

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

MAY 2022

core values

THE FREE LUTHERAN BIBLE COLLEGE & SEMINARY

Equipping for Future Vocation

Whole-Life Discipleship

Life Together

Stewardship

Integrity





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CLINGING TO THE CROSS

BY KIRSTIE SKOGERBOE

During Lent this year, we drove with a couple of new friends to see Bach's oratorio *St. Matthew Passion* performed by the LA Opera with the Hamburg Ballet. Los Angeles traffic gave us plenty of time for conversation, much of which centered on questions of faith. One of our friends had grown up in a church that emphasized faith as a retreat from life's struggles to the extent that Christianity seemed stagnant instead of progressing toward a deeper relationship with God. Our friend summarized frankly, "I hate Christianity as a retreat."

I thought about his statement that evening, watching the dancers reenact Christ's rejection. So many people retreated from Jesus on His journey to the cross. "Then all the disciples left Him and fled," Matthew tells us (26:56). Pilate retreated from Jesus, washing his hands of guilt (Matthew 27:24). Judas retreated eternally. And these stand in ugly contrast to the Savior taking each step to Golgotha without wavering.

If anything, it seems that sin is the retreat, not faith. In life's struggles, we do run to Jesus for refuge and help—but He helps us to bear suffering, not flee from it. What's more, Jesus says that "the gates of hell shall not prevail" against the Church's attack (Matthew 16:18). But even if we're not meant to retreat, what does it mean to progress?

Once, I heard a pastor say in a sermon on sanctification, "We have to move past the cross!" In context, I think he meant that we shouldn't be complacent in our faith. But his statement still disturbed me. It would have been like my husband

saying, "We have to move past our marriage vows to really love each other." My faith was born from Jesus' blood; I *cling* to the cross. The devil's main intent is to tear my hands from those beams.

Progressing past the cross is itself a retreat from Jesus. Paradoxically, real progress in faith comes from not "moving" at all. Many of the saints we look to for examples of faith spent most of their time repenting of sins that overwhelmed them and coming to God again and again for mercy. St. Ambrose of Milan wrote in a prayer before the Lord's Supper,

Poor and troubled sinner that I am, I appeal
to You, the fountain of all mercy. ...

I show my wounds to You, O Lord, and I
reveal my shame before You.

I know my sins are great and many, and they
fill me with fear;

yet I hope in Your mercy, for it cannot be
measured. ...

Praise to the noble and precious Blood,
flowing from the wounds of my crucified
Lord Jesus Christ and washing away the
sins of the whole world!

When we're tempted to retreat from Christ, His steps to the cross keep us faithful. And when we ask God to help us make progress, He keeps our feet planted and our eyes on the cross, intent on drawing us more deeply into His love.

Skogerboe, a 2018 graduate of the Free Lutheran Bible College, Plymouth, Minn., lives in Orange, Calif.

It is in His will that God should 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.

—October 1962 Annual Conference resolution
on Seminary and Doctrine

The Conference recommends that we, the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, establish our own theological seminary, to open in the fall of 1964.

—1963 Annual Conference resolution

The Conference would like to urge the Seminary Committee together with the Executive Committee and the Board of Administration to investigate the possibility of establishing a Bible School in connection with the Seminary by the fall of 1965.

—1964 Annual Conference resolution

With a seemingly greater need for a Bible school for our young people and in response to the desire of the Conference last year, we will launch out in faith and start a Bible school in the fall of 1966.

—1966 seminary report, Howard R. Lieder, vice-chairman

The 1966 Annual Meeting gave the impetus for the establishment of a Bible school in the fall of 1966. This was a venture of faith to the “nth” degree.

—1967 seminary report, George Soberg, chairman



To anyone watching, it was a bizarre ritual. One Wednesday afternoon several years ago, many of the staff and faculty of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary slowly circled a table in the middle of an empty classroom. In our hands were several dried black beans and on the table were several sheets of paper, each labeled with something considered important to our ministry at the Bible college and seminary. It wasn't the most sophisticated or elegant of voting processes, but it got the job done. Each bean placed represented one vote as we determined the "core values" of FLBCS.

The beans were new, but surveys like this were old hat to many of us. We were in the midst of gaining accreditation through the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS); evaluation and improvement had been on our minds for months. The staff had taken a fine-tooth comb over everything—interviews, surveys, and polls for every program, procedure, and policy.

But there was something different about *this* survey. We had beans in our hands, but we knew this was important. An organization's core values answer

important questions: who you are, and *why* you do *what* you do. Our core values cast the direction for our future while being informed by our past. They provide the anchor of our identity as we move into the unknown future.

Several tribes in the Pacific think about the future differently than we do. Instead of looking ahead into the unknown, they picture themselves facing the past as they walk backwards into the future. We adopted this approach with our core values, confidently walking backward into the future, guided by our God and informed by our heritage. Confident not because we know what lies ahead, but because we see how God has brought us to this point and we know that He controls what lies ahead.

After several rounds of brainstorming and discussion—and all our beans had been cast—we arrived at a consensus of five values.

Kneeland, former staff at FLBCS, serves Gloria Dei Lutheran, St. Louis, Mo. He is also a student at Concordia Seminary.



core VALUES

By Pastor Andrew Kneeland

Equipping for Future Vocation

The programs offered at FLBCS are built to send faithful men and women into local congregations for lay or pastoral ministry. The local congregation is where Christians are fed with the Word and grown as God's children. Both lay and pastoral ministry are vital in local congregational contexts. Our mission statement clearly affirms this purpose: "Our mission is 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."

Stewardship

The time and resources we have belong to Christ. We know that all things will pass away and everything we've been given is a gift from God. Staff and faculty take care of what has been entrusted to them and will continue to wisely use it to glorify Him. They spend and save money wisely, preserve and maintain property and facilities, and honor and invest into the lives of their staff, faculty, and students.

Integrity

Honesty is a chief virtue for all Christians. We value the truth and desire to provide, by the strength of God, a witness of integrity for our neighbors. FLBCS staff and faculty are honest and forthright as they carry out the operations of the Bible college and seminary and as they interact with others. Students, staff, and faculty clearly know what is expected from them and what they should expect from the school. External entities and regular audits ensure consistent financial integrity and transparency.

Life Together

Christians are called to live in community. God's design for our life involves regular life alongside our spiritual brothers and sisters, allowing our faith community to shape and form us in the Christian life. The best way to train students to live out their Christian faith is by actually living together, in an on-campus community. There's something special about dorm life. It's busy, loud, often messy, but always enriching. As students rub shoulders with each other there are opportunities to encourage, to forgive, and to grow. These opportunities are fostered and modeled by a staff of dorm workers who guide the students in their life together.

Whole-Life Discipleship

There is no aspect of life that Christ didn't redeem, so FLBCS intends to value and care for the *whole* life of their students. The students are spiritually nourished every day with the life-giving Word of God. Their emotional and mental health is also a priority, and students and dorm staff work together to maintain an appropriately balanced schedule. Healthy food made with high-quality ingredients will be offered to students, as well as regular opportunities for recreation, to provide for their physical health.



By Pastor Micah Hjermstad

Twenty years ago, I graduated from the school formerly known as AFLBS. I loved my time there, and the dividends of that two-year investment still bless me abundantly after all these years in the friendships made, training in leadership, and most importantly, a love for God's perfect, life-giving Word.

Twenty years later, the school goes by a new name with an acronym (FLBC) that is arguably even more clunky-sounding than the last one. The faculty is almost totally different. There are two massive buildings that dominate areas where my classmates and I studied under the shade of large trees and played catch in the warmth of the spring sunshine.

In many ways, it's not the same school. But then, I'm not same person, either. We all know change is hard, but I wonder if we should learn to embrace change more than we do. We pray for it, don't we? As the old chorus goes: "Change my heart Oh God ... You are the Potter, I am the clay.

Mold me and make me, this is what I pray." And Scripture exhorts us, "In view of God's mercies ... be transformed ..." (Romans 12:1-2). I pray that God has changed me over the years, that I've grown in Him, the Vine. I pray that we as a body continue to be transformed by the extravagant mercy of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

That's really the key. This kind of change is only good and right if it happens, in Christ. It has to be His work. One way to discern that is to look at the fruit of a particular work. The congregation I serve in Fargo, N.D., is blessed to have many FLBC alumni in its ranks. It blesses my heart to see that today's alumni have the same love for God's Word that our alumni have always had. They're hungry for the Bread of Life. They take positions of leadership on various committees, they lead worship, and they teach Sunday school.

In that sense, FLBC is the same school it always has been, by God's grace. What can't change is our foundation in the Vine, abiding and



FUTURE vocation

By Pastor Adam Osier

Live Called—that was the year-long theme for the Free Lutheran Bible College during the 2020-21 school year. It was based these words from Paul: “Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him” (I Corinthians 7:17, ESV).

This passage concisely expresses the doctrine of vocation. This doctrine was paradigm-shifting for me as a young college student, and it greatly shaped how I understood my service in God’s world and in the local congregation. As is human tendency, my idea of serving God had become a means of impressing God or earning His favor. I needed to do things—usually church-specific ministry things—for God to see my devotion and accept me.

My professors at FLBC demonstrated to me from God’s Word that I had the cart before the horse. The only work capable of making me pleasing to God was completed on a cross two millennia prior. Now, as one who by faith had received perfect standing before God, I was God’s workmanship created for good works. I had been assigned by God various callings in which I was able to serve my neighbor. In these vocations (from the Latin for “calling”) God was serving my neighbor through me. But not only that, in these same vocations, I was serving Christ who was hidden in my neighbor (cf. Matthew 25:35-40).

This doctrine touches every facet of life. We each have various callings in our families, society (including the workforce), and our congregations. In each of these “estates” there are neighbors to serve. Sometimes this is ordinary and mundane, other times this is more exciting. Yet in either case, love is being expressed, and needs are being met.

Now, as the dean of FLBC, I have the privilege of serving and leading in a culture where I can be used to equip students for their vocations. We are intentional in pursuit of this end. In each of our classes—whether in exegetical, systematic, historical, or practical theology courses—our intention is not to impart mere head knowledge. We seek to show that God’s Word calls us to faith in Christ and fuels faithful service in His world and kingdom. The Word as it is taught and applied calls and equips faithful Christian servants, whether they be husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, children, farmers, doctors, Sunday school teachers or students, elders, deacons, pastors, or anything in between. Wherever God has called us, He has given us neighbors to love in His name and for His glory. And as we do, we are serving him.

Osier is the dean of the Free Lutheran Bible College.

resting in His authority and finding forgiveness and life in His Name. Our school has always placed a high value on teaching our students to love God’s Word and serve the congregation, and I praise God that mission continues to be carried out today.

I still don’t know if I love the name FLBC, but it’s just a name, and the new name does bring some tangible benefits. I praise God for providing excellent faculty for a new generation. Those two big buildings serve our students and greater AFLC in wonderful ways. And I find great encouragement in the fact that our Bible college and seminary faithfully prioritize the message of the gospel to save souls and transform lives for service to Him.

Hjermstad, who serves St. Paul’s Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D., is a 2002 graduate of the Free Lutheran Bible College and a 2010 graduate of the Free Lutheran Seminary.

By Sherry Mork

The Apostle Paul writes to the Philippians, “Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (4:8).

This is not exactly a verse that I think of when I consider stewardship. Yet, as I began to pray about the topic, it is the verse that came to my mind. My initial thought was, “What? This isn’t a stewardship verse ... or is it?” So what is stewardship?

Stewardship is the responsible management of God-given resources. It is taking care of what has come into our possession or what has been given to us to care for in a special way. God has ownership, we have stewardship. Recognizing that everything comes from God, “The earth and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants, belong to the Lord” (Psalm 24:1), how will we steward what God has put in our care?

Being a steward, then, is taking care of our resources, gifts, and all that God has generously provided in light of Paul’s admonition that “whatever is,” is ours to safeguard. We steward our finances, our friendships, our relationships, families, homes, vocations, talents, etc., with a mind saturated by the Word and guarded by the Spirit, turning our eyes upon Jesus and submitting all to Him.

The Apostle Peter writes, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:10).

Generosity in giving—when stewarded through the lens of Philippians 4:8—then honors and glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. At the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary, we acknowledge gratefully that every student and every resource (financially or otherwise) are God’s provisions to be stewarded responsibly for the glory of Jesus Christ for faithful service in His Kingdom. I encourage you to “turn your eyes upon Jesus.”

Mork is the director of donor relations for the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary.





RESPONSIBLY MANAGING THE GIFTS THE LORD HAS PROVIDED

stewardship

By Ashley Feist

God's workmanship—Ephesians 2:10 gives believers this title.

The God of the entire universe—who spoke into existence every star in the sky and every grain of sand in the seas—sees us as His handiwork. Wow. Not only that, but we also learn through Paul's letter to the Ephesians that through Jesus we—God's workmanship—were created with a specific purpose: do the good works God has prepared in advance for us to do. The debt of our sin was paid in full, once and for all, through Jesus Christ on the cross. We need not do good works to earn God's love; rather, our good works flow from the love we have already received! I am free to steward both the gifts the Lord has given me and the tools with which He has equipped me to serve in the opportunities He has placed at my feet.

Understanding that Christ's work on the cross brought me—sinful, broken, and in-the-process-of-sanctification as I am—freedom revolutionized the way I lived my life. Because of Christ's finished work for me, and for you, dear believer, I no longer feel the need to “do” to gain eternal brownie points with the Lord. Instead, I am free to “do” what needs to be done and to serve where service is needed.

On a similar note, I no longer worry if I am using my gifts well enough. Peter tells believers to “use whatever gifts you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various

forms” (I Peter 4:10). I have found there is great flexibility in being a faithful steward of God's grace from season to season. I have come to recognize that serving with my gifts is less about becoming wrapped up in what specific gifts the Lord has given me and more about practically serving people around me whose needs are yearning to be met.

In one season, the church floors might need to be swept and mopped each week. Another season might bring up the need for active Sunday school teachers. In another, the church outreach team might need someone to help cook community meals every Wednesday. In yet another season still, the need for frequent, consistent prayers might be the most pressing concern of them all. No matter the season or the service at hand, one sentiment rings true: The Lord has created His people—His workmanship—to love others. This love is not worked out to earn salvation, but because Jesus Christ first saved and served His people through His death and resurrection. As believers, we can freely meet the needs of others, stewarding the gifts and abilities we have been given. What a beautiful thing to proclaim.

Feist, a 2020 graduate of the Free Lutheran Bible College, is a member of Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn.

WHOLE-LIFE discipleship

A FOCUS ON SPIRITUAL, EMOTIONAL, MENTAL, AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

By Brad Bierle

One of the joys of being on a college campus is the enthusiasm of a connected group of individuals committed to living and learning together. When this takes place within the context of God's Word and His design for community, it is even more special. The final ingredient in this recipe is the shared purpose of developing and maturing as disciples of Christ. This is the whole-life discipleship model of FLBC.

Focusing on the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical health of each person is a value we share and pursue together. Through consistent exposure and interaction with God's Word, we build upon a solid foundation that prioritizes

By Bethany Motley

I love telling people my story because it demonstrates God's ability to make "all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28).

When I graduated from FLBC in 2008, I was unsure of what path I should take. I knew from my own personal Bible study and my coursework on campus that God could (and would) accomplish His purposes in my life, even in a "regular" job. Now more than 10 years later, I can clearly see all the ways that God works through regular people.



My decision to become a registered dietitian nutritionist was born out of my own struggle with an eating disorder. Through my treatment, I was able to fully experience and observe the work of an eating disorder dietitian. In my recovery, I decided I wanted to help others in the same way that I was helped.

Now in my own private practice, I have the autonomy to counsel my clients in a way that encompasses the whole person—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Most people immediately think of the physical aspects of nutrition, such as nutritious eating for a healthy body. Nutrition rehabilitation is certainly a physical need in eating disorder work, but it's only part of the work.

I also focus heavily on my clients' mental and emotional health. Eating disorders are a mental health issue, and there are many underlying roots to untangle to experience full recovery. I tell my clients, "I care less about what you eat and more

about your thoughts and beliefs about food." My goal is to help clients improve their relationship with food, so food no longer controls their life, and they can focus on the truly important things.

Many of my clients are not believers, but I know that God has put them in my care for a reason. My deepest desire is for all my clients to come to know the Great Physician and experience the healing that only He can bring. I pray for every one of my clients and do my best to show them God's love and compassion through my work. Building relationships is paramount in eating disorder work, and I look forward to seeing how God will open doors for future spiritual conversations.

In the fall of 2021, I was able to come full circle and return to campus to continue the work God began there for me. A few months earlier, I was feeling the nudge to reach out to the administration to talk about how I could use both my nutrition expertise as well as my story to minister to FLBC students. I was given the opportunity to share my story with the women on campus, which has led to providing individual nutrition consults for students.

It has truly been a joy to sit down with students and minister in the unique way God has prepared for me. I'm excited to continue this relationship with the college, for as long as God has planned for me. And I'm looking forward to seeing where God takes me in this story.

Motley, Minnetonka, Minn., is a 2008 graduate of the Free Lutheran Bible College.



love and care for individuals as well as the entire community. This training is described in Philippians 2, referring to believers as “being of the same mind.” In addition, verse 5 states, “have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.” With Christ as our model and source of this mindset, we become equipped through the Spirit to love better and care more for each other than we could ever muster in our own strength. This unity in mind and purpose allows each of us to “look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4). This is the reason we can live and love one another in a community which values Christ over all, and others over self.

Within this Christian community, our different backgrounds, personalities, and pursuits can be valued and explored within a safe and nurturing environment. Even failings and shortcomings can be redeemed for good as we encourage each other to grow as followers of Christ. Together, we learn

how to balance all of the opportunities and responsibilities that God puts in our path. From sharing daily meals, dorm rooms, classes, and ministry activities, we learn together how to glorify God in all that we do and say (Colossians 3:17). Through practicing faithfulness in the little things, we mature and prepare for the big things to come. Thriving in study, work, rest, and even play, we begin to understand God’s design and plan for those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

As children of God (John 1:12), we are provided with all that we need to live lives worthy of His calling and to encourage one another in the pursuit of righteousness. John wrote of how Christ laid down His life for us (I John 3:16). This is how we know love, and how we can share it with others as we discover how to become disciples of Christ with our whole lives.

Bierle is the director of student life at the Free Lutheran Bible College. He is also the men’s basketball coach.





By Soren Grotberg

At FLBC, life together is a really important aspect of ministry. Many activities are designed to bring the community together as brothers and sisters in Christ, including dorm devotions, wing devotions, and vespers.

Both devotional times have been very impactful in my life. Dorm devotions are cool because all the men come together to grow in our relationship with Christ and grow closer as brothers. It feels a little cliché to say this, but it really is true.

One of the best parts about being at FLBC is community time. There is a brotherhood where we push each other to be more like Christ and to grow in spiritual maturity. There is always someone you can talk to if you're struggling, including teachers, dorm assistants, or fellow students. The saying, "iron sharpens iron," (Proverbs 27:17) is something I see lived out in the men's dorm.

During my first semester here, my grandpa passed away and there was never a moment where I felt alone. People came up to me, encouraged me, and supported me. I remember at one of dorm devotional times all the guys gathered around and prayed for me. I am so thankful to know that I have brothers who will be there for me no matter what and will encourage and challenge me in my faith life as well as in

practical aspects of life.

Another aspect of community life here that I enjoy is community time between second- and third-hour classes on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. During these 40 minutes students will often go to the Student Life Center and indulge themselves at the Full Court Press, our own coffee shop. We also use this time to play games, have theological conversations, or on some Fridays students lead devotional times.

We also have intramural sports like volleyball or Ultimate Frisbee. These events give students the opportunity to get their energy in some friendly competition. This is one of my favorite things to do at FLBC. People come to win, but also to have fun. It does get competitive but at the end of the day, no matter the score, we all can come together and respect each other's abilities. Our friendships are more than our desire to win.

I am incredibly blessed to be here and very thankful that God has given me this opportunity to grow closer to Him and learn to serve others. The goal for FLBC students is to become grounded in the Word so that we can go out into the world and be examples for Christ in whatever vocation to which He has called us.

Grotberg (above left), a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Valley City, N.D., is a first-year student.

By Diana Alverson

as a believer, at the Free Lutheran Bible College you are not just living among your peers, you are called to live lives, in Christ, together. This is exemplified in the residential life of FLBC students. To live in harmony among one another is not something that is just obtained but something that is sought after as we grow in our personal walk with Jesus and as we grow together as the body of Christ.

Paul writes to the church in Galatia, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (6:2). It is not simply passing in the hallway and offering an awkward hello, living together allows us to bear each other’s burdens as we pursue the Lord, getting on our knees in the late hours of the night, in the early hours of the morning, or in the middle of a class period and crying out to our heavenly Father, boldly. These moments of vulnerability are built on trust created as we chase after Jesus together in our community.

Paul also wrote to the church in Ephesus, “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (4:15-16). As we pursue growing together, living together, and striving to chase Jesus together, we are given the opportunity to encourage our fellow sisters and brothers in Christ to pursue a higher calling than the world offers. By speaking the truth in love, we are given the chance to have the harder conversations, to humble ourselves, and to speak truth to those who surround us every day. In turn, we expect the same from them—that our brothers and sisters would speak the truth in love into our lives and that we would humbly hear what they have to say.

The body of Christ is built up with many members. One member cannot work without the other. It is a joy to see people living together in harmony here at FLBC, with the end goal of being kingdom-minded with our eyes fixed on eternity. As dorm staff, we pray as students prepare to be sent out that they will be all the more equipped to bear the burdens of those they live amongst in the future, that they will have the boldness to get on their knees and cry out in prayer with their peers, and that they will be kingdom-minded until the day they set foot in eternity.

Alverson (above left) is a women’s dorm assistant and event coordinator for FLBC.

life together





integrity

By Pastor Todd Erickson

integrity is an integral core value as the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary (FLBCS) seeks 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. In fact, it is the integrity of God's Word that fosters this integrity in the lives of students, faculty, staff, and administration on campus and beyond.

Our core value states, "We will do what we say, and repent when we fail to do so." This honest commitment to truth in word and action is essential in the purposeful discipleship training that is practiced on campus in the dorms, classrooms, and offices. This integrity also leads to humble admission when we fail and a freedom to repent. Openness and transparency feed a culture of spiritual growth across all levels from students to board members.

Further, our core value states, "Excellence will be pursued in every facet of each department." Striving for excellence is not based merely on God-given talents and abilities, but for faithful service in God's kingdom to honor Him and Him alone. One clear example through the years has been the Bible College choirs and the excellent quality of music. This is also displayed in the excellent care given to seminary students so that they may be pastors who love their congregations and rightfully handle God's most excellent Word.

Next, our core value states, "We will evaluate the past and cast a vision for the future through frequent

and regular review of our people, procedures, and programs." We should be thankful for the heritage we have in the AFLC and in FLBCS these last 50 years, but we must not rest. Rather, we should constantly seek to move forward in the truth never straying from it. Purposeful reviews now take place on all levels from the Board of Trustees to administration, to faculty, and to every level of involvement. This process has led to a more willing attitude to be evaluated so that true improvement may take place. Praise God!

The last statement is, "We will foster innovation in each staff member, avoiding vague direction." Change scares many. But when the mission of FLBCS is kept at the forefront, change is done seeking God's direction and for His purposes. That encouragement fosters a forward-looking environment. One thing we have been blessed to do as a Board of Trustees is to take advantage of training in board governance. Integrity is integral and means we seek to improve.

Students, staff, supporters, and visitors will perceive joy, efficiency, stewardship, and beauty while on campus. I invite you to campus. Come and visit with students, staff, and administration. You won't find perfection, but integrity is integral. May God help us all to live out our faith in Jesus in His strength alone.

Erickson, who serves Rose Free Lutheran and Spruce Free Lutheran, Roseau, Minn., is chairman of the FLBCS Board of Trustees.



"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9).

M

inistry as a nursing home/senior care chaplain is an open door to meet people at a critical

time in their lives—many of them close to the end of their earthly lives—and bless them with the open door of eternal peace with God through Jesus Christ.

I work at four residential facilities which range from nursing home care to short-term rehabilitation, and from assisted living to memory care, to independent living. Each Sunday I lead three worship services, and during the week I lead Bible studies, special services, devotions and table prayers, and an event I call "Faith Time Singalong," which combines hymn singing with devotions and prayer. In between these daily events, there are people who need one-to-one visits and fellow employees who also need spiritual support and encouragement. There's plenty to keep me busy.

I'm blessed by the open door to bring the unchanging Word of God to a diverse

AN OPEN DOOR TO MINISTRY

BY PASTOR MICHAEL PETERSON

collection of people from varying perspectives and spiritual backgrounds. In a world with tremendous pressure to compromise and water down the message of salvation through Jesus Christ, I find that the people I work with are highly receptive to a ministry which stands firm upon God's Word and presents Christ alone as the way to heaven. This includes both the people to whom I minister as well as the organization for which I work. Even in a somewhat pluralistic spiritual environment, there's a recognition that an old-fashioned Bible faith is just what is needed here, and I'm amazed by the freedom I'm given to preach the Word alone. I'm thankful for this open door of support.

I'm also blessed by the opportunity to extend the ministry of my own home church, Chippewa Lutheran Church in Brandon, Minn. The organization I work for, Knute Nelson, has a number of affiliated corporation churches which have a voice in its governance. I'm happy to report that Chippewa is one of those corporation churches and has been for a long time. As an

AFLC pastor I believe that "the congregation is the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth" (Fundamental Principle 1), and so I believe that my ministry is an extension, not only of our corporation churches, but of the church where I am a member. I'm doubly blessed to be ministering on behalf of Chippewa Lutheran on both counts.

I'm also blessed to be working as a member of a team and not by myself. I work closely with members of other departments, especially the activities staff, and we also have a team of several other spiritual care workers, both paid staff and volunteer.

If you are seeking a wide-open door to gospel outreach, your local nursing home or senior care facility may be a golden opportunity for you and your church to reach out to souls in need of the good news of Jesus. I highly recommend it.

Peterson, Alexandria, Minn., is the chaplain at Knute Nelson, Alexandria.

God Rewards the Faithful

June 15-18 • Association Retreat Center

The Association Retreat Center (ARC) welcomes the 60th Annual Conference of the AFLC June 15-18. We are honored and blessed to be a part of this momentous occasion where we can come together to celebrate the blessings of the Lord over the past 60 years and look forward to many more blessings in the years to come.

ARC staff and Conference Committee members have been meeting regularly. We are excited, enriched, and blessed to be hosting this event. We “consider it pure joy” (James 1:2) to partner with the Annual Conference. This week—what is often referred to as a “spiritual powerhouse of prayer”—will include workshops and lecture series. We will work together toward our common goals through business sessions and corporation meetings. There will be activities for young and old including morning and afternoon schedules for nursery, vacation Bible school, and youth programming.

We thank all of those who have supported and are supporting this event. Without the help of volunteers, donations, and prayer this event would not be possible. If you wish to help in any way before, during, or after the conference please feel free to reach out to the ARC at 715-294-2877 or email info@arc-aflc.org.

We encourage everyone to attend conference. Seeing how God has been moving through the ministries of the AFLC that we support is always encouraging. Then taking that encouragement back to your congregation further strengthens the AFLC and its ministries as well as the kingdom work in your area. Come, be blessed, and then be a blessing. See you soon!

—Kirk Rautio is the executive director of the ARC

Proposed change to Mission Corporation

This year’s nominees for the Missions Corporation (MC) look different. I want to share with the AFLC what has been happening in the MC, the legal operating entity for both AFLC World and Home Missions’ efforts since they were founded. While existing as a single corporation, the World and Home Missions Departments have functioned independent of each other. It has worked, but operating this way has created several challenges. The MC’s effort to improve our structure and our effectiveness led to a vote at last year’s Annual Conference to look at creating a second corporation, the World Missions Corp. The current MC would then become responsible for Home Missions work only. This change in structure is *not* due to any conflict between departments or persons but is in pursuit of increased effectiveness in each mission field.

The creation of a new corporation is only a proposal at this point, and it has been the work of a small steering committee to prepare all the documents and procedures for this plan to be executed. The proposed change, along with the goal of approving the plan and beginning to implement it at this year’s MC annual meeting (scheduled for June 17 at the Annual Conference), has made the job of the Nominating Committee particularly challenging. This is why you will find that the list of nominees for the MC looks different this year. The nominees are technically for the MC as it has always existed, but we asked nominees to indicate a preference for which corporation they would like to serve on if the division is approved.

If the creation of a second corporation is approved at the MC annual meeting, the boards of both new corporations will begin to implement the legal steps to begin operating as new corporations. The World and Home Missions departments have always operated independently, which means that the way the AFLC interacts with each department will remain largely unchanged. However, the legal changes are significant, and we have spent a lot of time considering the different options available to us as a corporation. Please pray for our corporation, that God would grant us all wisdom and grace as we vote on this process at the upcoming Annual Conference.

—Pastor David Handsaker, Mission Corporation president



Conference Registration

An online registration form for the Annual Conference will be available through June 6

aflc.org/about-us/conferences

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

2023 CONFERENCE COMMITTEE NOMINEES

Committee No. 1

(Administration)

Cheryl Skordahl, Rogers, Minn.

Pastor Shane McLoughlin, Minot, N.D.

Three more nominees

Committee No. 2

(Schools)

Gary Fulsebakke, Devil’s Lake, N.D.

Alison Mundfrom, Crystal, Minn.

Pastor Gideon Johnson, Killdeer, N.D.

Two more nominees

Committee No. 3

(Missions)

Pastor Andrew Kneeland, St. Louis, Mo.

Pastor David Johnson, Boyertown, Pa.

Jan Mobley, Lake Preston, S.D.

Two more nominees

Committee No. 4

(Publications and Parish Education)

Pastor Luke Berntson, Northome, Minn.

Deb Burmeister, Mount Vernon, S.D.

Becca Mundfrom, Wayzata, Minn.

Two more nominees

Committee No. 5

(Evangelism and Benefits)

Pastor John Amundson, New Leipzig, N.D.

Four more nominees

BOARD & COMMITTEE NOMINEES

Association Retreat Center

Voted on by corporation members

- (One pastor, five-year term)
*Pastor Shane McLoughlin, Minot, N.D.
X

Bay Broadcasting

Voted on by corporation members

- (One pastor, three-year term)
No nominees

Benefits Board

- (One layman, five-year term)
Joe Spilde, Arlington, S.D.
X

Evangelism and Discipleship

- (One layman, five-year term)
*Micah Johnson, Maple Grove, Minn.
X

FLAPS Board

Voted on by corporation members

- (One layman, five-year term)
No nominees
- (One pastor, five-year term)
No nominees

Coordinating Committee

- (One layman, five-year term)
Mark Presteng, Grafton, N.D.
*Dr. Lyle Westrom, Crookston, Minn.
- (One layman, five-year term)
Paul Haugen, Sioux Falls, S.D.
X

Budget Analysis Committee

- (One layman, three-year term)
Dan Aichele, Killdeer, N.D.
Marlene Wik, Sparta, Wis.
- (One layman, three-year term)
Leo Brackel, Mott, N.D.
David Johnson, Burtrum, Minn.
- (One layman, one-year term)
No nominees

Schools Board of Trustees

Voted on by corporation members

- (One layman, five-year term)
*Phil Johnson, Esko, Minn.
Dan Mundfrom, Greeley, Colo.

Parish Education

- (One layman, five-year term)
Gwen Berge, Maple Grove, Minn.
Gracia Johnson, Canal Winchester, Ohio
Jen Thorson, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Home Missions Committee

Voted on by corporation members

- (One layman, five-year term)
Jim Harrington, Lisbon, N.D.
X
- (One layman, two-year term)
Hans Tanner, Fargo, N.D.
X

World Missions Committee

Voted on by corporation members

- (One pastor, five-year term)
Pastor David Johnson, Boyertown, Pa.
X
- (One layman, three-year term)
No nominees

Youth Board

- (One pastor, four-year term)
Pastor Matthew Nelson, Radcliffe, Iowa
Pastor David Ryerson, Sioux Falls, S.D.

CORPORATIONS

ARC Corporation

(10 terms of five years each)

- *Pastor Ron Brubakken, Osceola, Wis.
- Charles Dietz, Canal Winchester, Ohio
- Marty Hauschild, Arlington, S.D.
- Patty Hooper, Ishpeming, Mich.
- *Donald Jones, Kandiyohi, Minn.
- *Steve Lehmann, Milford, Ill.
- *Pastor Aaron Olson, Arlington, S.D.
- **Kevin O'Neil, Beresford, S.D.
- Lowell Watt, Fargo, N.D.

Eleven more names needed

Schools Corporation

(10 terms of five years each)

- *Pastor Dan Antal, Grand Forks, N.D.
- Aaron Arneson, Fargo, N.D.
- Mike Borg, Sioux Falls, S.D.
- Pastor Kevin Czymbor, Armour, S.D.
- Kelly Emerson, St. Francis, Kan.
- Kevin Hooper, Ishpeming, Mich.
- *Pastor Martin Horn, Crystal, Minn.
- *Wanda Jacobson, Brooklyn Park, Minn.
- **Phil Johnson, Esko, Minn.
- *Erling Langness, Ishpeming, Mich.

- Jared Langness, Thousand Oaks, Calif.
- Dan Larson, Tioga, N.D.
- Tim Larson, Osakis, Minn.
- Jenna Lee, Ray, N.D.
- Alison Mundfrom, Crystal, Minn.
- **Dr. Dan Mundfrom, Greeley, Colo.
- *Sam Nash, Fergus Falls, Minn.
- *Dean Nelson, Vergas, Minn.
- *Pastor Eric Rasmussen
- Walter Rolf, Lisbon, N.D.
- Alan Twedt, Portland, N.D.
- Pastor Brian Westerbur, Grafton, N.D.

Home Missions Corporation

(10 terms of five years each)

- *Licensed Pastor Brady Arneson, Honolulu
- **Lavon Bohling, Inman, Kan.
- **Tom Caouette, Nisswa, Minn.
- Dylan Emerson, St. Francis, Kan.
- Brad Folsland, Oldham, S.D.
- Cathy Folsland, Oldham, S.D.
- *Michael Grahm, Roseau, Minn.
- Dana Hagen, Sioux Falls, S.D.
- **Jim Harrington, Lisbon, N.D.
- Doug Hertlein, Carroll, Ohio
- Pastor Wayne Hjermstad, Elk River, Minn.

- Reagan Johnson, Bethel Park, Pa.
- **Pastor Jon Langness, Deshler, Neb.
- **Pastor Henry Mohagen, Reva, S.D.
- Philip Mundfrom, Maple Grove, Minn.
- Pastor Barry Nelson, Tripp, S.D.
- Pastor Jerry Peterson, Durant, Okla.
- Jolene Scheel, Fergus Falls, Minn.
- **Greg Schmitke, Moorhead, Minn.
- Loren Tungseth, Fergus Falls, Minn.
- Jeremy Zeltinger, Valley City, N.D.

World Missions Corporation

(6 terms of five years each)

- Kaetlyn Davalos, Sioux Falls, S.D.
- Pastor Jim Fugleberg, Moorhead, Minn.
- **Pastor Craig Johnson, Ferndale, Wash.
- Pastor Lynn Kinneberg, McVie, N.D.
- Jim Marcusen, Taylor, N.D.
- Casey McLoughlin, Minot, N.D.
- David Moeller, Mayville, N.D.
- Heidi Mundfrom, Crystal, Minn.
- Karen Palmer, Shakopee, Minn.
- Jim Thompson, Janesville, Wis.
- Sharon Tungseth, Fergus Falls, Minn.

One more name needed

AFLC Annual Conference

June 15-18 • Association Retreat Center

The AFLC's 60th anniversary Annual Conference will be held June 15-18 at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis. The conference theme, "God Rewards the Faithful," comes from Hebrews 11:6.

Registration

Registration for the conference is available online. To register, please visit aflc.org/about-us/conferences. The cost of registration is \$35/individual, and \$60/couple. To register over the phone, call Chanel Nelson in the AFLC president's office at (763) 412-2001. Registration will close on June 6. Walk-up registration will be available for late registrants.

As you register, please refer to the conference schedule (subject to change). A full version of this schedule is available on the AFLC conference web page.

Housing and Meals

Reservations for housing and meals at the Association Retreat Center are available through the ARC web page (arc-aflc.org/2022-annual-conference), or by calling the ARC at (715) 294-2877. A link is also available on the conference registration page.

Off-site housing is available at the following hotels/motels:

- Osceola, Wis. (8 miles): River Valley Inn and Suites (715) 294-4060
- St. Croix Falls, Wis. (13 miles): Holiday Inn Express (715) 483-5775
- New Richmond, Wis. (13 miles): Best Western Plus (715) 243-5600, AmeriVu Inn and Suites (715) 246-4606, AmericInn (715) 246-3993
- Amery, Wis. (18 miles): Forest Inn (715) 268-4100
- Chisago City, Minn. (20 miles): Comfort Inn and Suites (651) 213-3400
- Stillwater, Minn. (25 miles): Comfort Inn and Suites (651) 275-1401, Water Street Inn (651) 439-6000, Lora Hotel (651) 571-3500

WMF Day

WMF Day will be held beginning at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, June 15, under the theme "Sing for Joy" from Psalm 90:14. Registration for the event is available online at aflc.org/women/wmf-day or by mail (see page 19) by June 1. A link is also available on the AFLC conference registration page. The cost to attend is \$20/person. Registration for the WMF luncheon (on June 15), breakfast (on June 16), and housing can be handled through the ARC registration page. Contact Margie Lee, WMF treasurer, at margieleend@gmail.com, with further questions.

Children and Youth

Childcare, vacation Bible school (VBS), and youth activities will be available June 15-18. Please register all participants on the AFLC conference registration form available at aflc.org/about-us/conferences.

VBS activities will be provided for children entering preschool through those entering 6th grade. Two FLBC summer teams and volunteers will lead daily Bible lessons, music, crafts, and recreation during morning and afternoon business sessions, and children will join their families for lunch and dinner.

Childcare will be available for those 3 years old or younger during the morning and afternoon business sessions. Children in the nursery will join their families for lunch and dinner. If you plan on using this service at any point during the conference, please register your child/children for accurate planning.

Students entering 7th through those who have completed 12th grade who register for the teen track will join together for worship, Bible study, and fellowship activities each morning and afternoon. Students will remain on camp grounds.



Conference schedule

Wednesday, June 15

- 9 a.m. Conference committees meet
- 7:30 p.m. Ordination service

Thursday, June 16–Saturday, June 18

- 7:30 a.m. Breakfast
- 8:30 a.m. Devotions
- 8:45 a.m. Business session
- 10:25 a.m. Break
- 10:50 a.m. Business session
- 11:40 a.m. Prayer: Pastor David Jore
- Noon Lunch
- Thursday Builder's Fellowship
- Friday Chaplaincy
- Saturday FLBC Alumni
- 1:15 p.m. AFLC Department Electives (Thursday and Saturday)
- 1:15 p.m. Corporation Meetings (Friday)
Lecture Series (Friday)
- 2:15 p.m. AFLC Department Electives (Thursday and Saturday)
Lecture Series (Friday)
- 3 p.m. Break
- 3:30 p.m. Worship and devotions
- 3:50 p.m. Business session
- 5:30 p.m. Dinner (Thursday and Friday)
- 7:30 p.m. Evening service
- Thursday Mission Festival service
- Friday Communion, 60th anniversary
- Saturday Testimony service (4:30 p.m.)



WMF

WOMEN'S
MISSIONARY
FEDERATION

SING FOR JOY!

BY DAWN JOHNSON

It is getting to be that time of year when we come together for our annual AFLC family reunion called the Annual Conference. Plans are being made for our WMF Day gathering on June 15 at the ARC, near Osceola, Wis. Registration opens at 8 a.m., and the program begins at 9 a.m. Come and join us as we hear from God's Word, sing, praise our Lord together, and conduct WMF business. Our theme is "Sing for Joy," taken from Psalm 90:14, "Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days."

Our day will include hearing from workshop speakers Andrew Hanson, Rachel Mattson, and Jan Strand. A memorial service, remembering the women from our congregations who have passed on to glory, will be led by Vicki Johnson. An informal breakfast will be held on June 16 for those who would like to gather and share ministry ideas and encourage each other.

Pastor Jon Langness will be our service leader for our Mission Festival Service on June 16. Pastor Langness serves in Deshler, Neb., and is on the Home Missions Committee. Pastor Holmes Zhao will give an update on the Living Stones Chinese Fellowship, a Home Missions congregation. Our main speaker will be Pastor Andrew Olson, AFLC missionary to Tanzania on loan to LBT. We will also be blessed by the musical talents of the FLBC Ambassadors.

Be sure to register early as it helps all involved to be prepared for the day. Registration is a two-part process: 1) WMF Day registration (aflc.org/women/wmf-day or use the form below), and 2) meal and housing registration with the ARC (see page 18).

Come join us for this great time of fellowship!

Johnson, a member of Christ the King Lutheran, Wilson, Wis., is the executive secretary of the Women's Missionary Federation.

2022 WMF Day • June 15 • Association Retreat Center • Near Osceola, Wis.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Home congregation (city and state): _____

Item	Cost	#	Total
*Registration	\$20		\$

Have you registered with the ARC for the luncheon on June 15? If so, how many will attend? _____

Have you registered with the ARC for the breakfast on June 16? If so, how many will attend? _____

Please list children by name and age who will need childcare for WMF Day _____

The registration fee is required for all attending the convention. Register by June 1. Register for meals and housing with the ARC (see page 18 for more information). **Make checks payable to "WMF of AFLC" and mail to: WMF Treasurer, Margie Lee, PO Box 118, Beulah, ND 58523.*



A group of 24 students from the Free Lutheran Bible College's Cross Cultural Ministry class traveled to Tlacolula, Mexico, April 10-18 to work with Foundation for His Ministry, an independent ministry focused on meeting the needs of children. Pictured are eleven of the students at the mission base.



Thief River Falls congregation dedicates new church addition

Members of Our Saviour's Lutheran, Thief River Falls, Minn., dedicated a newly completed addition to God's glory on April 10. The project, which began in April 2021, includes a 3,500 square foot addition for Sunday school classes and ministry needs. The congregation gives thanks to God for His provision and His perfect timing. (Submitted photo)

2021 SEMINARY GRADUATES

SAM WILLARD

Minneapolis, Minn.

Ask me what my hometown is, and I'll give a sly smile and say, "America." Born Feb. 11, 1984, in San Diego, Calif., to Cal and Jane Willard, I spent my childhood moving around the country as my father served in the U.S. Navy. At age 13, God used the local youth group and a Bible camp to mature my faith and my relationship with God in Jesus Christ. I graduated from the Free Lutheran Bible College in 2004, and from the University Northwestern—Saint Paul (Minn.) in 2007. I served in the Navy from 2008 to 2015, deploying to both the Arabian Gulf and the South Pacific. I finished my Navy service as a recruiter in Minnesota.



In 2012, I began attending Hope Lutheran Church, Minneapolis. I married Rachel Grammer there in 2014. Through this congregation, I was led to explore the seminary, and enrolled in 2018. The three years of seminary preparation were a blessing. I grew in my understanding of Scripture, pastoral ministry, and spiritual life. I also experienced God's faithfulness to His Word in new ways.

I have been serving as an intern at Christ the King Lutheran Church, Pipestone, Minn., since May 2021. Rachel and I have two boys: Caleb (4) and Simeon (2), and we are expecting a baby girl in early July. I recently accepted the pastoral call to King of Glory Lutheran Church in Shakopee, Minn.

SCOTT ERICKSON

Badger, Minn.

I was born Nov. 18, 1970, to Farrell and Anne Erickson, who raised me to love God's Word and taught me the importance of growing in a faith relationship with Christ. I grew up on a farm in rural Badger, Minn., where I attended Oiland Free Lutheran Church. There, Pastor Gustav Nordvall had a great impact on my life. After graduating from Badger High School, I attended the Free Lutheran Bible College, where I met my future wife, Tina Cherney, daughter of Pastor Frank and Pamela Cherney. We were married the summer of 1991 at Bethany Free Lutheran in Bluegrass, Minn.



We moved to Thief River Falls, Minn., to pursue further education. Tina finished in the nursing program as an LPN and I earned an architectural drafting degree. During our first year there, we lived with Judith Wold, former director of AFLC Parish Education. We moved back to my home area of Badger, where we raised our five children. Micah, now 29, is married to Taylor Dame and they have one child, Evelyn. Julia, 27, is married to Pastor Matthew Pillman and they have two sons, James and Benjamin. Sarah, 25, is married to Sam Schierkolk and they have one daughter, Ellarose. Leah, 24 is married to Ethan Kucera. Our youngest, Joanna, is 22.

The Lord called me into the pastoral ministry after working for 25 years at Polaris Industries. The last three years at the seminary and during my one-year internship in at Grace Free Lutheran in Valley City, N.D., have been an excellent experience in preparation for the parish ministry. Our desire is continual growing in our faith as the Lord guides and protects our steps. I have accepted a call to Our Savior's Lutheran, Dickinson, N.D.



Have you ever worried about a demon grabbing your foot? Pastor Alex and I drove through the gates of Sole Hope one Monday afternoon to help plant an Ambassador Institute class under the direction of Francis. Francis has been a teacher for the Ambassador Institute for many years, and Sole Hope happens to be his workplace, which makes the start of an Ambassador class there a special joy for him. Sole Hope is a team of 55 Ugandans and a handful of Americans who handcraft 11,000 close-toed shoes per year, treat jigger infestations at their medical dormitory, and offer traveling medical seminars to Ugandan schools to combat this nasty foot parasite. Their website (solehope.org) contains footage of dozens of young feet being scrubbed. Sole Hope takes the ministry of foot washing very seriously.

However, neither their website nor their facility will overtly direct your attention to Jesus the foot washer. They present their mission as humanitarian rather than evangelical. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit's activity at Sole Hope is evident because our start-up class included a guard, a medic, an educator, and a

OUR SOLE HOPE IS JESUS CHRIST

BY MICHAEL ROKENBRODT

coordinator who were all interested in signing up for Ambassador Institute studies. Our first lesson, from Genesis 1, was lively and encouraging. I could tell this was a group that already enjoyed one another and would be bonding even deeper as they studied the Word together.

As I departed the dormitory at the end of the lesson, I wasn't much thinking about some of the history of the Sole Hope property that I had been told about before the lesson. Pastor Alex, who grew up in Buwenda, knew the property from his childhood in the days before it belonged to Sole Hope. It lay on the banks of the Nile where Alex and other children had loved to swim, picnic, and socialize. But it also has a darker memory. Next to the place where we had parked our cars stood two large, spooky trees. They had been demon shrines in former days. Francis said they still carried a reputation for darkness. Alex said one had been cut down once, only to reappear standing the next day. Francis said others had tried to cut into them only to produce blood from the bark. Now Sole Hope employees just stayed clear of them.

But that wasn't on my mind when I heard Alex call to me. "Did you want to come down by the river?" he asked, wanting to show me his

childhood. I stepped out of the parking lot to cut a direct path to his location. Suddenly, I found myself on my back looking up into the branches of the demon tree. My foot had slid in some mud which now covered me head to foot.

"You know, they are going to say the tree did this because you were here to bring God's Word," Francis said. The next morning the doctor informed me I had torn the tendons in my knee.

There are four verses in the Psalms which speak of God guarding our foot from slipping. But I am rather glad that He allowed me to slip on this occasion. The entire incident reminds me that evil has its foothold even in a nice-looking organization like Sole Hope.

Our Sole Hope is Jesus and the Word, and, if it was a demon that grabbed my foot, all I have to say is, "The Lord says to my lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'" (Psalm 110:1). May the staff members of Sole Hope come to see this more and more in the weeks ahead.

Rokenbrodt is an AFLC missionary to Uganda.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Sam Willard, a 2022 graduate of the Free Lutheran Seminary, has accepted a call to King of Glory Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn.

Scott Erickson, a 2022 graduate of the Free Lutheran Seminary, has accepted a call to Our Savior's Lutheran, Dickinson, N.D.

Pastor George Lautner has accepted a call to serve Holmes Evangelical Lutheran, Clarion, Iowa. He will step down on June 5 from his call to Living Faith Free Lutheran, Larimore, N.D., and Middle Grove Free Lutheran, Mekinock, N.D.

Dean Feistner has accepted a call to serve as associate pastor of Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Madison, S.D., and Center Free Lutheran, rural Salem, S.D. He is pursuing lay pastor licensing with the AFLC Co-ordinating Committee.

Members of **Resurrection Free Lutheran**, an AFLC Home Missions church plant in Ramsey, Minn., have made the decision to close the church following the Easter service.

Pastor Blake Kilbourne has been removed from the AFLC fellowship roster by members of the Co-ordinating Committee, who believe the ministry he is involved in would be better operated from a context other than congregational ministry.

Correction: The maiden name of Pastor Alvin Grothe's first wife, Frances, was listed incorrectly in the March issue. Her name was Frances Tauer.

The **2023 Annual Conference** will be held June 14-17 in Sioux Falls, S.D.



Ellen Beaman

Ellen Maye Beaman, 84, of East Grand Forks, Minn., passed away on March 31 at the Villa St. Vincent in Crookston, Minn. Born on May 15, 1937, in Schaller, Iowa, she was the daughter of Erling and Alice (Bakameyer) Nielsen. She married Walt Beaman Nov. 7, 1959, in Alta, Iowa.

She grew up and attended grade school and high school in Alta. She attended Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, Iowa, graduating with a two-year teaching degree. She later attended Bemidji State University, graduating with a bachelor's degree in teaching. She taught for more than 20 years in various places, including McIntosh, Minn. After marriage, they served as missionaries in Ecuador (1962-66), where she used her seamstress talents to bless many with new clothing. They served AFLC congregations in McIntosh, Sebeka, Greenbush, Argyle, and Shevlin, Minn., and Edmore and Hampden, N.D. They retired to East Grand Forks.

She is survived by her husband; three children, Debbie (Dennis) Strand, Grand Forks, N.D., Naomi (Jim) Mathsen, Alvarado, Minn., and Daniel (Angela) Beaman, Oakfield, Wis.; six grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren; and one brother, Lael (Tia) Nielsen, Greenwood, Ind.

The service was held April 7 at Dahl Funeral Home, East Grand Forks, Minn. Memorials are requested to Steve and Glenda Kvale, AFLC missionaries on loan to Wycliffe Bible Translators (wycliffe.org/partner/9A33D6).

Bethany Bible Camp summer schedule

Bethany Bible Camp, located on Grace Lake just southeast of Bemidji, Minn., will host several camps during the 2022 summer season.

Junior Camp will be held June 21-25 for students who have completed third grade through sixth grade. Pastor Tom Reagan will be the featured speaker.

Senior Camp will be held June 25-30 for students who have completed seventh through twelfth grade. Pastor James L. Johnson will be the featured speaker.

The WMF Summer Rally Day is scheduled for July 14, a Men's Retreat will be held August 12-14, and Women's Retreat will be held August 19-21. For additional information and registration forms visit bethanybiblecamp.com. To rent the camp for a family reunion or host a Bible camp call: 218-751-6094.



MARCH MEMORIALS

Bible College	Annette Rorvig
Vince Larson	
Rebecca Melby	World Missions
Ruth Claus	Charles Freeberg
Herb Pfiffner	Orwin Sparby
Sharilyn Walters	Arthur and Catherine Gifford
Home Missions	Steve Lau
Steve Lau	Wayne Bocksell
Parish Education	Pastor Alvin and Frances Grothe
Vince Larson	
Seminary	... in honor of
Orwin Sparby	Bible College
WMF	Josh Johnson
Gary Ruud	Pastor Wade Mobley
Alma Johnson	Pastor Adam Osier

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-March 31, 2022

FUND	REC'D IN MARCH	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$25,311	\$135,397	\$106,640
Evangelism	13,033	36,182	40,592
Youth Ministries	11,593	51,035	56,427
Parish Education	15,141	35,278	39,352
Seminary	13,949	68,366	74,784
Bible College	30,075	108,746	113,891
Home Missions	18,231	104,257	98,696
World Missions	40,488	137,387	136,650
Personal Support	74,657	219,168	257,902
TOTALS	\$242,496	\$895,816	\$924,934

For additional financial information for each department, go to www.aflc.org/giving

THE LEAVEN OF THE AFLC SCHOOLS

October 2022 marks the 60th anniversary of the organization of our fellowship, later called the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC). This will be specially observed during the communion service at our annual conference on Friday, June 17, and highlighted in the October issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*.



Pastor Robert Lee

One of the blessings of an anniversary year is the opportunity to reflect on the concerns and convictions that moved people, in spite of significant sacrifice, to make a new beginning of the Free Lutheran movement in America, and there should be no doubt of the importance of Christian education in those first steps. You will note the brief quotes earlier in this issue from the conference reports, and one should read the entire reports from those early years if possible.

It seemed clear to the founders of the AFLC that our LFC college and seminary no longer stood without apology on the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Holy Scriptures, and this led first to the formation of a theological seminary and two years later to a Bible school. These institutions have been a potent and positive leaven in their permeating effect within our fellowship.

Where should one begin? All of our seminary and Bible college theological faculty members are graduates of our schools, most of them from both. A strong majority of the clergy roster also trained at the AFLC seminary. One of our newer pastors tells of the AFLC congregation that he joined, where graduates of the Bible college were leaders in youth and Christian education programs. Another pastor who is open to call said he was contacted for a possible interview by a graduate of our school who is a lay leader in his congregation. The national WMF president is another graduate, as is the managing

editor of this publication. The list could go on and on.

Every year, however, there are Bible college students who are not from AFLC congregations; not all who trained in our schools are serving within the AFLC. Sometimes this is stated negatively, but I would encourage us to view it as part of the leavening process, too. It is interesting to glance through the national magazine of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren, for example, and to see graduates of our schools serving within that fellowship. There are some who have found a home in the LCMC, the NALC, and the LCMS; others serve within non-Lutheran fellowships. We may wish they were all with us, but that should not be expected.

C.J. Carlsen, in his 1942 *Years of Our Church*, a history of the Lutheran Free Church, suggested that other Norwegian Lutherans found their thoughts and convictions clarified “in regard to the Christian life and the nature of the Christian church” (p. 26) as a result of the conflict in the 1890s that gave birth to the church body, and the second of the Rules for Work states that the aim of our association is “to work towards making Lutheran congregations free and living.” The original sounds even broader: “to work for freedom and life in all Norwegian Lutheran congregations.” Our founders, in other words, envisioned a calling to be leaven beyond their own fellowship. Do we share this calling today, not with arrogance but humility?

We must remember, however, that with one exception the NT references to leaven are negative: “the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matthew 16:6, 12), Galatians 5:9, which point to the danger of legalism, and I Corinthians 5, which addresses the toleration of immorality on the congregation. There are dangerous theological and moral leavening influences

in the church world today against which we must always be on guard, and they may come to us in attractive forms from people whom we want to respect.

The issues today may seem very different from the concerns expressed 60 years ago. Did anyone ever imagine in 1962 that men would marry men and women marry women, that gender was something to be selected or changed? The toleration of theological liberalism, the rejection of biblical inerrancy and infallibility in seminaries and colleges across denominational lines has increased, and a more hierarchical form of church government that minimizes the centrality of the local congregation is common. Also, there is desperately needed an evangelistic outreach flowing from a true piety taught and modeled that will meet heart and life

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needs in this day of tragic spiritual and moral decline.

Let us be thankful to the Lord for the positive leaven of our schools that blesses our church family and others. At the same time, we remember that there is a dangerous leaven, too. There were those who insisted 60 years ago that these things could never happen, and they were wrong. The warning of the Apostle Paul refers to the final day of the Lord, but it also applies to every generation: “Let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober” (I Thessalonians 5:6).

building the base

FREEDOM OF THE CONGREGATION

BY PASTOR JON LANGNESS

My dad once told some swearing middle school students to watch their language. “It’s a free country, I have freedom of speech!” was their response—not what you want to tell an adult, especially when he’s going to be your high school social studies teacher.

The students understood that America is a free country, but they didn’t understand the idea behind free speech; it doesn’t mean you can say whatever you want without consequences.

Similarly, there’s a misunderstanding surrounding the freedom of the local congregation among Free Lutherans. Does it mean anything goes? No, that’s not the intent. What does it mean to be “free,” then?

Perhaps the simplest explanation is that congregations will not be coerced. The AFLC’s Fundamental Principles states, “The congregation directs its own affairs, subject to the authority of the Word and the Spirit of God, and acknowledges no other ecclesiastical authority or government above itself” (FP 5). Other “authorities” could refer to a synod outside the congregation, a board of elders within it, or certain “power people”

within the congregation whose authority trumps others’ for a number of factors including previous involvement, family ties, strong opinions, or louder voices. In a free congregation, the congregation holds the final authority on all matters of congregational life.

But why the congregation? Isn’t it more efficient to have a smaller group call the shots? What about deferring to people who are older, wiser, and more biblically grounded? Shouldn’t their voices hold more weight? Not necessarily, and it is because of the definition of the congregation.

“The congregation consists of believers...” (FP 2). Every believer has the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:7). And “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (II Corinthians 3:17). Every believer has received the same Spirit (Ephesians 4:4-7). He doesn’t come in varying degrees either, it’s all or nothing. That’s why no individual or group has a monopoly on the Spirit’s leading, not charter members, not the chairman, not the council, not even clergy. The Spirit leads through the congregation.

How does the Holy Spirit come to us? Scripture says through baptism (Acts 2:38-39). All who are baptized have received

the Holy Spirit and are set free from sin by Christ (Colossians 2:12-14). Freedom comes from Christ and is born of the Spirit, not from rejecting external or internal authority.

How does Christ set people free in local congregations? FP 2 reminds us, “by using the means of grace and the spiritual gifts as directed by the Word of God.” God sets us free through the means of grace (Word and sacrament), through which He delivers life, salvation, and the forgiveness of sins. These gifts are given to all; they aren’t reserved for the “spiritual elite.” They are given to emancipate and enliven each believer to work for the salvation of souls.

If we are going to be free and living congregations, we are to be Word and sacrament congregations, utilizing all the gifts which the Lord has given. That means *each* believer, not just a few in leadership. Congregational freedom isn’t anything goes, nor is it having others do our work. Freedom is every believer filled with the Spirit, serving the Lord (FP 12).

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