Rainer. *Scrappy Church* is not for the faint of heart. In it, Rainer gives a thorough review of those things that may be driving your church to extinction.

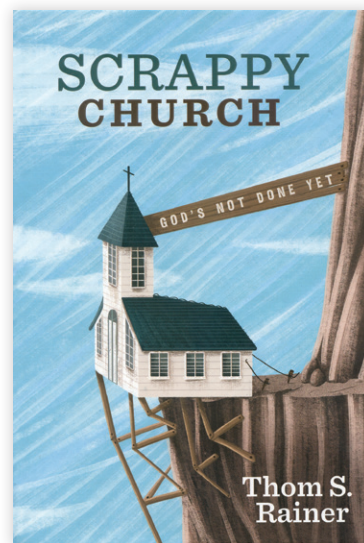
Author of more than 20 books dealing with church health, Rainer takes an honest look—through the eyes of members, leaders, and visitors—at how a church can kill itself without even realizing it. But he does not leave you hanging on for dear life. Rainer also gives readers a blueprint of actionable steps to take to turn the church around.

Rainer's key characteristic of a healthy church is found in his title, "scrappy," and his key action for any church member is prayer. He challenges congregations to remain positive, partner with area churches rather than considering them the enemy, and focus on outreach.

Under his blueprint for preparation, Rainer lists three areas to address: "outward deluge," "welcome readiness," and "back-door closure." None of these points can be met honestly until the church undergoes an attitude adjustment. And it is not just the members, but also the leaders and even the pastor who need to take part in this step. These three items focus on the structure of the church as a welcoming body of Christ.

I recommend *Scrappy Church* as a means to build or maintain the health of your church.

—Michelle Edgel, Hagerstown, Md.



B&H Publishing, 2019

A close-up portrait of a lion's face, looking directly at the camera. The lion has a thick, brown mane and intense orange eyes. The image is framed by a dark teal border. Overlaid on the top left of the lion's face is the text "By Jason Gudim" in a white, cursive script. Overlaid on the bottom left of the lion's face is the title "LEWIS: CREATIVE GENIUS" in large, bold, teal capital letters.

*By Jason Gudim*

# LEWIS: CREATIVE GENIUS

There is much to commend in C. S. Lewis' series *The Chronicles of Narnia* as a whole and *The Magician's Nephew* in particular.

Lewis' handling of good versus evil is particularly excellent. Much has been made in the past couple of decades of the Christian response to magic and sorcery in popular fiction—especially in books and movies like the *Harry Potter* series. Here is not the place to examine those discussions and arguments.

Lewis, however, handles the question of magic as a matter of morality. Aslan's "deep magic" is a way of describing the indescribable mysteries of God (particularly when it comes to the resurrection scene in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*) without falling into heresy or blasphemy. In contrast, the sorcery of humans like Uncle Andrew and Queen Jadis is always described in terms of a corrupt perversion of the good "magic."

Lewis takes up the question of evil in great detail throughout *The Magician's Nephew*. Self-justification is condemned. When Uncle Andrew excuses his manipulative opportunism, and when Queen Jadis excuses her oppressive tyranny, both are identified as wickedness. This juxtaposition allows the reader to have some space for self-examination. If one is reading carefully and paying attention, the faults of the characters in Narnia are never presented as someone else's problem. They are all realities we each have to wrestle with as they manifest themselves in our own lives.

Another of my favorite features of *The Magician's Nephew* is Lewis' vividness in describing the scenery. As you read through the pages of the book, the various locales become real places in your imagination. You can almost breathe the cold, lifeless, stale air of Charn. In contrast, Lewis' description of the "wood between the worlds" takes you there. You feel the warm, peaceful serenity of the place as the words jump off the page and into your mind.

Finally, and the real reason why *The Magician's Nephew* is my favorite book in the series, is the description of Aslan creating Narnia. In my opinion, these are some of the best pages of fiction ever written. I get goosebumps every single time I read this account.

In a few minutes, Digory came to the edge of the wood and there he stopped. The Lion was singing still. But now the song had once

more changed. It was more like what we should call a tune, but it was also far wilder. It made you want to run and jump and climb. It made you want to shout. It made you want to rush at other people and either hug them or fight them. It made Digory hot and red in the face.

What follows, and the vivid detail with which Lewis describes the creation of Narnia, is simply splendid and astounding. I can read this section of the book over and over again and never get sick of it. It is truly remarkable prose—a masterpiece.

I also think Lewis' imagination, and especially here in *The Magician's Nephew* (and throughout *The Chronicles of Narnia* for that matter), really puts us as modern-day Christians in the 21st century to shame. This may be a sweeping generalization, and those are generally unhealthy, but much of modern Christian art has devolved into rote emotionalism. We're not interested in creative descriptions of the attributes of God, how He works in the world, or how we as humans exist and interact in His world. We're interested in generating an emotional experience so we can be convinced something "spiritual" has happened.

In contrast, Lewis lets our imaginations run wild, and aids us in getting to that point. He provides the context, setting, and plot that allows us to paint the story in our minds. This gift is on full display as Lewis guides us through Aslan's song during the creation of Narnia. I've often used this section of *The Magician's Nephew* to inform my own reading of Genesis 1 and 2. I cannot believe God was speaking in monotone when He created the heavens, the earth, and all that is in it.

Lewis' mastery of the English language and his vibrant creativity are on full display throughout the entire series. I whole-heartedly recommend reading it if you haven't done so already. And if you have read *The Chronicles of Narnia*, each one of these books is always worth a re-read. You won't be disappointed.

*Gudim serves Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn.*



HarperCollins, 2009



AMBASSADOR  
PUBLICATIONS

## Resources

These titles along with other C. S. Lewis books and many other resources are available to purchase from Ambassador Publications. To order or to search for additional publications, please visit the publishing website:

[ambassadorpublications.org](http://ambassadorpublications.org)

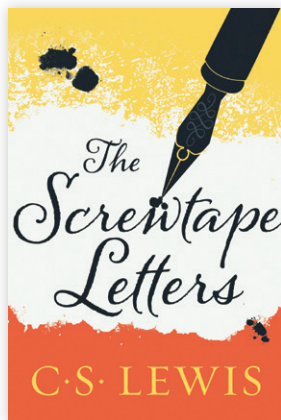
**email:**

[parished@aflc.org](mailto:parished@aflc.org)

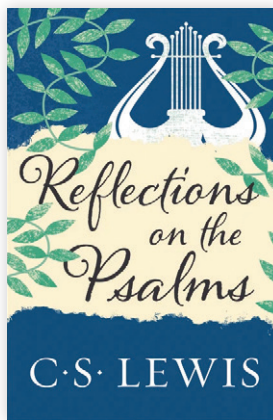
**phone:**

763.412.2010

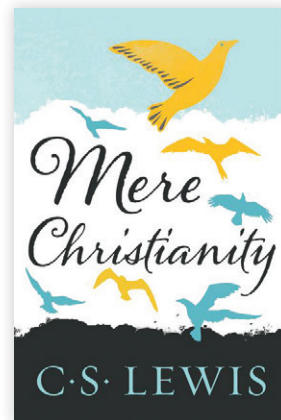
C. S. Lewis



A classic Lewis masterpiece of religious satire that entertains readers with its sly and ironic portrayal of human life and foibles from the vantage point of the worldly-wise devil Screwtape in correspondence with his nephew Wormwood, providing an engaging account of temptation—and triumph over it.



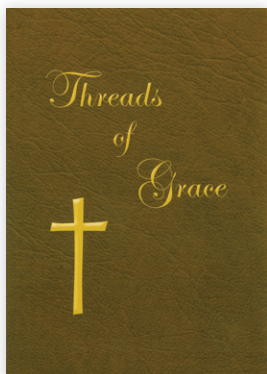
C. S. Lewis considers the most poetic portions from Scripture and what they tell us about God, the Bible, and faith, making clear the significance of the Psalms in our daily lives and reminding us of their power to illuminate moments of grace.



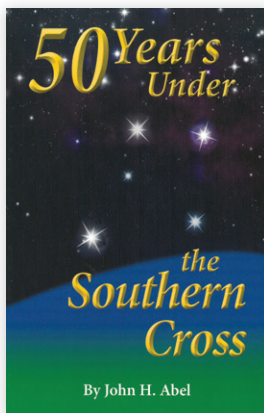
In one of the most popular introductions to Christian faith ever written, with scintillating brilliance, Lewis provides an unequalled opportunity for believers and nonbelievers alike to hear a powerful, rational case for the Christian faith.



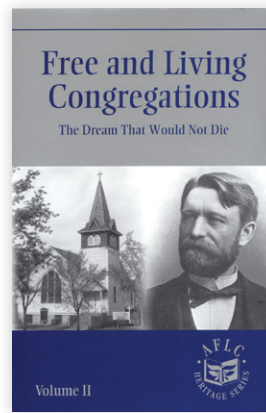
Reflections on the 1890's revival among Norwegian-Americans. "The Revival in the Nineties was not a structured movement of evangelistic outreach, but a spontaneous movement of the Holy Spirit among an immigrant people."



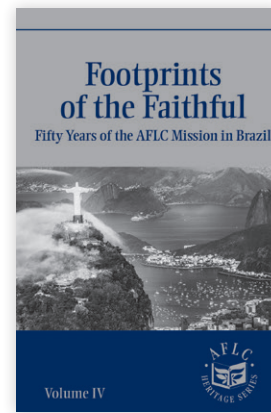
The daily fabric of our lives is woven with threads of expectations and commitments, laughter and tears, joy and discouragement, mundane routine and unpredictable events. This daily devotional book shows that in the midst of it all, the unbroken thread entwined throughout the life of the believer is God's grace in Christ.



An autobiography of Pastor John and Ruby Abel, missionaries to Brazil. Follow the lifetime missionary adventures of the first AFLC missionary family.



Learn about the early history of the AFLC and the purpose of the annual conference, while gaining a biblical understanding of the congregation and the role of pastors and lay people. Correlating study guide available.



From a primitive Brazilian frontier to developing cities, God prepared the groundwork, provided workers to plant the seed, and brought about growth through the Word of God. These historic accounts demonstrate God's hand guiding, sustaining, and expanding the work of AFLC—Brazil to the present.



# DEFINED BY THE LORD

BY JONNI SLIVER

**I**t is easy to think of our lives as a series of mileposts: moments that marked our lives, or changed our lives in some way. The mileposts might be happy ones—the day we received our diploma, the day we met our one true love, the moment we discovered we were expecting a baby. The mile posts might be difficult ones—the day we lost a parent or a child, the moment we read the letter saying our application to university was declined, the hour the doctor explained the results of the examination. The mile posts might be communal—the night the Twins won the World Series (I had to include it!), the *months* that revolved around Covid-19.

Though these mile posts are real, and certainly impact our lives, none of them define who we are. If we focus on the individual events, they can control our lives. Then, our peace, joy, and contentment are dependent on the events, or we have an excuse for bad

behavior—the event made us do it. Both as a source and an excuse, mileposts lay a poor foundation. There is only one thing that defines us, and that is our relationship with the living God. Every other event in our lives has value as it relates to the one true standard of God alone.

I say that because I am surrounded day by day with little people. At this exact moment the median age in the Miriam Home (not including staff) is 6 years old. At this tender age most of these precious ones have big mileposts in their lives—abandonment, abuse, witnessing the humiliation of their mothers, the arrest of their fathers, the perverse behavior of their families. And I often hear the representatives from social services comment on how sad it is that the children are just like their families. It is as if the family the children came from and experiences they have had have already determined how they will be as adults. Praise the Lord, it isn't true! We know the One who makes all things new! And I have the privilege of seeing it every day.

When social services brought Marcio to us they advised us that he was trouble. In the first week he demonstrated an advanced knowledge of female anatomy and a vocabulary that appears to come from an angry sailor. Marcio is only 4 years old, but people were talking about him as if his future was already set. Just two weeks into his time with us Marcio asked Aunt Eva if he could pray at bedtime (the house moms pray for each child before they sleep). Eva said yes and Marcio prayed for two things: that God would “fix



Derik's mouth” (another 4 year old child who has difficulty pronouncing several letters), and take away the pain in Aunt Eva's back. It is exciting to see him learn to pray and witness his compassion for others.

At such a tender age, Marcio already has multiple mileposts in his life. Many are simply tragic, others are new and wonderful. But what becomes of Marcio's life all depends on his learning to bring every milepost to the Father to bless, to heal, and to transform—all to reveal God's good plans for him.

God has precious plans for each one of our kiddos, from the babes in arms to the tough-as-nails teenagers. Praise the Lord, He is able to heal every wound and draw young hearts to Him!

*Sliver is an AFLC missionary serving at the Miriam Home in Campo Mourão, Brazil.*



## Student Life Center nears enclosure

Construction of the Student Life Center at the Free Lutheran Bible College continued throughout June and July mainly with exterior work, enclosure of much of the lower level, and expansion of the roof on the south side of the building (top). The south portico (right), will feature a patio area. Above is the future gym.

# WMF

WOMEN'S  
MISSIONARY  
FEDERATION



# CHANGE IN DIRECTION

BY MICHAEL ROKENBRODT

**L**evi the tax collector made his greatest life choice in an instant (Luke 5:27-28). Many of my changes in direction have also come unexpectedly. WMF President Lavonne West was kind enough to invite me to address you regarding a more recent change of direction.

My first post was in a public classroom in rural Wabasso, Minn. I loved it and had no intentions of abandoning this role. But one spring day, I walked into the superintendent's office to get signed off for a coaching event and walked out informed a district building had

closed and my position was being offered to a more tenured staff member.

This led to my second post in a parochial high school outside of Chicago. The new position, overt in ministry and Christian education, made me wonder why I hadn't sought out such an opportunity sooner.

But a conversation with God after a stirring campfire devotion suddenly led me out of the American classroom and into the AFLC Ugandan mission field. Serving seasonally for the first half of every year, I now have half a decade in Uganda behind me and more in front.

But I was to be surprised yet again. Since coming to Uganda, I have balanced the second half of my year with ministry at a Minnesota camp during the summer and fall seasons. In fact, I have been faithful to this post since 2006. It has come to the point where the camp has suggested I surrender my position to the less tenured, those



young folks who often make their start in lifelong ministry careers at summer camp.

A suggestion from my World Missions director combined with a vehicle collision this January has led me to pursue seminary education at the Free Lutheran Seminary this fall. We have forecasted a commitment of nine years, so that I might continue to serve in Uganda, switching off seasons in order to complete the necessary course loads. God willing, a master's in divinity will open more unexpected doors in the AFLC as well as support my work overseas. Thank you for your prayers and support.

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



## 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)**

The opening service (Aug. 10) and Mission Festival service (Aug. 11) will be live-streamed at 7 p.m. at:

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



## 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

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

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

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

New Richmond, Wis. (13 miles)  
• AmeriVu Inn and Suites:  
715-246-4606

• AmericInn by Wyndham:  
715-246-3993  
• Best Western Plus: 715-243-5600

## JUNE MEMORIALS

### AED

Pastor Lyle Twite  
Beatrice Anderson

### Bible College

Ruth Claus  
Cynthia Erickson  
Vernon Russum  
Clifford Holm  
Beatrice Anderson  
John Larson

### General Fund

Beatrice Anderson  
Clifford Holm

### Home Missions

Madeline Thorsgard

### Journey Missions

Vernon Russum  
Amanda Breden

### Parish Education

Vernon Russum  
Amanda Breden

### Seminary

Pastor Roger David  
Clifford Holm

Beatrice Anderson  
Cynthia Erickson

### World Missions

Pastor John Abel  
Vernon Russum  
Amanda Breden  
Irene Westby  
Vernon & Dorothy  
Russum

### SIT

Pastor Roger David

### WMF

Neil Nelson  
Jerry Kerbaugh  
Gerda Nylander  
Kent Quanbeck  
Iola Rokke

... in honor of

### World Missions

Ruby Abel

### Parish Education

Marian  
Christopherson



### Clifford Holm

Clifford Odien Holm, 94, of Roseau, Minn., who served as building and grounds supervisor, and later as cook on the campus of the Free Lutheran Schools, died June 8. Born Feb. 24, 1926, he married Ruby Besserud in 1948. She preceded him in death. Surviving are six children, 24 grandchildren, and 36 great-grandchildren. A memorial service was held June 13 at Rose Free Lutheran, Roseau. Burial with military honors by the Roseau Memorial Honor Guard was held in Badger Creek Cemetery, Badger, Minn.

## AFLC to host All Boards, Pastor's Conference events

The AFLC administration staff are planning to host All Boards Oct. 5-6 on the Plymouth, Minn., campus. Members of AFLC boards and committees are requested to attend the annual event, in which the work of each AFLC department will be shared. The AFLC Pastor's Conference will be held following All Boards, Oct. 6-8 at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis.



# MILITARY CHAPLAINCY: A UNIQUE CALLING

BY CHAPLAIN JOHN EIDSMOE

**P**astors and future pastors, are you looking for a field of ministry? A field that includes young people, displaced from home and family, under stress and sensible of danger? A ministry that combines service to Christ with a life of adventure and challenge?

If so, the military chaplaincy may be for you. Since colonial days, the military has recognized that its men fight better if their spiritual needs are met. And the church has worked through military channels to supply those needs. A few have challenged the constitutionality of military chaplains. But the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committed performed an exhaustive study of the First Amendment in 1853 and concluded,

The clause speaks of “an establishment of religion.” What is meant by that expression? ... Our fathers were true lovers of liberty, and utterly opposed to any constraint upon the rights of conscience. ... But ... they did not intend to send our armies and navies forth to do battle for their country without any national recognition of that God on whom success or failure depends ...

The chaplain’s life is challenging: military discipline, preaching in chapel, praying for

commander’s calls, counseling troubled soldiers and their families, conducting clemency evaluations for soldiers convicted by court-martial, being on the line with the troops and sharing their problems, and making sure they know their chaplain is someone with whom they can talk.

One chaplain supervisor told me, “When I arrive on base, I approach soldiers at random and ask, ‘Who’s your chaplain?’ If they don’t know, the chaplain and I will talk about it.”

And that’s in peacetime. In war, the chaplain will be on the front lines with his troops, risking his life with theirs, praying with them in the hour of death. One hundred American chaplains were killed in action during World War II, including four Navy chaplains who gave up their life jackets and went down with their ship and were last seen linking arms and singing hymns.

And this age presents unique challenges. The requirement that chaplains meet the spiritual needs of all military members requires diplomacy for those of us who believe everyone needs Jesus Christ. You may face a commander who doesn’t think you should pray in the name of Jesus Christ, or a social actions officer who thinks you should perform gay marriages. But in general, evangelical chaplains fare well.

Not all chaplains are full-time soldiers.

Some enter the reserves or the national and state guard, often supplementing a pastoral ministry. Retirement benefits plus medical and other benefits after 20 years of service can enable a pastor to serve a home mission church or on the mission field. And chaplain assistant positions are available for laypersons who do not have seminary training.

Currently the AFLC has a shortage of military chaplains. With Chaplain (Lt. Col. Ret.) Craig Benson’s retirement and my impending retirement, we need new chaplains to fill the ranks. If you believe active or reserve military chaplaincy could be for you, please contact Chaplain Craig Benson or me.

*Eidsmoe is a chaplain (colonel) with the Mississippi State Guard and senior counsel for the Foundation for Moral Law.*

## PEOPLE &amp; PLACES

**Pastor Wayne Hjermstad** is serving as interim pastor at Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn.

**Pastor Kerwin Sletto** retired from his role as a chaplain with Altru Health System's pastoral services department, Grand Forks, N.D., on May 1. He will continue to live in Grand Forks.

**Pastor Mark Olson**, Minneapolis, is serving as interim pastor at Zion Lutheran, Dexter, Minn., and Mt. Sion Lutheran, Kasson, Minn. He recently finished work as the chief academic officer at the Free Lutheran Schools, Plymouth, Minn., after guiding the schools through the accreditation process.

**Pastor David Nelson** has resigned from Oiland Free Lutheran and Badger Creek Free Lutheran, Badger, Minn., and will move to Marshall, Minn.

**David Handsaker**, a 2020 graduate of the Free Lutheran Seminary, was ordained and installed July 26 at St. Paul's Lutheran, Cloquet, Minn., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, officiating.

**Pastor Tim Carlson** will be installed Aug. 9 at Timberland Ringeby Free Lutheran, Barronett, Wis., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, officiating.

**Pastor Will Cole**, Gastonia, N.C., has been accepted onto the AFLC fellowship roster. He has accepted a call to serve St. Matthew Lutheran, Millerstown, Pa. Cole graduated from Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, Ontario. He is married to Nicole and they have two children, Martin (6), and Cynthia (2). Cole is the author of two books, *Bumps and Bruises: Making It Through Alive* and *When We Say I Do: A Guide to Love and Marriage*. Cole also has a YouTube channel ministry called "Healing Hearts Lutheran Ministries."

**Erin Tormanen**, a 2020 graduate of the Free Lutheran Seminary, will be ordained and installed Aug. 30 at Our Savior's Free Lutheran, Stanley, N.D., and First English Lutheran of Lostwood, with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, officiating.

**Pastor Paul Nash**, former director of AFLC Home Missions, has started Shamgar Ministries, which focuses on mobilizing men for ministry.



## Pastor Kenneth Thoreson

Kenneth Keith Thoreson, 86, of Janesville, Wis., died July 14 at Door County Medical Center, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.

Born June 25, 1934, he was the son of Kenneth and Marion (Foreman) Thoreson. He married Marilyn Yunk on June 25, 1955.

He graduated from Mary D Bradford High School, Kenosha, Wis., and attended University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and UW-Madison. In 1953, he began working at General Motors, where he became a maintenance supervisor and later a substance abuse counselor in the 1970s. He was invited to speak in many places throughout Wisconsin and Illinois about substance abuse and his newfound faith in Jesus Christ. He taught Sunday school and was a Luther League advisor. He played guitar with a group he formed called the Gospel Chords and was also a chalk artist. In 1974, he attended the Free Lutheran Seminary and then returned to his former position as a supervisor at GM in Janesville. He became a licensed pastor with the AFLC in 1976 and was ordained in 1979. He served Bethany Lutheran, Brodhead, Wis., for more than 17 years while working at GM. He served Trinity Free Lutheran, Janesville, Wis. He retired from GM in 1989 and went into the ministry full time after completing his seminary training through the Summer Institute of Theology. In 1996, he accepted a call to Our Savior's Lutheran and Alma Free Lutheran in Argyle, Minn. In 2003 they moved to Sebring, Fla., where he served as minister at Tanglewood Community. He served as interim pastor at Peace Free Lutheran, Canal Winchester, Ohio, and St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran, Gifford, Ill. He retired in 2019 to Washington Island, Wis. He traveled extensively for evangelistic meetings, using his talents and gifts throughout Canada, the Dakotas, Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin. Ken and son, Leif, traveled overseas to Slovakia, Poland, and Czech Republic, preaching, singing and presenting chalk art. Two of Pastor Ken's parishioners supported a website as a gift to him, kenthoreson.com, which shows his art and musical talent.

Surviving are his wife; six children and an adopted daughter: Keni Christiansen; Todd (Karen) Thoreson, Owen, Wis.; Christian (Christina) Thoreson, Gayleville, Ala.; Layne Thoreson, Huntington, Ind.; Leif (Norma) Thoreson, Washington Island; and Erika (Rob) Balza, Luxemburg, Wis.; and Debra Rentz, Bemidji, Minn.; and several grandchildren.

He will be laid to rest at East Luther Valley Cemetery, Beloit, Wis. Due to COVID-19 the family has decided there will not be any funeral or committal arrangements.

## AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-June 30, 2020

FUND	REC'D IN JUNE	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$45,014	\$206,667	\$222,441
Evangelism	7,431	49,496	62,368
Youth Ministries	10,980	56,444	59,062
Parish Education	12,508	68,714	89,257
Seminary	18,936	146,188	134,691
Bible College	21,980	205,284	292,586
Home Missions	43,878	176,425	195,746
World Missions	25,642	187,771	235,249
Personal Support	51,412	385,665	309,472
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$237,781</b>	<b>\$1,482,654</b>	<b>\$1,600,873</b>

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

# READING ... AND WRITING

Our readers are still living in quarantine days. Even if the regulations have been slightly relaxed in some areas, many people are spending more time at home ... and doing more reading. While planning an upcoming issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*, your editorial staff sought to



Pastor Robert Lee

learn what some of our people are reading and to report it to our church family. Perhaps readers will be introduced to new books that strike their interest or be reminded of books that need to be read again.

There are also some among us who have written books, and it's right to recognize them, too. Perhaps our most prolific author is Larry (Lars) Walker, former AFLC Schools librarian. He has penned a series of engaging novels in a Viking historical fantasy mode, which one may order from Amazon. He's also a Norwegian translator, and his most recent work is *Viking Legacy* by Dr. Torgrim Titlestad.

Elise Parsley, a graduate of our Free Lutheran Bible College (FLBC), is the bestselling author and illustrator of a delightful series of children's books, the most recent of which is *If You Ever Want to Bring A Pirate to Meet Santa, Don't!* She's a busy young mother and wife of Pastor Jarrod Hylden.

A copy was sent to me during the last holiday season of a little book of Christmas devotions, entitled *Sanctuary Midst*, by Karen L. Straszheim, who worships with the Stavanger congregation, Garden City, Iowa. It was especially interesting to see that the illustrations were done by Matthew Reiersen, an FLBC graduate. The book also may be ordered from Amazon.

Are you interested in AFLC Missions? Then there are two "musts" that should be added to your reading list: *Footprints of the Faithful: 50 Years of the AFLC Mission in Brazil* by Loiell Dyrud. This book is part of the AFC Heritage Series. The second is *Fifty Years under the Southern Cross*, by the late Pastor John Abel, pioneer AFLC missionary.

Another book in the Heritage Series, *Free and Living Congregations: The Dream That Would Not Die*, contains chapters written by several AFLC authors, and reading it will help you to be better acquainted with our church fellowship. P.S. There's a study guide that can be ordered with it. *Threads of Grace*, a daily devotional written by many AFLC writers, is available in hard or soft cover, and as an e-book. All of the books in the Heritage Series, including treasures from the past by Rosenius and Saarnivaara, plus the Abel book, are available through the AFLC parish education office. Check out the catalog online or call to request a copy, and you will discover what an excellent selection of resources is offered. (See page 16.)

The current project for the Heritage Series is a collection of the writings of the late Dr. Francis Monseth, dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary, entitled *One Thing I Seek*. Hopefully the next project will be a long-awaited history of the AFLC, which I hope to complete soon. I also wrote an account of the "Revival in the '90s" entitled *A New Springtime*, an important foundation of the Free Lutheran movement in America.

The Internet provides a significant second pulpit for some of our pastors and their writings. Craig Johnson provides readers with a monthly devotional at [cjhasgoodnews.com](http://cjhasgoodnews.com); Nick Schultz and others (Luke Berntson, Alex Amiot, Dan Antal, Jarrod Hylden) write for [servantspen.com](http://servantspen.com); Andrew Olson presents a unique

perspective on [thepastorskidspodcast.org](http://thepastorskidspodcast.org); and J. Christian Andrews does a weekly "vlog" on YouTube entitled Lump of Clay. And don't forget Andrea Christenson, another FLBC graduate, wife of an AFLC schools' staff member, who offers book reviews, writings, and devotionals at [andreachristenson.com](http://andreachristenson.com). Pastor Kent Sperry writes a blog called "Preaching the Word" at [pastorkent.blogspot.com](http://pastorkent.blogspot.com) and three Twin Cities Pastors (Jason Gudim, Brett Boe, and Brian Ricke) produce "Being Lutheran" a podcast featuring the Augsburg Confession.

Speaking of writers, it would be sad indeed if we did not recognize the long list of willing and gifted women and men who serve the Lord and bless our AFLC family every month through the pages of *The Lutheran Ambassador*. Thank you all!

Forgive me if I've forgotten anyone. Keep reading and writing, dear readers!



## Remembering Bea Anderson 1928-2020

Bea and I first got acquainted during gatherings of pastors and wives during the 1970s when we were in the same district. After her husband, Ken, died, she moved to the Twin Cities and became secretary/administrative assistant to two AFLC presidents, one of whom was me. I was totally unprepared for the position, and it was Bea who told me what to do and when to do it, sometimes with a word of encouragement when she sensed it was most needed. She loved the Lord and loved our Free Lutheran church family, and enjoyed insulting birthday cards. It was my great privilege to serve with her.

Blessed be her memory.

*building the base*

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# FINDING GOD'S WILL: GODLY COUNSEL

BY PASTOR DAVID JOHNSON

*"Where there is no guidance the people fall,  
But in abundance of counselors there is  
victory" (Proverbs 11:14).*

**T**wo articles ago, I began this series on finding God's will in a given situation. We often struggle to find just the right course of action in life, especially when pressured or bound up in fear, something Satan loves to use to his advantage. As a guide for our study, I mentioned the little harbor community that put a sequence of three lights in the bay to direct ships safely into port. For our purposes, those three lights directing us into God's will are: God's Word, good and godly counsel, and the discernment of the Holy Spirit. And it is the second of these three that we are addressing here.

The story is told of a young man who was known to be prone to hasty and emotional decisions. Well, one day he was working in his garage when some sparks from the grinder he was using started a pile of oily rags on fire. In his panic and haste,

he grabbed the nearest container of liquid nearby and poured it on the smoldering pile. Sadly, the container was red, and the word gasoline was emboldened on its side. You can imagine the result of that rash decision.

In life, there are often times when we face challenges that don't have a particular "chapter and verse" biblical remedy. The man in our story could search all day for a verse that would instruct him in the proper way to attack an oily rag fire in his garage. But he wouldn't find anything. And there are other such events in life that go beyond revealed biblical instructions. In which case we need to seek out good and godly voices, mentors, and counselors who will give us wise and balanced instruction. We need trustworthy peers and confidants to guide us faithfully in areas that are beyond our experience or "pay-grade," as the saying goes. Scripture is filled with these kinds of exhortations, especially Proverbs.

"A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel ... The fear of the Lord

is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:5, 7).

"Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser, Teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:9-10).

"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel" (Proverbs 12:15).

Over and over again, we're given these instructions, first go to God, and then seek out as many godly counselors as possible. Set our hearts on pursuing the priorities of God first, but don't disregard the wisdom of those who are further down the road than ourselves, or who may have experiences that we lack. And remember, don't panic when times get tough, or the pressure is on. It is the fool who grabs the gasoline when the fire extinguisher is near at hand.

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*Johnson serves Living Faith Lutheran,  
Boyertown, Pa.*