

# LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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## THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

MAY 2021  
VOL. 59 NO. 5

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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  
lasubscriptions@aflc.org

### SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

# THE FIRST CUP

BY RACHEL MATTSON

**D**o you have a favorite cup in your cupboard? I do, but the more I drink out of it the more I see that my love really comes from the generous content inside the cup.

In Psalm 23:5, David wrote, “my cup overflows,” speaking to the provision of God’s goodness and mercy in life. He fills my “life-cup” with His presence, giving me abundant life, and providing for every need. “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want” (vs. 1).

But this cup would never be possible without the satisfaction of the “first cup,” the cup of God’s wrath (Isaiah 51:17). We forget our sin that separates us from God’s holy presence. We forget that left to our own resources, we are sinners stuck in our own way. We forget that we are not naturally good, nor can we muster up enough strength to ever be good. But our compassionate God wants us in His presence so deeply that He sent Jesus as our representative to drink the cup of God’s wrath in our place. He emptied it, exhausted it of all it contained and took on all its consequences—including death—for us.

“My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done,” He prayed (Matthew 26:42).

The cup of suffering that Jesus would drink made it possible for another cup to be offered—the cup of life, love, and restoration.

“This is what the Sovereign Lord says, your God, who defends His people; ‘See, I have taken

out of your hand the cup that made you stagger; from that cup, the goblet of my wrath, you will never drink again” (Isaiah 51:22).

The process of this deliverance from wrath is explained a couple chapters later. Isaiah 53 tells of the One who would bring peace by taking our punishment and carrying our sorrows, who would be pierced and crushed in our place. Jesus drank the cup. Why? “... for the joy set before Him” (Hebrews 12:2). The joy of having you and me in His presence.

The first cup was emptied so that the second cup could be filled to the brim! Jesus emptied Himself to give us abundant and overflowing life *in* and *with* Him! “Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them” (Hebrews 7:25). Jesus saves!

As I enjoy the last delicious contents from my favorite cup, my mind once again dwells on the shocking trade that Jesus made, taking the cup of wrath and condemnation so that my cup would be filled with His love, forgiveness, and mercy. And in this amazing grace, I get to be in God’s presence and enjoy the cup of blessing saying, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Psalm 23:6).

*Mattson is a member of Our Saviour’s Lutheran,  
Thief River Falls, Minn.*

It is in His will that God shall give us faithful servants for the days ahead, for we realize that the heart of any kingdom work lies in such an institution as shall train our youth to be good pastors, teachers, and church leaders.

—Resolution approved, October 1962 Organizational Conference

The Conference approves the purchase of real estate property from the Hauge Inner Mission Federation at Medicine Lake Blvd, Minneapolis, Minn., for our headquarters and seminary, and future needs of our Association.

—1964 Annual Conference

The Annual Conference concurs with the Seminary Board in its decision to open a Bible school this fall. Let us be in prayer that God will richly provide the teachers and move us to provide the means.

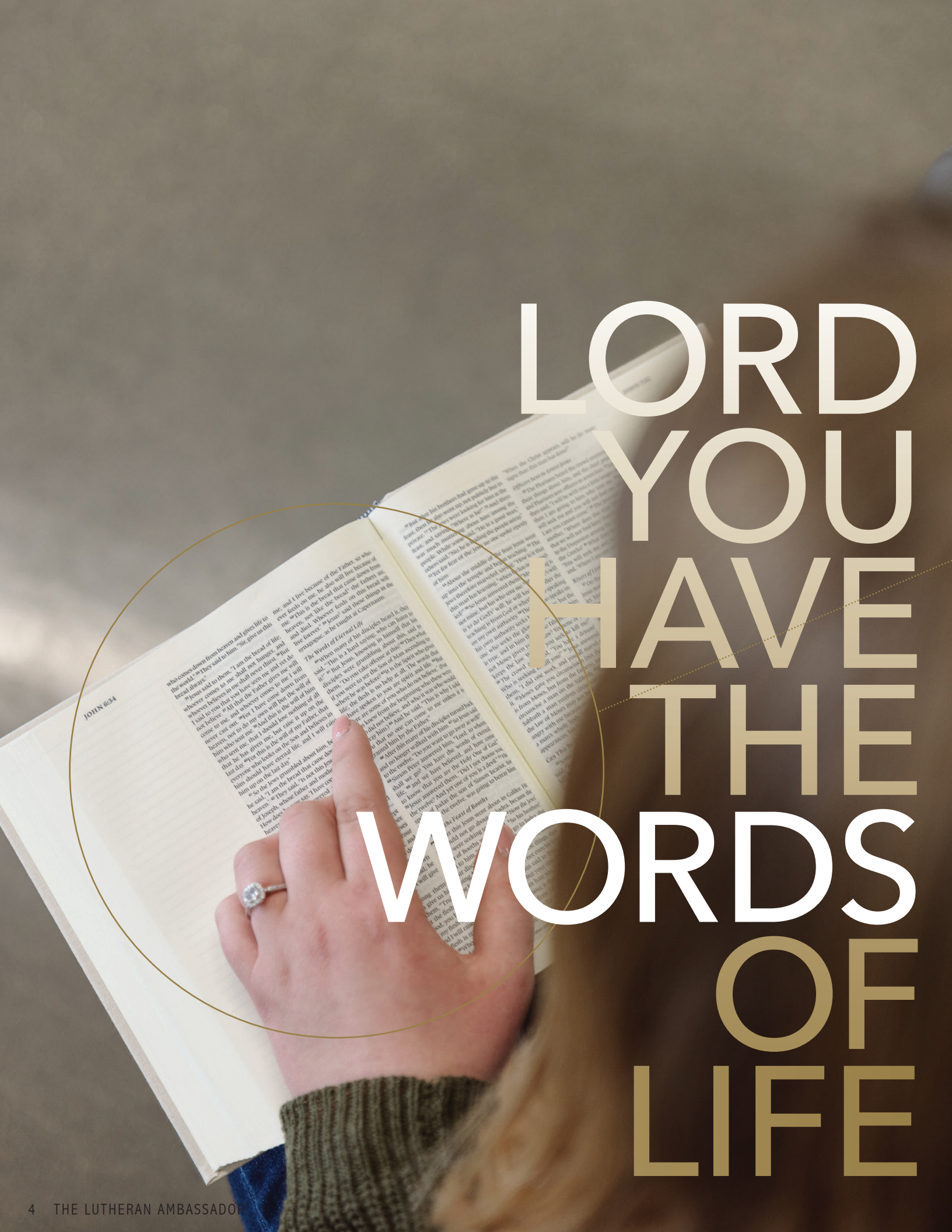
—1966 Annual Conference

The Conference endorses and approves plans of the Board for erection of dormitory facilities at the Bible School, and recommends that the Stewardship Committee prepare and present a program to finance the project.

—1967 Annual Conference

As enrollment grows we have greater need for recreational facilities. ... It is surprising how closely related the physical well-being and the spiritual are in our youth.

—1971 Report of the Bible School Dean



# LORD YOU HAVE THE WORDS OF LIFE

JOHN 6:34



**W**hen the world fell to pieces last year because of the pandemic, I felt shaken with uncertainty and fear of the unknown. I had been sent home from my first year at the Free Lutheran Bible College and felt devastated to be missing out on time studying God's Word alongside my classmates and friends. It was a season of disappointment and loss for not just me, but the entire world. The Bible college continued to have classes online, and although it was a different setting, God's Word remained the same.

When the virus hit, it was hard to know what news source was true and trustworthy. Because of the training I received at FLBC, there was one thing I knew for certain to be true—the Word of God. In a time when I was unsure of everything else, God's eternal Word stood firm and spoke truth and light into my life when I most needed it.

Peter's words to Jesus in John 6 resonate with me. When many disciples deserted Jesus, He asked the Twelve, "You do not want to leave me too, do you?" Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (vs. 67-68).

Through His Word, God calmed my anxious heart and gave me a peace during a time in which I needed it the most. Being sent home from FLBC made me realize even more the importance of His words of eternal life.

I am thankful God has given me the opportunity to study His Word at FLBC. As a high school student, I wasn't completely sold on the idea of an additional two years of college. After attending Campus Days at FLBC, observing my brother's years at FLBC, and talking to alumni, I came to learn that what I would gain from attending Bible College would be so much more than just an additional two years of college. It's a safe place where I have gained so much knowledge of God and His words of life. I have gained long-lasting friendships with fellow believers who share the same love for Christ as I do.

Before coming to the Bible College, I thought I had a fairly good understanding of God and His Word, but I quickly came to realize that I had only scratched the surface of His goodness. I have been blessed with the opportunity to go far beyond the surface and dive deeper into His Word in my two years at the Bible College. I have been challenged by faculty, dorm staff, and fellow students to dive deep into learning more about Jesus Christ and what He has done for me. Not only have I learned so much, but I have also been

BY  
BECCA  
LYNNES



challenged to put into practice and live out what I have learned about Christ Jesus. For the past two years I have had the opportunity to wake up in the morning and attend classes where the gospel is proclaimed. It isn't often that you find a classroom setting where God's Word not only has the highest authority but is also the primary textbook. At FLBC, this is the normal standard — God at the center always. The importance of studying God's Word and giving all the glory to Him is clearly emphasized within the community at FLBC.

I now feel that I am well equipped to go out and confidently share Jesus' words of life with others who are in need of His saving grace. Even though I have learned so much in my time at Bible College, I know that there is still so much more for me to learn about Jesus and His wonderful words of life. With all that I've learned at FLBC, I feel confident to go out and share His words of eternal life with others.

Throughout my life, I've come to learn that the material things of this world are worth nothing compared to the joy we will feel when we one day join Christ in heaven for eternity. Recently I've been reminded of a verse found in I Peter 2:24-25 which says, "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." God's Word stands firm and remains forever. There is value in taking an extra two years to study Jesus' life. I am thankful God placed me at FLBC so I could dive deeper into these studies. I know that wherever He leads me I can find peace and comfort in His wonderful words of eternal life. When all other things give way, God's Word stands firm. I can cling to His foundation, a foundation that stands firm throughout a pandemic, a foundation that will never give way.

*Lynnes is a member of West Prairie Free Lutheran, Kindred, N.D. She will graduate from FLBC in May.*





BY  
MATTHEW  
MONSETH



*Monseth, a 2021 graduate of the Free Lutheran Bible College, is a member of Living Hope Lutheran, Rogers, Minn.*

To many, discipleship means reaching out to unbelievers with the message of the gospel. But Christians are in constant need of discipleship, too. Just read the Apostle Paul's numerous letters to the churches he was helping. His example leads us to encourage each other as brothers and sisters in Christ through the Word, because it is "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

One of the many blessings of attending Bible College is that we are a community of Christians who are being equipped to not only go out into the world to disciple, but we are being encouraged by our classmates and faculty on campus. Of course, God has pierced my heart and helped me grow in faith through my classes, but some of the greatest spiritual growth I have experienced in this past year was through my fellow classmates. Whether it was a long van ride with the basketball worship team talking about issues in our culture and how we should respond to them using the Word, or a late-night conversation with my dorm assistant, Ryan, about my struggles, God is using a community of disciples on our campus to pierce my heart with His Word.

One theme that my teammate, Danny, has been teaching me this year is that Jesus uses the sinner (Romans 7). A verse that I often meditate on is II Corinthians 12:9, "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weakness, so that Christ's power may rest on me." I have heard this over and over again in church, yet I have struggled with trying to earn righteousness my whole life. It wasn't until God used my basketball teammate to disciple me that He worked that truth into my heart.

FLBC's community of discipleship has changed my life. After being sent home last school year because of Covid-19, I was left feeling alone in my faith without the constant pouring out of the Word from my FLBC family. It is impossible to miss God's blessings when you wake up in the morning and sit through classes hearing the Word of God and then carry through the rest of the day on a campus full of people who are determined to be disciples of Christ. I like to think that it is a taste of heaven where everyone is loving God and consequently loving each other.





# TO BE DISCIPLINED

**G**rowing up, I moved around quite a few times. Moving from one place to another meant moving churches, as well. I was never really a part of a Sunday school class or youth group for very long, so I never got to experience what it was like to belong to a community of friends and mentors who were brought together in Christ. I went to a Catholic high school and they always taught us to “have God be a part of our lives every second of every day.” I was never able to fully grasp this idea, either.

Being at the Free Lutheran Bible College this past year has not only given me the opportunity to learn new things, but has also filled in these gaps. I am surrounded by friends and mentors with whom I am in constant conversations about God. My classes are focused on learning about everything that is related to God. I finally know what it means to have God be a part of every second of every day. And now I know what it is like to have godly relationships with others.

FLBC provides so many different opportunities to build upon the relationships that are formed while here on campus. The connections I have made with my classmates are blessings that I can thank God for each day. From having classes together in the mornings, to having devotions together at night, to living with each other every day in the dorms, the relationships that are made here are ones that will last a lifetime. The thing that makes these relationships so much more unique and special is that we all get to relate to each other on a deeper level—a level on which Christ is central. The same thing goes for the connection between faculty and staff and the students. The relationships I have with the faculty and staff here are so different from those that I have experienced with others in the past. It is such a positive and enriching experience to be able to have a relationship with a professor who wants nothing less than to help me grow and see me succeed in my knowledge of and personal relationship with God.

Being surrounded and supported by such wonderful people at FLBC during such a difficult period of time has made such an impact in my life. These two years here will be ones that I will never forget and always cherish. It is where I have truly found my people, and not only that, but have truly found who I am through Christ.

BY  
OLIVIA  
REIMER



*Reimer, a first-year student at the Free Lutheran Bible College, is from Sioux Falls, S.D.*



I don't know where my kids will live, what they will do for a living, or how they will survive or thrive in a given culture. I don't know how societally acceptable it will be to identify oneself as a Christian.

I don't know where our students will go after they "start here" at the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary. But I know that what we teach on our campus and in our homes and congregations transcends any of these situational considerations, resting instead on the foundation of Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection for the forgiveness of our sins.

We live our lives on earth in three spheres of influence: The state, the family, and the Church, what Martin Luther referred to as "the three estates." The family is the fundamental unit of human interaction and societal flourishing, established both by God Himself in Scripture and in the United States Constitution, "...and our posterity." In the family, a Christian is a parent, child, husband or wife.

In the state, the Christian has a relationship with governing authorities that is itself governed by a right understanding of church and state, what Luther called the "two kingdoms." The state bears the sword and concerns itself with external order. The estate of the Church, though, is where the gospel is found. No amount of persecution can kill the gospel of our resurrected Savior, and no amount of pressure should allow us to alter our confession.

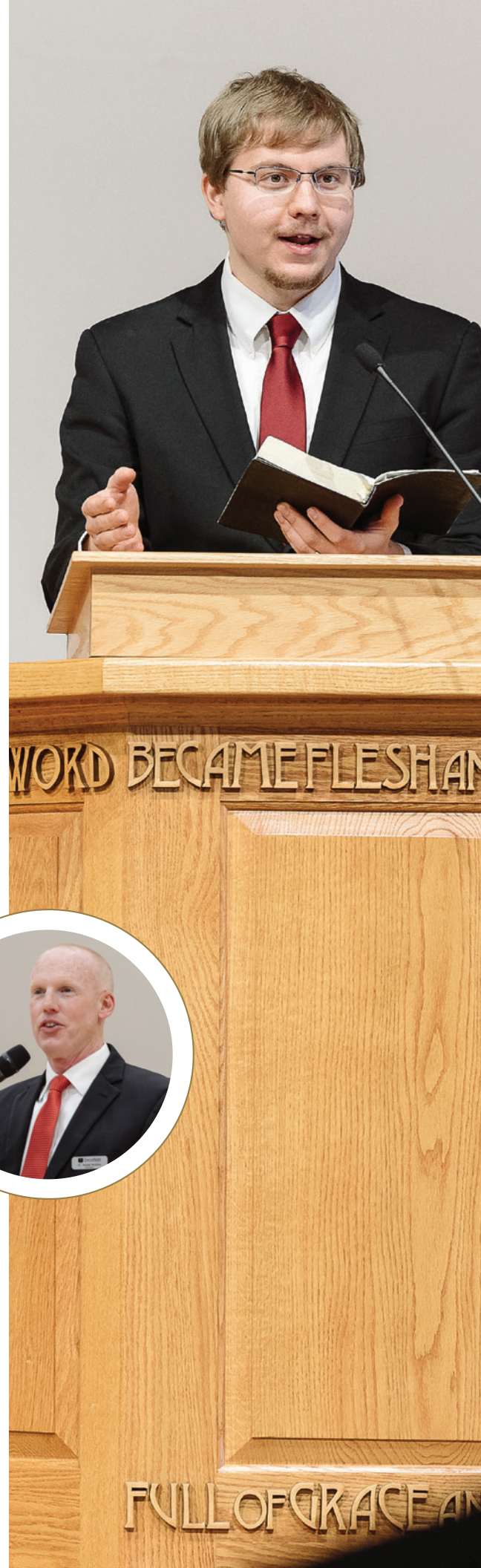
God calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth (this is Luther's explanation to the third article of the Apostles' Creed), even transcending time and location. However, on this side of eternity the work of the Church universal is visible only in the congregation. The congregation is the place where Christ's forgiveness of sins is delivered through the preaching of God's Word and the administration of the sacraments. It is the place where fellow followers of Christ sharpen one another in the nurture and admonition of God's Word.

The first fundamental principle of the Lutheran Free Church, from which the AFLC derives, states, "According to the Word of God, the congregation is the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth." God gives Christians all that we need to stand alone, but He intends for us to stand together, rooted in a confession more ancient than time itself, where God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. We stand together in congregation, and the Free Lutheran Seminary trains future pastors for ministry in and through these free and living Lutheran congregations.

God saved me through the ministry of an AFLC congregation that preached the finished work of Christ as God's only solution for my sin. Many of the people who were part of that congregation were impacted, if not trained directly, by places like FLBC. Students at FLBC do not study for the purposes of certification, but for God to establish them in His eternal and inerrant Word for faith in Jesus Christ and faithful service in His kingdom. Our students then go anywhere, grounded in the Word of God. And as they go, the kingdom of God goes with them, manifested in local congregations throughout the world.

*Dr. Mobley is the president of Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary. He, his wife Michele, and two children (Hannah and Benjamin) are members of Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn.*

BY  
WADE  
MOBLEY







BY  
BRENNAN  
JOHNSON

The demographics of my home church have shifted often during the time I have attended there. When my family and a few others came to the church, the youngest attendee was 45 years old. There were no children. In fact, there hadn't been Sunday school or any youth ministry for at least 10 years, maybe more. Since incoming families reintroduced children to our congregation, the need for children's programs resurfaced. In the Bible clubs, vacation Bible school, and Sunday school classes that were created over the years following, my mother and my best friend's mother took the lead and organized the programming. They planned and ran the events, which made my siblings and me very accustomed to children's ministry. I was among the oldest of our youth, so I was asked to help. I learned to love being around the church and serving others.

It wasn't until high school that I was given an opportunity to lead. Our first Sunday school teacher for the high school youth happened to be my cousin, an AFLC seminarian attending my church. He was very encouraging to our class and, since he knew me best, he would ask me to substitute teach the class on the Sundays that he couldn't attend. I found that I enjoyed teaching and I was fairly comfortable with it. I continued substitute teaching throughout high school, filling in for the teacher who followed, another seminarian who became our parish assistant. I enjoyed doing that even after graduation.

I am blessed to be only a 20-minute drive from my home church now that I am at FLBC. This has allowed me to continue to serve. I have become more involved as our parish assistant is moving on. We are good friends and I'm close with the youth, so he is passing a lot of responsibility to me. Last semester, I was able to be the chaperon for our junior high boys at SnoDaze, a camp at the AFLC's Association Retreat Center. It was a fantastic experience. I was able to bond with the kids and talk about God's Word with them. I'm glad I had that opportunity to get to know the kids better. I am now the junior and high school Sunday school teacher, so that time was helpful.

I am very thankful that God has given me opportunities to be a role model and care for the spiritual wellbeing of our young congregants. I love sharing knowledge of God's Word that I have learned in my classes at the Bible college. God is good to me. He has blessed me with the gift of serving my home congregation and the chance to minister to His children.

*Johnson, a first-year student at the Free Lutheran Bible College, is a member of King of Glory Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn.*



# IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

BY  
NATHAN  
OLSON



Growing up in the AFLC, I have always appreciated what we have at our Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary—a training ground for life in the local congregation where we equip students with the Word of God and a Lutheran framework. It was at our Free Lutheran Schools where God opened my eyes to the gospel, encouraged me through a community of Christian believers, and prepared me for a life of ministry.

At one point, I had thought that perhaps that would mean a life of ministry overseas. For those who know me, you know my heart for sharing Jesus abroad and my love for different cultures.

This was first birthed in me during a year-long mission in Tanzania as a teenager with my family; followed by a summer in China teaching English (and Jesus) in colleges, and furthered by a 12-month ministry internship under our AFLC missionaries in Brazil.

However, as much as I love international ministry, a growing recognition gripped my heart during my time in seminary that there is a huge ministry call and challenge facing us here in the United States. We live amidst a hard-hearted people and a culture that many are calling “post-Christian.”

In my devotions one morning, Ezekiel 3:4-9 was particularly jolting to me:

And he said to me, “Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with my words to them. For you are not sent to a people of foreign speech and a hard language, but to the house of Israel—not to many peoples of foreign speech and a hard language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, if I sent you to such, they would listen to you. But the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me: because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart. Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces, and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. Like emery harder than flint have I made your forehead. Fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.”

# THE WORD OF GOD





As I reflected on Ezekiel's call to the ministry and his context, God impressed upon my heart through His Word that while I could perhaps minister internationally and have a good and effective ministry, the challenge to go to my fellow Americans who are hard hearted and obstinate was staring me right in the face.

As my wife, Emily, and I prayed about what ministry in the United States would look like following our seminary internship at Ruthfred Lutheran Church in Bethel Park, Pa., the Lord directed us to accept a call to serve at Gloria Dei Free Lutheran Church in St. Louis, Mo., where the door was opened for me to continue in my studies toward a Ph.D. in Doctrinal Theology from Concordia Seminary.

Upon completion of my doctoral studies, I was called by Living Word Lutheran Church in Eagan, Minn. Our family loves this congregation and are grateful to the Lord for the opportunity to serve them. My doctoral studies have provided a number of avenues to engage with people beyond just surface level conversations and to challenge the cultural context in which our church finds itself.

Now, in this opportunity to serve as a faculty at our AFLC Schools, I look forward to joining the team in proclaiming God's Word to a generation that is bombarded by so many mixed signals of "truth." My desire, along with

my colleagues, is to stand on the Word alone and proclaim God's truth to this generation.

I believe that the most powerful thing that someone can do for their spiritual life is to have an encounter with the Word of God. It is the life transforming force of God which convicts of sin, points to Jesus, and instructs us how to be Christ followers. As Martin Luther wrote, it is a performative Word.

Consequently, I believe that every single time God's Word goes forth, something powerful takes place. Someone either receives God's Word by faith or they reject it and harden their hearts to it. However, it is impossible for someone to remain in a neutral position after having an encounter with the Word of God. Consequently, my ministry goal is to simply proclaim God's Word to people and let God's Spirit use His Word as He promises to do.

Please join us in the ministry of proclaiming God's Word as the light in this dark world and pray for us as faculty as we endeavor to do this at our AFLC Schools.

*Dr. Olson, Savage, Minn., has accepted a call as faculty at the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary. He serves as lead pastor at Living Word Lutheran, Eagan, Minn.*



# A GYM OF OUR OWN



*"I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds. I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praises to your name; O Most High" (Psalm 9:1-2).*

The dream of a gym on campus goes back many years for me and others. As a student of AFLBS, and some years later when the Lord led me back to work and coach there, the dream continued. Those years of coaching hold many memories of driving the school vans to every practice and game, often on cold, snowy nights. The gyms we used were far from campus, small, and one even had carpet for a floor on which we had to draw a three-point line with markers. We practiced with both men's and women's teams simultaneously, so each had only half of the court most of the practice. It was a challenge, but the students endured and made the most of it.

There were a couple of attempts to get a building project going for a gym over the years, but ultimately no gym was built. I had come to truly believe I would not see a gym built on campus in my lifetime. Even when I was asked to serve on the Building Committee, I had real doubts it would happen. As we started to meet, the enthusiasm and commitment from the Building Committee members and FLBC staff gave me hope. Even as the architectural plans came together, it still seemed like a dream to me. We talked a lot about how this facility could be used, which helped shape the design of the building. Committee members viewed this building not just as a place to play basketball, but as building that would be used for ministry for FLBC and the AFLC.

Even as the groundbreaking was held in the spring of 2019 and the building started going up, it didn't seem real to me. I would check the webcam often just to be sure it was really happening. I work on campus, so I was able to see it first-hand. After a busy and stressful week, I decided to drive up and see the building.

As I pulled up and looked at it, I thought, "Wow! There it is, a gym of our own."

I broke into tears of joy and thankfulness.

Then, as I stood on the completed floor for the first time with a former player, my assistant coach and good friend Wendy Greven, the effort, struggles, and prayers from over the years to keep the program going all rushed over us. Not only were we thinking of the past but also of the future and possibilities for ministry this building will bring. All I can say is praise be to God for His faithfulness. It is only by His provision and blessing that this building stands. May we be faithful to Him and use this facility to His glory.

*Jacobson (class of 1982) is a member of Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn. She served on the building committee, and was the women's basketball coach (1992-1998, 2002-2004, 2010-2011).*

BY  
WANDA  
JACOBSON





# OUR OWN

BY  
IVAR  
BERGE



**Opposite page:** Ribbon cutting for the new SLC; the men's tournament.

**This page:** Pam Kinneberg paints children's faces; the women's tournament; the crowd reacts when the gym is officially dedicated.

**Above:** Pre-event food.



**M**y, how we have waited! My, how time flies! It seems like yesterday as I think back on my years at AFLBS (now

FLBC). My older sister, Grace, paved the way for our family, attending in the second year of the school's existence. She was followed by my brothers, then came my turn.

I remember two classmates of my older brother, Don, who came to visit the farm during their time at AFLBS: Wayne Floan and Tonnes Pollestad. They made a profound impression on my scrawny little eighth grade self, and I knew then that Bible school was for me.

I remember the pair of wristbands that Don laid next to my pillow when I awoke one morning during one of his weekend visits home. I think I wore them till the elastic finally wore out! Don, then my brothers Kermit and Arne, would come home and tell stories of basketball games and other activities, often bringing friends with them. They would talk of practicing in an elementary school and playing games in gyms around the Twin Cities. Surely, I thought, by the time I would be there a gym would most certainly be on campus!

Well, we all know the answer to that. Our basketball practice was at Pilgrim Lane Elementary School, just as it had been for my brothers. Games were played around town in a YMCA league—but we always thought that at some point there would be a gym on campus.

Talks of a gym were always ramped up each year as committees would hunt for a location for the alumni tournament. We would talk about it each year during the alumni tournament, thinking surely there would be a gym when our kids would attend. Guess what? Each of our kids, first Caleb, then Adam, then Rachel, and finally Isaac, over a 12-year span, came and went from AFLBS and still no gym!

For what ever reason, God didn't choose for us to have a gym during our years at AFLBS. But He has chosen this to be the time. We know His timing is always perfect and we rest in that.

I've had the privilege of being on the Building Committee since the inception of the Vision project, which raised funding for three phases of campus projects. It has been so fun to see the campus transform into what it is today. What a blessing to have a campus with classrooms, dorms, and gymnasium facilities to equip our young people for service to our Savior. I'm so thankful for our school and that I could attend there. It's where I met my beautiful wife Becky, where our kids attended, and where hopefully our grandchildren will attend and enjoy the beautiful campus complete with the gymnasium we have dreamed about for 50 years. Praise the Lord, it was worth the wait!

*Berge (class of 1977) is a member of St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D. He served on the SLC Building Committee.*

## JOE DOMBROWSKI

Canal Winchester, Ohio

I was born on June 5, 1979, to Steven and Karen Dombrowski. I grew up in Pickerington, Ohio, and was raised in the Lutheran Church



(ELCA and its predecessor bodies).

My background prior to seminary

was in the field of electrical engineering. I hold a bachelor of science degree in electrical and computer engineering from Ohio State University. Prior to and during my time in seminary, I worked as an electrical engineer doing construction and design work in the natural gas industry.

I spent some time away from the Church during my 20s but was brought back to an active faith life by God working through His Word. In this renewal, the Lord brought me to Peace Free Lutheran Church (AFLC) in Canal Winchester, Ohio. Through many opportunities to serve in my home congregation, the Lord moved me toward pastoral ministry and seminary.

During my time in seminary, the Lord has opened His Word up to me in ways unimaginable and reinforced the lesson of perseverance through all things. I served my internship at St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church in Salinas, Calif., where the Lord has continued to reinforce the lessons of seminary and bring the joy of pastoral ministry to my life.

## LANCE MORRISON

Fargo, N.D.

God blessed me with being raised in a family where the love of God was taught. My parents, Justin and Annette Morrison, had me baptized



into the Christian faith shortly after my birth Feb. 2, 1975. At the age of 10, I rededicated my life to Christ

when I understood more clearly my great need for God's saving grace, and in His great mercy He drew me to Himself.

After spending most of my youth on a farm in eastern South Dakota, I attended a one-year Bible college program in Fergus Falls, Minn. Then I transitioned to North Dakota and settled in the Fargo/Moorhead area where I married Gretchen Weishaupt. God blessed us with two children, Tori (16) and Logan (14). I worked at an electronics manufacturing facility in Fargo, and earned a degree in electronics technology through Northwest Technical College. God then led us to become members of West Prairie Free Lutheran, near Kindred, N.D. In 2013 at the recommendation of my pastor, I attended the Summer Institute of Theology at the Free Lutheran Seminary. It was during that time that God called me to seminary. After initially saying no to this call, God led me to leave my job of nearly 20 years, move our family to campus, and pursue full-time seminary studies in 2017.

Throughout the challenges of balancing seminary studies, family, and work, God has continually revealed His faithfulness by providing for all our needs. I served my internship at Emmaus Lutheran in Bloomington, Minn.

## MICHAEL ONSTAD

Fargo, N.D.

My testimony begins in Park River, N.D. I was born on May 19, 1994, to Kurt and Lori Onstad. We attended the local ELCA



church, but I was taught the faith primarily from Luke Berntson, my counselor at Park River Bible

Camp, which I attended for many years, and leader of the local high school men's Bible study. Over the course of those years, I came to saving faith in Christ.

Once I began my studies at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn., I graduated from camper to counselor. I continued to grow and learn, and I met Taylor Ensrude, my fiancée. I felt the call to enter into ministry. Right away, I believed that God was calling me to youth ministry. However, that call morphed to pastoral ministry.

I graduated from Concordia in 2016 with a degree in communications. I became a member of St. Paul's Free Lutheran in Fargo, N.D., after attending for about a year. I went to seminary and Taylor went to dental school in Omaha. One of the biggest lessons that the Lord has taught me is the beauty of the congregation. That lesson really hit home during my internship at Our Saviour's Lutheran in Thief River Falls, Minn. I saw a congregation wrestle with how to minister during the pandemic, but I saw them do it as a unified body, constantly relying on the Word and Holy Spirit to guide them, despite different opinions. It was a beautiful thing to see, and I look forward to the opportunities that the Lord has for me in other congregations.

## KYLE SMITH

Howard Lake, Minn.

I was born Sept. 26, 1991, to Larry and Laurie Smith. I grew up in Howard Lake, Minn., but went to Good Shepherd Free Lutheran in



Cokato, the next town over. After graduating from high school, I attended the Free Lutheran Bible

College (formerly AFLBS) in Plymouth, Minn., from 2010-2012. Wanting to be done with formal schooling, I took a break and moved to Dickinson, N.D., to be the youth director at Our Saviour's Lutheran while also working at a local bank. Through my time at the FLBC and my time as a youth director, together with seeing the great need for pastors and how many churches go without one, I took the first steps towards seminary by taking a position as a full-time youth and family director at First Lutheran in Ellendale, Minn.

I decided to finish my bachelor's degree and enrolled at Faith International University in Tacoma, Wash., in the winter of 2015, graduating with a bachelor of arts in religion in 2017. Shortly after graduating, I applied to seminary and began my studies.

While in Ellendale, I married Alicia Kuhlmann on April 2, 2016. Together we have three children, Malachi (3), Levi (3), and Annabella (1).

I am currently finishing my internship at Living Word Lutheran in Eagan, Minn., under the supervision of Dr. Nathan Olson. One of the highlights of my time on internship is getting to see in action what it looks like to be a servant pastor. I have accepted a call to serve First Lutheran in Ellendale.



## PATRICK VANDENBOS

Northwood, N.D.

I was born May 16, 1984, to Leon and Patricia VandenBos in Sioux Falls, S.D. I am the youngest of four siblings. At age 18, I attended a summer Bible camp



where I heard God's law preached and repented of my sins. With a fresh desire to learn more about my faith and about God, I

enrolled in the Free Lutheran Bible College (formerly AFLBS), where I was grounded in the eternal truth of God's Word. I graduated in 2004 and attended the third-year program, the Ministry Training Institute, to study cross-cultural ministry, graduating in 2005. I married Anna (Larson) in the fall.

We moved to Northwood, N.D., where I was a youth leader at Ebenezer Free Lutheran while working for Northwood Public School and a local bank. I earned a teaching degree at Mayville State University in Mayville, N.D., in 2012 and taught seventh through twelfth grade math in Hatton, N.D., for five years.

I received the call to become a pastor after reading an article in *The Lutheran Ambassador* which included a call to pray for 40 pastors for the AFLC. I accepted the call to pray and God laid on my heart that I was one of the 40.

We moved our family to Plymouth, Minn., in the fall of 2017 and I began studies at the Free Lutheran Seminary. We now have seven children: Caleb (13), Adelyn (11), Joshua (10), Evelyn (7), Isaac (4), Axel (2), and Breanna (4 months). At seminary, the Lord taught me that the ministry of a pastor must be grounded in the power and authority of God's Word and Spirit. I interned at St. Paul's Free Lutheran in Fargo, N.D., under the guidance of Pastor Micah Hjermstad. I have accepted a call to St. Ansgar's Lutheran, Salinas, Calif.

The 2021 AFLC Annual Conference will be held June 16-19 on the campus of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary in Plymouth, Minn. The conference theme, "Prepare the Way of the Lord," comes from Isaiah 40:3.

### Registration

Registration for the conference, found online ([aflc.org/conference](http://aflc.org/conference)), is now open and will close on June 1. A single registration is \$35, and couple registration is \$60. Meals, offered through the FLBCS cafeteria, can be purchased through the registration form. Meals may not be purchased on arrival, so please be sure to register by June 1.

### Campus Housing

FLBCS has guest housing available during the conference, but capacity is limited. Each dorm room provides a bed, dresser, and desk. Please note that dorm rooms will not have air conditioning, and guests must provide their own bedding. Bathrooms in both dorms are shared. Kitchens are available on the lowest level of each dorm.

Trygve Dahl Hall (the women's dorm, located on the northeast side of Heritage Hall) has been reserved for families and individual women. Bathrooms are available for both men and women. There is also a kitchenette on each floor (including a washer, dryer, fridge, microwave, and sink).

John Strand Hall (the men's dorm, southeast of Heritage Hall) has been reserved for individual men. Bathrooms are only provided for men. There is a microwave on each floor.

For prices and to reserve a space in guest housing, contact Emily Kregel at [emily.kregel@flbc.edu](mailto:emily.kregel@flbc.edu).

### Off Campus Housing

Off-campus arrangements have been made with the following hotels:

- Country Inn & Suites by Radisson, 210 Carlson Parkway, Plymouth  
763.473.3008 • \$102/night
- Cambria Hotel, 9655 Grove Circle North, Maple Grove • (952) 225-2685
- Crown Plaza Minneapolis West, 3131 Campus Drive, Plymouth  
763.559.6600 • \$132 plus tax, or the prevailing rate, whichever is less

### Children and Youth

Families are welcome at the Annual Conference. Vacation Bible school will be led by two ministry teams from our Free Lutheran Bible College for children ages 4 through sixth grade. The time will include Bible lessons, music, crafts, and recreation during morning and afternoon sessions, and children will join their families for lunch and supper.

Childcare will be available for those younger than 4 during the morning and afternoon sessions. Children will join their families for lunch and supper. If you think you may use the service at some point, please register your child for accurate planning.

Students in 7th through 12th grade who register for the teen track will join together for worship, Bible study, and fellowship activities each morning and afternoon. Activities will include on- and off-campus opportunities with transportation provided by Bible College staff. Teen programming will provide a chance for students to grow in the Word while meeting students from other AFLC congregations. Note that students are encouraged to join their families for lunch and the evening services.

### Conference Electives

Added to the conference schedule this year is a series of lectures which will be presented by faculty of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary. The seven lectures will be offered during two blocks: 10:50 to 11:35 a.m. on Thursday, June 17, and on Saturday, June 19.

On Thursday, the following lectures will be offered: "Systematic Theology," by Dr. Nathan Olson; "Baal Xiphon," by Pastor Brent Olson; "What Can I Do to Encourage FLBC Attendance?" by Pastor Adam Osier (dean of FLBC); and "Music to Benefit the Congregation," by Andrew Hanson. On Friday, the following lectures will be offered: "You Cannot, You Must," by Dr. Phil Haugen; "How Our Past Informs Our Future," by Pastor Robert Lee; and "Sverdrup, Living Out Orthodox Piety in America," by Pastor Phil Hooper.



### Conference Registration

An online registration form for the Annual Conference will be available through June 1

[aflc.org/about-us/conferences](https://aflc.org/about-us/conferences)

- \* Incumbents
- \*\* Must be elected or reelected to serve on board or committee
- X Nominations not named by press deadline

## 2022 CONFERENCE COMMITTEE NOMINEES

### Committee No. 1

(Administration)

Pastor David Johnson, Boyertown, Pa.

Four more nominees

### Committee No. 2

(Schools)

Pastor John Amundson, New Leipzig, N.D.

Bill Fish, Everett, Wash.

Pastor Jon Wellumson, Williston, N.D.

Paul Welsch, Amery, Wis.

One more nominee

### Committee No. 3

(Missions)

Pastor James Fugleberg, Moorhead, Minn.

Pastor Brandon Marschner, Culbertson, Mont.

Dr. Lyle Mattson, Greenbush, Minn.

Eldwyn VanBruggen, Valley City, N.D.

X

### Committee No. 4

(Publications and Parish Education)

Pastor Richard Carr, Tioga, N.D.

Four more nominees

### Committee No. 5

(Evangelism and Benefits)

Pastor Jim Rasmussen, Maple Grove, Minn.

Four more nominees

# Prepare the way of the Lord

June 16-19 • Free Lutheran Bible College & Seminary

On behalf of the students, staff, faculty, and administration of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary, along with the Board of Trustees and the Free Lutheran Theological Seminary Corporation, it is my pleasure to invite you to the 59th Annual Conference of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, held this year on our campus in Plymouth, Minn., in the recently opened Student Life Center.

We love our city and the metropolitan area. We are an increasingly active part of the Plymouth, Minn., community, and our neighbors have treated us most kindly in the years that have gone before. Most of us hail from small town and rural America, and many of us still feel a sense of relief with open skies in our windshield and cityscapes fading in our rearview mirror. But this place is part of our calling, and God has brought us to the city in part to learn and in part to bring Jesus Christ to the three million souls in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area.

The past months have shaken us all to our core. Our idols have been exposed and found wanting. But our foundation in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ has endured and stands before us, more obviously crucial than perhaps we once realized. It is on this unshakable foundation that we build—or better, that God builds—our lives, purpose, and existence.

The Free Lutheran Bible College exists to establish students in the eternal and inerrant Word of God, for a life of faith in Jesus Christ and faithful service in His kingdom. We do this in the context of free and living Lutheran congregations, relying on congregational support as we exist for the benefit of congregations. By God's grace—and with your support—we have embraced the opportunity that lies before us. Stability in Christ is a particularly attractive reality right now.

Please join us on campus this June. Be our guest. Enjoy the once-dreamt, now actual Student Life Center. Check out the newly remodeled Hauge Memorial Chapel. Recall great memories made in Strand and Dahle Halls. But more than anything, come together for a spiritual recharge, celebration of great ministry in the AFLC's past, and participation in the AFLC's bright future.

—Dr. Wade Mobley is the president  
of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary, Plymouth, Minn.



# 2021 NOMINEES

## ARC Board

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One layman, five-year term)

\*Dr. Steven Johnson, Upsala, Minn.

X

## Benefits Board

(One pastor, five-year term)

Pastor Peter Franz, Maple Grove, Minn.

X

## FLAPS Board of Managers

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One layman, five-year term)

X

X

(One pastor, five-year term)

\*Pastor Tom Tuura, Stover, Mo.

X

## Youth Board

(One layman, five-year term)

Nikki Hanson, Valley City, N.D.

X

(One pastor, four-year term)

Pastor Dave Ryerson, Ishpeming, Mich.

Pastor Ryan Tonneson, Glyndon, Minn.

## Bay Broadcasting

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One layman, three-year term)

X

X

## Budget Analysis Committee

(One layman, three-year term)

Leo Brackel, Mott, N.D.

Joel Erickson, Plymouth, Minn.

## Coordinating Committee

(One layman, five-year term)

X

X

(One pastor, five-year term)

Pastor Jon Benson, Newark, Ill.

Pastor George Winston, Newark, Ohio

## Home Missions Committee

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One pastor, five-year term)

X

X

## AFLC Evangelism and Discipleship Board

(One pastor, five-year term)

Pastor Tom Parrish, Mendota Heights, Minn.

Pastor Ron Smith, Brookings, S.D.

## Board of Publications & Parish Education

(One pastor, five-year term)

\*Pastor Dennis Norby, Valley City, N.D.

Pastor Erin Tormanen, Stanley, N.D.

## Schools Board of Trustees

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One pastor, five-year term)

\*Pastor Alan Arneson, Amery, Wis.

X

(One layman, five-year term)

\*Gary Erickson, Dalton, Minn.

X

## World Missions Committee

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One layman, five-year term)

X

X

## CORPORATIONS

## ARC Corporation

(10 terms of five years each)

\*Shawn Adrian, Binford, N.D.

Nathan Crellin, Plymouth, Minn.

Katie Johnson, Crystal, Minn.

\*Hannah Langness, Deshler, Neb.

\*John Rieschl, Maple Grove, Minn.

\*Bruce Rokala, Kimball, Minn.

Stewart Vachal, Williston, N.D.

Thirteen more names needed

## Schools Corporation

(10 terms of five years each)

\*John Amdahl, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Rose Carlson, Cumberland, Wis.

Pastor Terry Culler, Hagerstown, Md.

\*Nathan Dalager, Argyle, Minn.

\*Lyle Forde, Arlington, Wash.

Ilona Fouks, Deer Park, Wis.

Pastor Chad Friestad, Camarillo, Calif.

\*David Fugleberg, Lakeville, Minn.

Pastor Rodney Johnson, Stanley, N.D.

Justin Jones, New Hope, Minn.

Jenna Lee, Ray, N.D.

Michael Osthus, Eagan, Minn.

\*Karen Pederson, Tioga, N.D.

Kya Schroeder, Oriska, N.D.

\*Pastor Steve Snipstead, Kalispell, Mont.

\*Doug Swanson, Swanville, Minn.

Alan Twedt, Portland, N.D.

Tammy Vukonich, Amery, Wis.

Pastor Sam Wellumson, East Grand Forks, Minn.

X

## Missions Corporation

(20 terms of five years each)

Velma Amundson, New Leipzig, N.D.

Lisa Arneson, Amery, Wis.

Peggy Berglund, Amery, Wis.

Pastor Andy Coyle, Summerset, S.D.

\*\*Ben Dahl, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Bob Davidson, Felch, Mich.

\*\*Steve Deysher, Fleetwood, Pa.

Matthew Green, Greenbush, Minn.

John Greven, Brooklyn Park, Minn.

Matthew Greven, Newark, Ill.

Pastor Scott Guhl, Gifford, Ill.

\*Pastor Gary Haug, Brooklyn Park, Minn.

Vicky Johnson, Boyertown, Pa.

Brian Lee, Ray, N.D.

David Moeller, Mayville, N.D.

\*\*Glen Mork, Buffalo, Minn.

Pastor David Niemela, Greenbush, Minn.

Shelly Raan, Tioga, N.D.

Mark Riley, Bethel Park, Pa.

Jeanie Sheldon, Ray, N.D.

Pastor Ron Smith, Brookings, S.D.

Jim Thompson, Janesville, Wis.

\*\*Shane Voxland, McIntosh, Minn.

Ethan Zeltinger, Fargo, N.D.

Sixteen more names needed

**I** was enjoying a relaxing Sunday afternoon when the IamResponding app on my smartphone alerted me that the local fire department and ambulance crew was being dispatched to the scene of a traffic accident involving a fatality a few miles from Newark, Ill. As chaplain for the department, I prepared myself for the possibility of an alert coming through requesting my assistance at the scene. No request for my assistance came, but later in the afternoon, as I saw department vehicles returning to town, I took a walk over to the fire hall to check in on the personnel who had responded to the call.

As I approached, one of the firemen called me over to where he was helping clean up one of the trucks. “Pastor,” he said, “This one is going to take a while to get out of my head.”

He put down his scrub brush, we walked away from the rest of the crew, and he spent the next several minutes telling me about the scene of the accident and what it was about this particular scene that was sticking with him. As he talked, I just listened. When he had said all that he felt he needed to say to me, he excused himself and resumed his cleaning duties.

I didn’t offer him any advice other than to say, “I will be praying for you. If you need to talk about this more, just let me know, and we can sit down over a cup of coffee.”

The fireman didn’t need any advice from me. He just needed someone to listen so that he



## THE MINISTRY OF PRESENCE

BY PASTOR JON BENSON

could clear his mind and his emotions and release the stress. For the next hour this scene repeated itself several times with other individuals who wanted to talk with me. Some of the individuals that I spoke with are members of Newark Lutheran, the church that I serve.

Even those who do not call Newark Lutheran their church were thankful that I was there as a chaplain for the department willing to listen. They knew I wasn’t there just looking for the inside scoop on what happened at the accident scene. They knew I was there to support them.

A chaplain conducts much of his ministry through what we call the ministry of presence. By offering a listening ear, or a shoulder for people to lean on when they are weary from the stress of life

situations, I demonstrate the Love of Christ to the men and women of the Newark Fire Department. That day my presence wasn’t needed at the scene of an accident. But it was needed at the fire hall. I count it a privilege to be able to serve the men and women of the Newark Fire Protection District with the ministry of presence.

Being a chaplain is one way that I have found to fulfill the instruction of Paul in Galatians 6:2 outside the walls of Newark Lutheran Church, in the greater community. Paul declared, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

*Benson, an AFLC chaplain, serves Newark Lutheran Church, Newark, Ill.*





# WMF

WOMEN'S  
MISSIONARY  
FEDERATION

## WHAT IS IN A NAME?

BY LAVONNE WEST

**E**ach of our AFLC departments has their own publication. One such publication, *Kinship*, came in the mail recently. This publication conveys reasons to rejoice in the work God is doing at our Free Lutheran Bible College, as well as matters in need of prayer. The word “kinship” means relationships founded on similar qualities or nature. It conveys the idea that as the family of God, we share a spirit of connection.

Your Women's Missionary Federation has a publication, too. It is delivered to each pastor's wife and WMF president. With increased costs of printing and mailing, we now send it twice a year instead of

four times. Our publication is entitled *Helping Hand*. I wasn't involved in the selection of that name, but it really is fitting.

Let me suggest a few phrases to bring meaning to the word “help”—make it easier, aid, assist, give relief, remedy, serve or wait on, to be useful or beneficial. When someone cries, “Help!” people naturally come running. When we see someone struggling, we may ask, “How can I help?” Or, “Where do you need me?” With fewer people gathering together in the last year, the servers—helpers—were the ones at home sewing masks or putting together care packages for their neighbors. They cleaned closets and organized pantries. They spent time writing notes and praying. My pastor's wife has that gift. You should see our church's Sunday school rooms, not a broken crayon in sight.

The challenge facing the WMF is giving each project we support equal space. We lovingly pray for our missionaries, church planters, Parish Education department, Bible college, seminary, and our local WMF groups. We bring an offering to our meetings to support them. As we work on

producing the *Helping Hand* newsletter, we long to bring help.

In some ways, producing four issues a year was easier since we have four projects, and four seasons. During a recent cleaning frenzy, I found some of the older issues of the *Helping Hand*. It still has the same mission today that it did when it began. Our focus will always be to get the Word of God out. As president of the national WMF, I am the editor of the *Helping Hand*. I lean heavily on our executive secretary, Dawn Johnson, to help me with this part of my job description. I am so thankful for each one who has stepped up to write for our newsletter when called upon.

Psalms 121 is one of my favorites, “I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.”

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*West, a member of Stillwater Free Lutheran, Kalispell, Mont., is the president of the Women's Missionary Federation.*



## Christ Community finds new church home in Maryland

Members of Christ Community Church (AFLC), Hagerstown, Md., have purchased a church building at 300 S Artizan St., Williamsport, Md. The property, which was the former New Hope Alliance Church, includes a parsonage, which will be used as a rental space.

Members of Christ Community raised \$153,000 for a down payment on the \$335,000 purchase price. They received \$75,000 from AFLC Builders Fellowship to meet accessibility and electrical codes and increase insulation in both the parsonage and the church. The congregation had its first service in the building on Palm Sunday.

"We have been renting since we were founded in 2006," said Pastor Kris Nyman, who serves the congregation. "We are in a neighborhood and have already done some outreach." (Submitted photos)



## Thief River congregation begins building project

Members of Our Saviour's Free Lutheran, Thief River Falls, Minn., held a groundbreaking service on April 11 for an addition to their church building. Construction began the following week, with footings poured on April 15 (right).

The 3,500-square-foot addition, which was part of the original building plan more than 20 years ago, will provide needed gathering space and rooms to be used for Sunday school classes and board meetings. Construction is expected to be completed this fall. (Submitted photos)





# FISHERS OF MEN

BY PASTOR NATE JORE

**S**imon Peter was the first in a long line of fishermen whom Jesus called to follow Him and become fishers of men. Rob, a neighbor and close friend of ours, is one of those fishermen who heard the gospel, repented, and began to follow Jesus.

One evening, his friend Salim came and asked if Rob would take him fishing. He explained that he had only 1,000 shillings (about 25 cents) to his name and that he did not even have enough food at home to cook supper. As they paddled out along the edge of the mighty Nile River, they prayed together, asking God to provide for them. Shortly after casting their hooks into the water, Rob felt a powerful tug on his line. His fishing line was being pulled through his hands as the fish made its way into deeper water.

After all the fishing line was pulled off the plastic bottle it had been wound around, they quickly tied on the line from a second bottle in an effort to keep the fish from snapping the line. At the end of the second line, they realized that the fish was still going strong and still had enough strength to snap their line.

They had anchored their boat to the tall grass on the edge of the river, but made a

quick decision to untie the boat and let it drift. The fish proceeded to pull the boat for about ten minutes before finally tiring and allowing Salim to pull it in. To their great delight and amazement, they found themselves staring at a 13.5 kg (29.7 pound) Nile Perch! As they reached the shore, Salim fell to his knees, raised his hands, and gave thanks to God for His provision. They sold the fish for the equivalent of 10 days' wages each.

Everyone loves a good fishing story, right? Well, there is another part of this fishing story. Salim has been struggling in recent months. Drug addiction, a failed marriage, and feeling unworthy and unwanted by God left him wallowing in defeat. God's gracious answer to his prayer and abundant provision showed him in a powerful and tangible way that God loves him and is attentive to his cry.

Just as Rob and Salim struggled to land the fish, there is a similar struggle taking place in Salim to become a follower of Jesus. The same invitation given to Simon Peter so many years ago has also been extended to Salim and to each one of us, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of



Jeremiah and Julia Jore hold onto the Nile Perch with Rob, who caught the nearly 30 pound fish.

men" (Matthew 4:19).

As for Rob, he was also saved out of a life of addiction and darkness to become a disciple of Jesus. He still fishes for fish, but now he also fishes for men for God's Kingdom. He is one of the leaders of the church plant in the village of Nabukosi where we live in Eastern Uganda.

*Jore is an AFLC missionary serving in Nabukosi, Uganda.*

## PEOPLE &amp; PLACES

**Alex Woodworth**, a second-year student at the Free Lutheran Seminary (FLS), has accepted a position as the ministry and outreach coordinator for Resurrection Free Lutheran, a church plant in Ramsey, Minn.

**Patrick VandenBos**, a 2021 graduate of FLS, has accepted a call to serve St. Ansgar's Lutheran, Salinas, Calif.

**Kyle Smith**, a 2021 graduate of FLS, has accepted a call to serve First Lutheran, Ellendale, Minn.

**Pastor Jerome Nikunen** will step down from his call to Holmes Evangelical Lutheran, Clarion, Iowa, in June.

**Pastor Kelly Henning**, Lake Alma, Saskatchewan, has resigned as president of AFLC-Canada. **Pastor Al Pinno**, Alix, Alberta, has accepted the position.

**Pastor Richard Gunderson** will serve as interim pastor at Bethany Lutheran, Astoria, Ore., beginning on July 1.

**Darwin Jackson** was installed April 18 at Triumph Lutheran, Nogales, Ariz., with Pastor Richard Gunderson officiating. **Pastor Ted Kennedy**, who served the congregation since 1979, has retired.

**Pastor J. Christian Andrews** was installed April 11 at Immanuel Lutheran, Springfield, Mo., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen officiating.

**Pastor Wayne Hjermstad**, Elk River, Minn., has accepted a part-time position with FLBC to coordinate connections between students and AFLC congregations.



## Mildred Strand

Mildred "Millie" Strand, 95, of Roseville, Minn., died March 28, 2021. Born May 30, 1925, at the family farm in Northwood, N.D., she was the daughter of Knute and Anna (Flisrand) Thorsgard. She married Pastor John Strand in 1945 in Northwood, N.D. He preceded her in death in 1997.

She attended country school for eight years and graduated from Northwood High School, then attended Augsburg College in Minneapolis. After marriage, they served Our Savior's Lutheran in Grafton, N.D., and Aspelund Lutheran, Vang, N.D. (1944-1952), Tioga, N.D. (1952-1964), and St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D. (1978-1982). They also lived in Minneapolis, where her husband served as the first president of the AFLC (1962-1978), as dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary (1964-1966), and as dean of the Bible College (1966-1968). They retired to Remer, Minn.

Surviving are three sons, Steven Strand, Michael (Barbara) Strand, and Jonathan (Ruth) Strand; two sisters, Kathryn Erickson, and Ruth (Don) Homme, five grandchildren; and one great grandson.

The service was held April 6 at Ebenezer Free Lutheran, Northwood, N.D., with Pastor Mark Molstre and Pastor Terry Olson officiating. Burial will be in Northwood South Cemetery.



## McDowell speaks at grand opening event

Dr. Sean McDowell, author, apologist, and associate professor at Biola University, La Mirada, Calif., was the featured speaker during the grand opening of the Student Life Center at the Free Lutheran Bible College on April 16. He spoke on the role of a biblical education and the importance of building relationships with students.

McDowell also spoke on issues of life during a class hour at the Bible College and Seminary earlier in the day. Students then had a hour-long question-and-answer session.

## MARCH MEMORIALS

## All Departments

Pastor Don Thorson

## Bible College

Kathleen Bischoff

Pastor Don Thorson

Lila Sabbe

Ruth Claus

Thor Strand

## FLAPS

Marlowe Huber

## General Fund

Betty Lou Floan

## Home Missions

Valborg Huglen

Phyllis Nikunen

Leonard Stinar

## Seminary

Pastor Don Thorson

Phyllis Nikunen

## WMF

Tracy Jenkins

## World Missions

Dennis Jorenby

Valborg Huglen

Leonard Stinar

... in honor of

## General Fund

Wayne and Karen

Floan

## AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-March 31, 2021

FUND	REC'D IN MARCH	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$24,795	\$69,669	\$76,368
Evangelism	13,639	31,755	15,945
Youth Ministries	22,573	40,083	18,703
Parish Education	10,107	20,874	18,422
Seminary	24,825	45,709	58,386
Bible College	47,801	81,217	64,202
Home Missions	25,489	62,067	51,118
World Missions	34,409	72,088	83,630
Personal Support	93,868	188,012	133,112
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$297,507</b>	<b>\$611,473</b>	<b>\$519,886</b>

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



# LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

*"I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet" (Amos 7:14).*

These words came to mind as I prepared to write this editorial. My own perspective is more toward the past than the future, since there will arguably be little of the latter for me to experience.

Looking to the past of our AFLC schools, we cannot doubt that the hand of God has been upon them. At the time when the AFLC began, at least a couple of critics



Pastor Robert Lee

pointed to the meager support that most of our founding congregations provided for the common endeavors of the denomination, warning how unrealistic it was to expect that we could ever establish and

support schools, missions, etc. But with a confidence that God was leading, major steps of faith were taken, and the Lord supplied what was needed through the generous gifts of His people.

Just think of it: The Medicine Lake property was purchased, a seminary and later a Bible school were established, dormitories were constructed, married student housing added, and a spacious classroom/office/dining area/library building finally made the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary (FLBCS) look like we had a real campus. And now, by the time you read this, the ribbon has been cut and a new Student Life Center and gymnasium is open. Wow! All glory to God, and thanks to those who gave and those who worked hard to make our campus a reality. Even though I watched it all happen, I still find it quite unbelievable.

Do we dare to wonder what the future might hold for our schools? There is an expectation that the Bible college will enjoy increased enrollment, due in part to gaining accreditation. Yet in terms of the sheer number of future young women

and men available, institutions of higher education are concerned that the pool of prospective students is shrinking every year. This is certainly true for us as we consider the smaller number of high school youths in many of our congregations. The strong response to our recent Campus Days, however, was certainly encouraging.

FLBCS is accredited through a biblically conservative organization, approved by the U.S. Department of Education. We cannot be confident in these days, however, that schools holding to biblical beliefs on marriage, gender, and sexuality will be able to retain government certification, and there are already lawsuits that have been filed by activist groups seeking to block Title IX's religious exemptions. This does not apply to us yet, but should we not expect that the movement against the so-called "hate" convictions of Christian schools may be expanded?

Some have expressed concerns, too, about the future tax exemption of church-related facilities. Does the argument that we provide an important benefit to society still carry weight in our more secularized society today? Could our schools survive if suddenly faced with a huge property tax bill?

It might be well for us to compare our fears of the future with what was happening in 1962 when the AFLC began. Did you know that it was the year when the Supreme Court outlawed prayer in public schools? That our country was on the brink of war with the USSR when missile bases were discovered in Cuba? That the Vietnam Conflict was escalating? That racial riots broke out in Mississippi when a black student enrolled in an all-white university? It was a very troubling time in

the life of our country, and yet it was the very time when God led in the rebirth of a spiritual life movement.

The new beginning was not free from struggles. Our fellowship went to court to try and prove that our principles had been violated in the merger process. We lost. In spite of a majority vote, the Valley City, N.D., congregation lost its court battle, too, and a new beginning for them was necessary. There were many congregations, also, in which some of the members were bound by their convictions to not participate in the merger. New congregations were organized, and we must not imagine for a moment that this was easy. Buildings were purchased or constructed, parsonages were acquired, pastors called, and the financial cost was surely considerable. Yet these were among the small group of congregations that established a new denomination with its schools, missions, and ministries.

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What does the future hold for the AFLC and its schools? We don't know, of course, and I do not claim to be a prophet. But we do know the One who has guided and provided for almost 60 years, and He will lead us through whatever comes. We know, too, with certainty, that He hears our prayers for the AFLC and its schools. So, our calling is to be faithful as we look to Him. All to His glory!

*building the base*

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# TOTAL FORGIVENESS

BY PASTOR DAVID JORE

**A** contemporary author whom I have come to appreciate is R. T. Kendall, who was pastor of Westminster Chapel in London for 25 years. I have read several of his books, but the one that stands out the most for me is titled, *Total Forgiveness*. In this book Kendall shares about an extremely painful experience that he and his wife, Louise, went through while he was serving at the chapel. He told no one about it until he spoke to a pastor from Romania by the name of Josef Tson.

Kendall recounts that when he told Pastor Tson his story, he had hoped he would put his arm around him and say, "You do have a right to be angry." Instead, this godly man looked at him and said, "RT, you must totally forgive them. Until you totally forgive them, you will be in chains. Release them and you will be released!"

Kendall wrote that forgiving those who had wronged him was the hardest thing that he had ever been asked to do. But when

he began to forgive, an unexpected change emerged. It was a peace that entered his heart that he had not experienced in years. I heard Kendall share about this life-changing experience in person. He said that choosing to forgive totally those who had hurt him dramatically altered the course of his life and ministry. Let me add, if God could do that for Kendall by choosing to forgive in the way Jesus taught us to forgive, then He can do the same for us.

A practical truth that my wife, Judith, and I have learned and are still learning is the freedom that is released when we bless those who have wronged us, which is another aspect of total forgiveness. I'll never forget overhearing Judith blessing someone who had deeply hurt her. I happened to come into the living room when I heard her praying for this person. She was using the words of the familiar blessing in Numbers 6:24-26. Where the word, "you" is repeated in this blessing, she named the person who had wronged her. Judith prayed, "The Lord

bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."

I know Judith used this prayer of blessing many times, and as a result, two wonderful things happened: first, she was kept free from bitterness, and second, eventually there was a change in the heart of the person who had hurt her. Blessing those who have wronged us is something Jesus taught His followers to do. It is a form of total forgiveness. Let me conclude by quoting one of those passages where Jesus taught us to bless others when we are in difficult situations. Jesus said to His disciples, "But I say to you who hear, 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you'" (Luke 6:27-28).

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*Jore serves Maple Bay Free Lutheran, Mentor, Minn.*