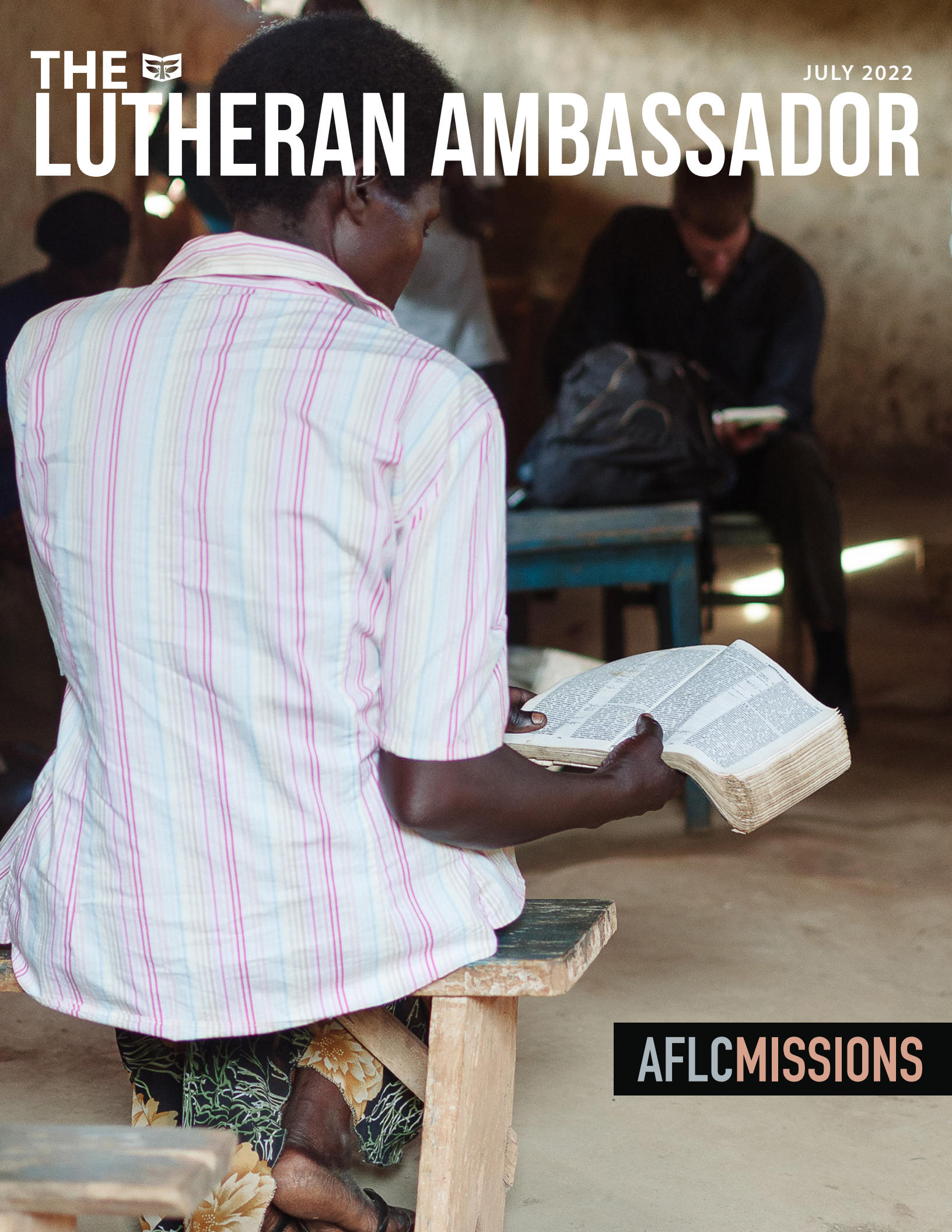


THE 

JULY 2022

LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR



AFLCMISSIONS



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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ENCOURAGING WORD

THE DESIRE FOR GOD

BY KIRSTIE SKOGERBOE

"I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant, for I do not forget your commandments."

This is the final verse of Psalm 119, the 176-verse meditation on God's Word. Glorifying God for His sovereignty, goodness, and mercy, the psalmist promises and begs God for help to meditate on, delight in, and be faithful to the Word.

The words of Psalm 119 are deeply personal; the vows and pleas come out of my own heart with longing. "I will not forget your word" (v. 16). "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law" (v. 18). "I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end" (v. 112). These promises and desires are fundamental to Christianity. But the last time I read it, I noticed that this psalm of devotion ends by acknowledging that even those who remember God's commandments are always getting lost.

Desiring to seek God always leads to the desire for God to seek us. In Bo Giertz's book *The Hammer of God*, a pastor asks an older rector how many times a person must be converted. "As many days as one lives," the rector replies. Daily, we should promise our Father that we will not forget His Word, and we must daily ask Him to remember His grace. Martin Luther writes of the last verse of Psalm 119, "Thus this verse is extremely emotional and full of tears, for truly we are all thus going astray, so that we must pray to

be visited, sought, and carried over by the most godly Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ[.]"

The end of this psalm also moved me because I am better at recognizing human promises of devotion than the grace of God. I realize now how often I've overlooked the importance of verses where the psalmist acknowledges God as the principle actor in our faith. "Teach me," the psalmist prays repeatedly. "Incline my heart" (v. 36), he adds, "Let your steadfast love come to me" (v. 41), and, in my favorite verse in Scripture, "I am yours; save me" (v. 94). Riddled through the psalm are expressions of God's mercy, His help for the wayward, His strength for the weak. The old rector in *The Hammer of God* tells his fellow pastor, "Look in your Bible and see if the passages you have especially marked are not just those that speak of what you *shall* do. But you have not given half the attention to that which tells what Christ has done through his atonement. ... Underline heavily everything about what our Savior has done for us."

What has He done? He has lived and died for us, taught us, inclined our hearts to Himself, and forgiven us every day of our lives. This is the reason we worship and the promise that holds us in our failure.

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

That we elect a Mission Committee of three to present a challenging mission program to the June Conference of our fellowship.

—Recommendations for our Missionary Outreach,
1962 Organizational Meeting

The Conference recommends: a) that we seek to send forth three missionary couples in the coming year. b) that the land of Brazil be considered as a field of operation.

—Mission Resolutions, 1963 Annual Conference

We have been studying Home Mission needs and our call as an Association to enter the foreign field. God has sent many challenges to us and truly shown us that the theme of our last conference has held true for us all during the year—"I have set before thee AN OPEN DOOR."

—Pastor John H. Abel, Mission Director
Report to the 1964 Annual Conference

This door which God had opened has been a door of opportunity and a door of responsibility. There have been more opportunities to enter into areas than we have men and means to supply.

—Pastor Harold R. Schafer, Mission Committee
Report to the 1965 Annual Conference

Surely, the fields are white unto harvest right here in America. ... I am afraid that we as a church will have to answer to the Lord of the harvest in judgment for the lack of concern we have had for the souls of lost men and women here in our homeland.

—Pastor Herbert L. Franz, Home Mission Board
Report to the 1969 Annual Conference



ministry training GROUNDS



By Ruth Gunderson

Out in the far western plains of South Dakota, at the cusp of where the wind meets the stately trunks of the ponderosa pines dotting the Black Hills, a growing church and their pastor are learning how to train future ministry leaders.

Shiloh Church is a teenager, according to its first called pastor, Andy Coyle. Launched in 2015 with a core team of four couples and a four-year diminishing subsidy from Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., the congregation has experienced steady growth since moving to a site along Interstate 90 just northwest of Rapid City. The growth includes a wide demographic among its 120 or so attending on an average Sunday: members from many evangelical backgrounds composed of young families, mid-career professionals, recent retirees, and students from John Witherspoon College (JWC). A few of those students have found not only a church home at Shiloh, but also a training ground for gaining practical ministry skills. Shiloh calls them ministry interns, and they are part of an on-site program designed to catch, develop, and retain the next generation of congregational leaders in the AFLC.

Meet Hunter Berntson, Isak and Phoebe Olson, and Blake Martin. All are 2021 graduates of the Free Lutheran Bible College in Plymouth, Minn. For eight to ten hours a week, each ministry intern invests in the congregation—from technical aspects behind the scenes to weekly Lenten devotionals, and from teaching children's ministry to leading a summer vacation Bible school (VBS) program. In return, the four interns learn practical ministry skills, receive intentional discipleship training from Coyle, and gain confidence in leadership.

"I didn't really become proficient in leading worship until I did it," said Hunter, who grew up in Buffalo, N.D. At Shiloh, he has taught confirmation with Isak, led worship, and helped with youth ministry. "We not only get that ministry experience, we get that discipleship."

NEAR RIGHT: Phoebe Olson (from left), Monica Coyle, and Tonya Torve (members of Shiloh) hike in the nearby Black Hills, a major draw for tourists, retirees, and adventurous college students.

CENTER: Isak Olson (left) and Hunter Berntson (right) mark the confirmation of students Moriah Coyle, Isaiah Coyle, and Gavin Swett. Pastor Andy Coyle (back) serves Shiloh Lutheran.

FAR RIGHT: Phoebe and Isak Olson (left) and Hunter Berntson (right) hang out with Daniel, Isaiah, Moriah, and Levi Coyle.



Coyle began the internship program in 2017 when Levi Berntson, Hunter's older brother, enrolled at JWC. A year later, Sophia Rosgaard (now Molstad), a 2018 FLBC graduate and student at JWC joined the program. The church and the program have mutually grown in maturity, giving interns what Coyle calls a healthy environment for learning. He is adamant that ministry success should not depend solely on young people being apprenticed in ministry.

"I want to put them in healthy congregations where they can grow and learn and be shaped and formed, and work on ministry skills—certainly," said Coyle. "But let them be a part of the life of the church without thinking that everything falls on them or that they are responsible for building the congregation."

Beyond the ministry tasks they have been assigned, Coyle meets twice a week with the interns as they study various texts. "I don't want them to just do stuff," said Coyle of their 6 a.m. study time. "I want to invest back in them. ... at the end of the day, they are 20 years old. ... They are getting a lot of practical ministry opportunities. But I want to also frame up and help shape their theological and philosophical approaches to ministry."

Coyle's own philosophy about training the next generation is unique among our AFLC fellowship, where past experience has shown that congregations desire help from recent FLBC graduates but often fail to connect young people to engaging, yet essential, ministry opportunities. They either offer only marginal ministry experience involving small tasks that aren't building skills, or—more often—have not been able to define their need, leaving students to move on to other opportunities outside a congregational setting or even outside the AFLC.

"Whatever a program is ... it has to define a sense of servant leadership that they will invest in," said Pastor Jason Holt, director of AFLC Youth Ministries. Shiloh's program has been successful, says Holt, because "they have prioritized the community together that enables the young leaders to come in and contribute."

That sense of success is palpable in the four interns, each of whom, over a lunchtime conversation at their local Thai restaurant, spoke of moments in ministry when they saw their young students connecting gospel truths to their lives: "Being able to see them make that connection is so powerful," said Phoebe, who leads children's ministry and is in charge of the VBS program this summer.

Or, in thinking about their second year of internship ahead, laid out hopes and dreams for what that ministry could look like based on their experiences so far: "I want to figure out how to reach people who don't normally come on a Sunday morning," said Isak.

These are not directionless young adults in need of hand-holding. These are future leaders who see themselves as vital members of the Shiloh community. They are investing their lives there and struggling through ministry challenges common to all congregations, what Coyle calls "the grind."

However, one aspect of their backgrounds makes them unique—they all grew up in congregations which plugged them into ministry opportunities as young students: teaching Sunday school or being part of a worship team, for example. They represent one part of what Holt described as a "summary of thirds": a third of graduating high schoolers are loyal to the AFLC in their theological understanding and personal identity; a third are leaving the AFLC based on their own theological conclusions, past hurts, or confusion; and the crucial last third are "lingering."

"They are sitting here waiting to see: will we be the free and living Lutheran congregations that we say we are going to be?" said Holt.

It is an important question for a pivotal time in our denomination's history. At stake is no less than the future of the AFLC, according to Holt and Coyle, who both point to the next 10 to 20 years as being, in Coyle's words, "crazy important."

"I could not agree more," said Holt. "Pastor Elden Nelson [AFLC president 2007-2013] told us years ago that the average American denomination lasts 70-75 years. And so, as we celebrate our 60th



anniversary this year, that puts us exactly in that 10- to 20-year window where we need clear ownership from the next generation of our identity and our values so that we can go forward and be effective in ministry. And that transfer is significant.”

Programs like the one at Shiloh are working to build a bridge for that transfer. Pastor Matthew Ballmann, Coyle’s fellow AFLC church planter, has hosted several ministry interns at Trinity Lutheran in San Antonio, Texas. Similarly, AFLC Youth Ministries offers the Apprenticeship Program, equipping congregations with youth leaders in training to help them build skills in spiritual leadership, logistical organization, teaching, and interpersonal communication. And it is why AFLC Home Missions is reforming its Church Planter Assistant program, currently on pause while the department refines its mission. Coyle and Ballmann, who both sit on the Home Missions Committee, have worked for years on issues related to multiplying AFLC congregations, and, in turn, developing future leaders. But so far, no centralized program has emerged. The question remains: should an AFLC ministry be responsible for such a program?

“We lose so many young adults in the AFLC,” said Coyle. “That shouldn’t happen. We should have instruments and tools in place to get students involved in congregations and not expect everything from them but just to be a part of the life of the congregation.”

When asked if Shiloh’s or Trinity’s programs could be replicated in any congregation, Holt noted that while concepts could be transferred, whether a congregation uses a formal or informal approach, the origin is pivotal: discipling leaders starts with the congregation.

“Pastor Coyle highlights that we are expecting young people to just wait for their opportunity,” said Holt. “And Gen Z is saying, ‘Give me something.’”

Hunter and Isak, who will graduate from JWC next spring, both plan to pursue pastoral training at the AFLC seminary. When enrolled, they will be far more prepared for ministry than Coyle was at their age. And, perhaps, they will someday serve a congregation where they, too, can train future leaders.

Gunderson, managing editor, is a member of Living Hope, Rogers, Minn.

the (un)changing One



“Amid the changes occurring our lives, we’ve been resting in our unchanging God.”

Former missionary’s reflections on moving from Alaska

Change is hard, whether it’s the change of a job, a change of location, a change in health, a change in a relationship, or a change in ministry or church. My wife and I are in the midst of a big change: moving from a place we have loved, people we love, and a ministry God led us to 15 years ago. In 2007, the Lutheran Mission Societies (LMS) called us to Naknek, Alaska, to serve what is often referred to as the Alaska Mission. The mission was turned over a year later to the AFLC Home Missions Department. Now, in 2022, we are dealing with lots of boxes, accumulated possessions, difficult goodbyes, a Parkinson’s diagnosis, and many logistical details.

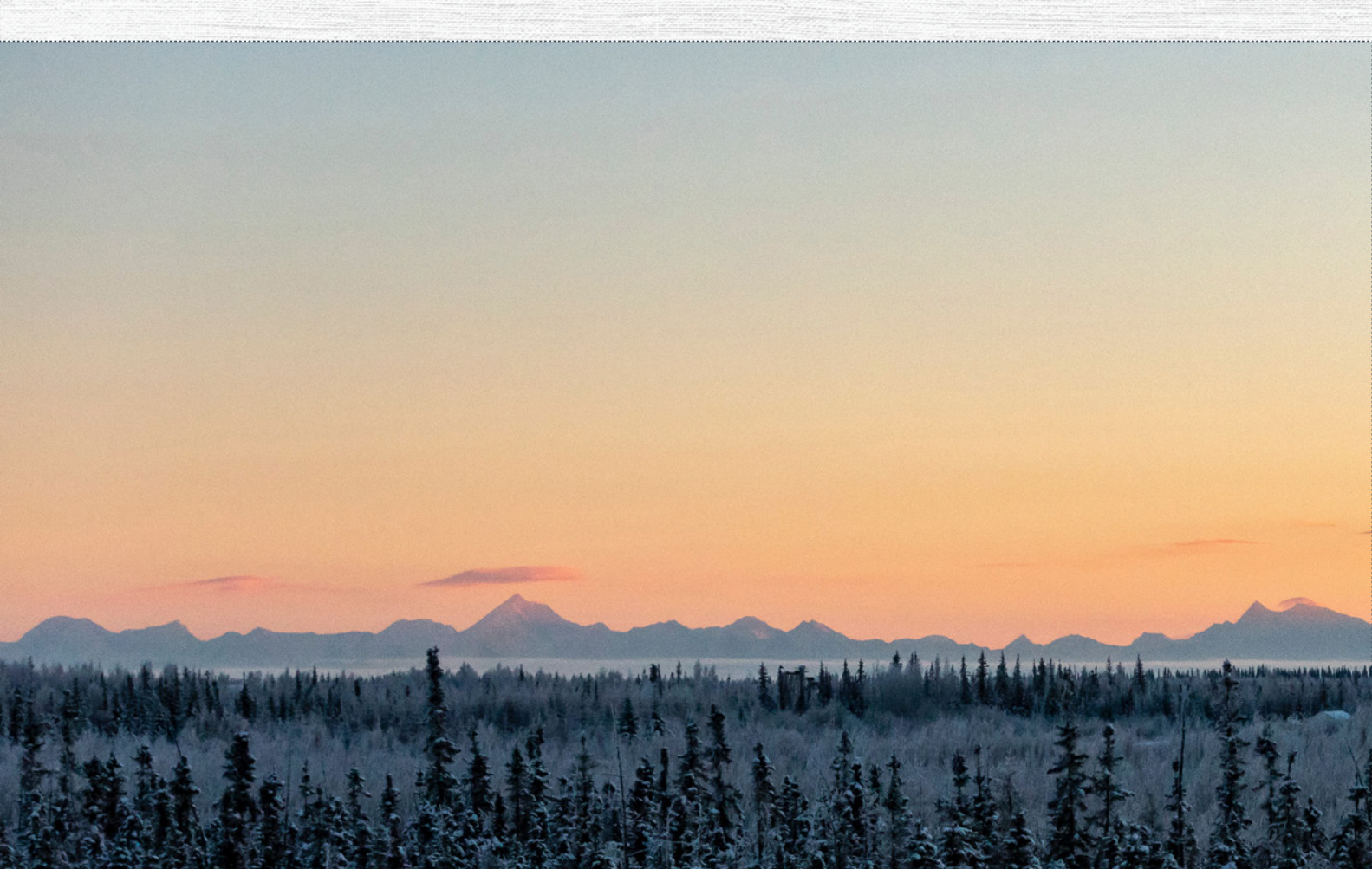
Amid the changes occurring in our lives, we’ve been resting in our unchanging God and His promises. One of my mother’s favorite hymns was “Abide with Me,” and this line from the hymn especially speaks to my heart: “Change and decay in all around I see, O Thou who changes not, abide with me.” This precious truth is based on the scriptural facts that God does not change (Malachi 3:6), God’s

Word does not change (Isaiah 40:8), and God’s Son, our Savior Jesus, does not change (Hebrews 13:8).

These are comforting and encouraging realities as we find ourselves in a new place with a new call and some new challenges.

We are thankful to the members of the Home Missions Committee, who have allowed us to stay involved in Alaska by calling me to be the Alaska Mission Coordinator. In this role, I will travel to churches, district events, and other locations as God opens doors to present the work in Alaska. The half-time position will allow us to be based at our home in Kansas. We will visit and minister as health and time allow.

We are thankful to LMS and their support through the years. We are thankful to those still in Alaska carrying on the important work of sharing the love of Jesus in word and deed in a needy part of the world. Pastor Bob Lee continues to oversee the 24/7 outreach of KAKN radio, bringing the hope of the gospel to a number of communities in Bristol Bay. Margaret Lee, his wife, teaches school



in Naknek and Sunday school at Hilltop Christian Fellowship. Pastor Jeremy Crowell oversees our aviation ministry that transports youth to Bible camp and summer VBS outreach. Lacey Crowell, his wife, and their son, Malachi, help in many areas of ministry as well. Last summer, Josh Fish joined us as a full-time maintenance man and has also helped out with flying and leading Bible studies. Bob, Jeremy, and Josh are together carrying on the proclamation of God's Word in the churches and nine preaching points in the Bush, a part of Alaska so named because it is not connected to any road network. Finally, Heather Hansen, who first came on a summer team to teach vacation Bible school, has now been working full-time in Naknek for several years leading children and youth ministries. God has assembled a great team for the Alaska Mission, for which we give Him praise.

With our departure from Alaska, some things have changed. But we rejoice that, Lord willing, this summer's ministry will proceed with VBS in nine villages and volunteer ministry to fisherman and cannery workers at the Net, our

coffeehouse where visitors receive free coffee, cookies, Bibles, tracts, and loving conversation pointing to Jesus.

Please pray. Pray for fruitful summer ministry. Pray for those serving full-time as well as the many volunteers headed north to help out this summer. Pray for a new pastor/missionary for the Alaska Mission. Pray with us for God to reach the dear souls of the Bush, an area of great need where people are struggling with substance abuse, hopelessness, despair, and high suicide rates. These social ills and personal struggles occur at a higher rate than in many other areas of the U.S. Pray for Jane and me as we deal with the changes in our lives and as I begin work as the Alaska Mission coordinator.

We all are, or will be, experiencing change in our lives and ministry. Trust in, cling to, and rejoice in the unchanging One.

The Swansons, Axtell, Kan., welcome the opportunity to visit your congregation, district event, or WMF rally to share about the Alaska Ministry. Contact them through the Home Missions office of the AFLC.

AFLCHOMEMISSIONS

Naknek, Alaska



Axtell, Kansas



Two and a half years ago, my wife, Julia, and I sat at our congregation's annual meeting. The discussion topics were familiar: "What should we do about the ash trees?" "What are some new ideas for outreach?" "What should we do about declining volunteers on certain committees?" Then a question was asked that reverberates in our ears today: "Has Christ the King ever considered planting a church in another community?" This question started our church—and our family—on a new journey.

In the spring of 2020, while the world's attention was centered on the spread of a virus, we were moved to contemplate and pray about our role in spreading the gospel. We already were convinced that God calls His people into the work of sharing the gospel near and far. Two facts especially gripped our attention. First, if the unchurched people in America separated into their own country, it would become the eighth largest nation in the world (about 156 million people). Second, church planting is the most effective means to reach the unchurched. There are many great evangelism efforts in existing churches, but statistically only 10 to 20 percent of new members were previously unchurched. By contrast 60 to 80 percent of new members in most church plants were unchurched. (A resource we found helpful in considering a biblical and

cultural case for church planting was Pastor Tim Keller's article, "Why Plant Churches").

From January 2020 through May 2021, our church leadership prayed over two communities near Pipestone, Minn. It became clear that the timing was not right at either of these locations. Through this time of prayer and discernment, God began to prompt Julia and me individually. We love Pipestone. We feel at home here. But what if God was calling us to step outside of our comfort zone for the sake of lost human souls? Over the summer of 2021, we began seriously praying and discerning an individual call to church planting. Through numerous personality tests, church planter assessments, and a church planting conference, God confirmed the internal call to church planting. We realized that God has prepared us through seminary training, ministry experience, entrepreneurial tendencies, and relational personalities.

Over the same summer, God laid a church plant location on our hearts. In July, we had conversations with four separate family units with connections to the Ankeny, Iowa, area, a northern suburb of Des Moines along the I-35 corridor. Over the past 15 years, it has roughly doubled in size. Currently, it is home to 70,000 residents and continues to grow by leaps and bounds. There are good

plantingmission

By Pastor Matthew Pillman



churches in the area, but there simply are not enough and very few in the conservative Lutheran tradition. Our mission is to bring the hope of the forgiveness of sins and life in Jesus to the precious human souls in Ankeny by establishing a Free Lutheran congregation wherein God's Word is preached and the sacraments are rightly administered. In this, we humbly cling to Jesus' promise in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

We are in the first of a three-phase approach. Currently, we are building support systems. Members of Christ the King Lutheran have agreed to serve as our sending congregation, providing accountability, oversight, and encouragement. Members of the Home Missions Committee have agreed to endorse and support a one-year residency. We are also visiting with congregations and individuals to share our vision and raise prayer and financial support.

In phase two, we look forward to a one-year church-planting residency alongside Pastor Matthew Ballmann at Trinity Lutheran in San Antonio, Texas, beginning August or September of this year. This time is valuable for our formation and preparation.

The third phase is church planting. This is when we will move to Ankeny and gather a launch team. If everything stays on schedule and we get the green light from our oversight board, coaches, and members of the Home Missions Committee, we will make this move in August 2023.

We are convinced that church planting is God's plan for reaching the lost, and it is primarily His work. Our role is to be faithful witnesses wherever He leads, to "Jerusalem, Judea, [Ankeny], Samaria, and the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Pillman currently serves as the associate pastor of Christ the King Free Lutheran, Pipestone, Minn.



Would you consider partnering with us?

- First, pray for us. You can sign up on our website for our monthly newsletter and prayer requests.
- Second, connect with us. If you know someone who lives in the Ankeny area, we would love to connect with them.
- Last, in order to effectively prepare and launch a ministry to the people of Ankeny, we need individuals and congregations to financially partner with us. These funds help to cover things like rental space, sound equipment, outreach, and salary. Our projected donation need is \$412,000. Would you prayerfully consider making a one-time gift or a monthly pledge for the next two to four years?

Contact

- Website: ctkpipestone.com/Ankeny
- Email: ankenychurchplant@gmail.com
- Mail: Christ the King, 804 8th Ave. NE, Pipestone, MN 56164 (memo: Ankeny Church Plant) or give online (rebrand.ly/churchplant)

AFLCHOMEMISSIONS

Ankeny,
Iowa



Ugandan church looks to mission efforts in Malawi and beyond

bearing new fruit

By Michael Rokenbrodt

Since Nate and Rhoda Jore and their family first came to Uganda in 2006, the AFLC has been blessed to have missionaries *to* Uganda. But now an era has arrived for the AFLC to have the blessing of seeing missionaries *from* Uganda.

In the past decade of its establishment, the Ambassador Institute of Uganda (AIU) has been overseen by a Ugandan committee whose members work closely with Pastor Jore, who directs the work. The near-original committee when I arrived in 2015 included Pastor Musasizi Wilson, Rev. Mufumbiro David, Momma Fauzia Tracy, Pastor Bagatya George, Bishop Eliab Kinene, and Momma Nissi.

According to our constitution, officers who have finished two terms of service then join the Council of Elders, whose job is to advise and disciple the officers they elected to take their place. Upon obtaining our first elders in 2019—Wilson, George, and Tracy—it seemed appropriate for them to keep attending the national executive meetings alongside their successors, and business continued as normal.

Upon receiving two more elders in 2022—Kinene and Nissi—it became evident that indefinite elder attendance of committee meetings was not sustainable. With each election, we would gain an ever-increasing number of executives. Yet the elders expressed a desire “not to be retired, because we are not yet tired.” To meet this desire, AFLC missionaries Nate and Rhoda Jore, Brent and Emily Raan, and I decided in our January 2022 Field Conference to recommend the Council of Elders begin conducting their own meetings and formulate a vision and purpose for themselves.

At the same time, the International Orality Institute (IOI), a parachurch ministry founded by Pastor Kevin Olson and operating in oral cultures, was extending an invitation for the leaders of the Ambassador Institute in Uganda to help plant a new institute for IOI in Malawi that would disciple and train Malawians in the orality method used by both IOI and AIU. Thus, the idea came about for the Council of Elders to participate in foreign outreach. This vision has steadily gained momentum, especially following





the IOI's short-term mission trip to Malawi during April and May in which the Ugandan leaders Rev. David, Pastor Wilson, and Momma Nissi took part.

Flying by plane was a new experience for the two rural pastors. They marveled at the moving staircases, the dogs that came and sniffed their bags, and the cloud-side views. After strenuous efforts to obtain passports, COVID tests, and multiple vaccination cards, they were relieved to pass through every airport checkpoint, and they found it most amusing when the final process required to get to their gate was to pass their shoes through a conveyor machine.

"We passed all the exams," declared Pastor Wilson. "Even the shoe exam."

At the end of the trip to Malawi, AIU Chairman Rev. David expressed his heartache for "leaving the work here so soon" and a desire to have Ugandans quickly return, this time for a longer period. Additionally, an Ethiopian who attended the first part of the Malawi trip requested that the Ugandans be sent in November to help IOI start orality training in the schools that he oversees back in Ethiopia. At first unsure of the orality teaching method, he said, "Seeing is believing!" The Ethiopian's proposal will be presented to the IOI board back in the U.S.

Meanwhile, the Ugandan elders met in the week following the Malawi trip to declare their council's identity and vision on paper and to draw up a pool of candidates available for foreign outreach. Their current suggestion to IOI is to initially consider sending two Ugandans, perhaps paired with spouses, to Malawi for two to three months. In addition to Malawi and Ethiopia, the Ugandans also mentioned they have their eyes on Tanzania.

I am pleased to share that 99 percent of this vision and movement for continued Ugandan foreign outreach did not come from any American but from the Ugandans themselves. The Americans are simply listening and asking questions. The Ugandans are enthusiastically taking ownership of this, and the rest of us are just trying to catch up. To me, it indicates a sustainable and fruitful ministerial

pursuit for which the glory goes to God. Africans ministering to Africans seems to me to be a more culturally-penetrable (and exciting!) way of getting into corners of the world that I, as an American, could never reach as effectively.

Momma Nissi called me four days after she returned from Malawi with the freshly drawn list of 13 Ugandan missionary candidates' names that have been submitted to our Uganda Field Conference. Describing the candidates, she said, "Their bags are already packed." At the age of 74, Momma Nissi is one of the 13 names and is a reminder that Moses began as an African missionary at the age of 80, sent to Egypt to declare the name of the LORD.

The Elders have agreed to fast and pray every Thursday for their foreign outreach. I joyfully and humbly invite the AFLC to join their prayer.

Rokenbrodt is an AFLC missionary serving in Uganda.



imagine

By Jonni Sliver

For 27 years, I have had the privilege of serving in ministry to children—all 27 of them somewhere in Brazil.

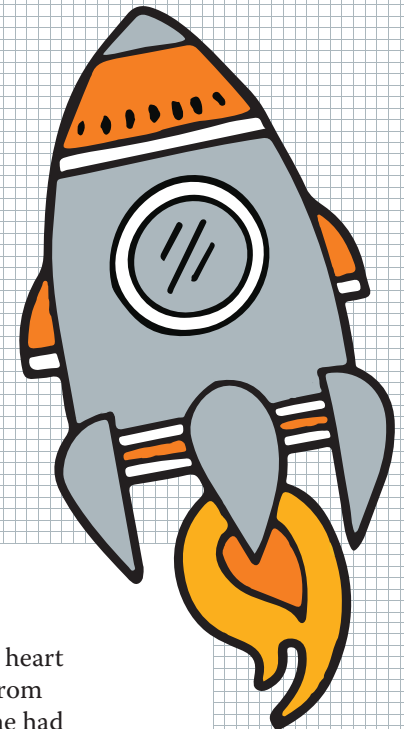
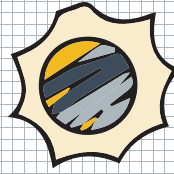
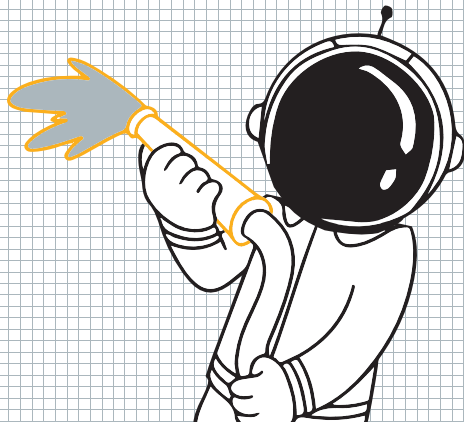
It is amazing to be part of the lives of so many children because you get to see the wonderful gifts God gives them. Take, for example, imagination. Kids can imagine ANYTHING! If you ask a 6-year-old what he is going to be when he grows up, he might well say a fireman and farmer who works on the moon—and he believes that with all his heart. Just because there isn't a farming fireman on the moon today doesn't mean there won't be one day! While their elders consider probabilities and risk factors, children just believe. That is one of the reasons I *love* it when kids pray for me and our ministry.

But what we see in the Miriam Home are children whose ability to imagine and believe has been broken by unkept promises, pain, and fear. A lot of children arrive to us with old, weathered hearts. Our job is to reawaken the child-like heart in them and help them believe again.

All of that brings me to six of my favorite words in the Bible: "It is too small a thing ..." (Isaiah 49:6). God's words to Isaiah speak to His generosity. Isaiah was already a prophet of God, but God had more for His servant than Isaiah could ever think of. And today He continues to move in and through our lives. It is our goal for the children to leave the Miriam Home knowing that God loves them and is faithful to make His amazing plans come to pass. Not limited by bad examples,

**At Brazil's
Miriam Home,
healing begins
by restoring a
child's trust.**

Jesus loves me,
this I know,
for the Bible
tells me so.



words of humiliation, or acts of cruelty in their past, the children are led to dream with God of His good plans.

Children's ministries are a little different from most missions—we start a lot of projects that we don't get to finish. And yes, that is frustrating! We sometimes only have time to get the seed in the soil before the children have moved on. Many times, the children stay long enough to see small changes, first sprouts, though we seldom get to see first fruits. But God is merciful, and every now and then we get a peek at the fruit.

Lucas joined us when he was 15, with two younger sisters. He was their only caretaker because their parents were extreme alcoholics. The children stayed with us for nine months while the parents went through recuperation, and during that time, Lucas discovered a world he hadn't known—a world of hope! The three children returned to their parents, but after just months, Lucas contacted Pastor Silvio for help. Though the kids were still "okay," Lucas saw signs that concerned him. He loved his parents, but he told Pastor Silvio that he didn't want to live their lives. Silvio helped Lucas enter a teen work program, and Lucas used the income to buy food for his family. After a year, he moved in with his godparents to be closer to school and work. As he continued to do all he could to help his family, he ran after a new future. Today he is 25, married to the daughter of his pastor, and a respected professional.

Paola came to us with an open heart and a loving spirit. She also came from an alcoholic mother, and though she had several older half siblings, they wanted no further commitment than hosting her for an afternoon or weekend. That could easily have impacted how she saw herself, but from early on, Paola heard and believed that, even if everyone else left her, she was eternally loved by God. Paola gave her heart to Jesus while she was here with us. Later, she was adopted by a pastor and his wife, and today she is a lovely young adult and a dynamic member of the church's ministry.

Greici was a beautiful, broken teenager who came to us with an intense need to be loved. She responded willingly to the Word while she was here, but after she turned 18 and left the Miriam Home, it did not take long for her to fall away. The farther from the Lord she drifted, the more walls she raised between herself and the people who loved her here in the Miriam Home. But two years later, each of us received the most delightful letter from Greici, thanking us for sharing the Word of Life with her and praying for it to take root. She included pictures of her recent baptism. It was a blessing beyond words.

One of the greatest blessings of working with children is that we get to see our own child returning—the child that dreams and imagines and believes.

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

God's work in Mexico

By Pastor Milton Flores

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ ... Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should" (Colossians 4:2-4).

On the first Sunday of every month, I visit the Huerta, Manzano, and Uribe families in the city of Querétaro, Mexico, 30 miles east of our city Celaya. These families all had a culturally Roman Catholic background, but they accepted the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ in their hearts. Two of these families are young; we have lived alongside them through moments of Christian fellowship, Bible studies, and Holy Communion.

We have also shared difficult moments with them, like when Mr. Manzano died of cancer five years ago, leaving behind his wife Cecilia and their children, Santiago and Quetzaly. During the pandemic, too, I was blessed with the opportunity to shepherd these families through months of pain and sadness. Though the government's health guidelines meant it wasn't possible to be with them as much as I wanted, we had the opportunity to continue sharing the message of the Word of God through technology. These were difficult months, but, like Abraham, we have grown strong in faith and have given glory to God—especially those who tested positive for COVID—convinced that God is powerful to fulfill His promises (Romans 4:20-21). We trust that He has good plans even for our small mission in the city of Querétaro.

The work of the gospel in Mexico and Latin America continues to be challenging due to strong family and social pressures, addiction to media, and immersion in problematic religious

traditions like Mariolatry [the idolatrous worship of Mary]. By the grace of God, however, the brothers and sisters in Querétaro have understood and accepted the heart of the Christian faith: the need for a Savior because of our sinful nature, and the need to nurture our faith through the study of God's Word. Learning these foundational biblical doctrines and participating in the sacrament of the Holy Communion, these Christians are growing in their faith.

I always thank God for my years at the Free Lutheran Seminary many years ago, remembering Dr. Francis Monseth's advice: "Preach the Word *alone* and let the Holy Spirit work in people's hearts." In this way, we refrain from simply criticizing Roman Catholicism or incentivizing people to come to faith using gifts, clothing, food, and so on. We want to preach justification by faith in Christ Jesus. It is the Word of God that has opened the homes and hearts of our brethren in Querétaro.

Although one goal in the Getsemaní congregation in Celaya continues to be to collect funds to build our chapel, we do not stop sharing the Word of God with the brethren in Querétaro. We pray also for our friends and brethren in the cities of Aguascalientes and Irapuato and the San Andrés and San Pablo congregations in León.

How we wish we had more time and resources to visit the brothers and sisters in these cities. So we ask you, as the AFLC family, to "help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks" to the Lord (II Corinthians 1:11).

Flores, a pastor in the Central Mexican Lutheran Church, serves the Getsemaní congregation, Celaya, Mexico.

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hat do you think of when you hear the words *blessing* and *challenge*?

At the beginning of June, I began my role as the pastoral intern in Valley City, N.D. While there are certainly many blessings in this role, such as delivering the gospel to those who need it, visiting the sick and infirm, or studying under an experienced pastor, there are also challenges. Oftentimes we see challenges as inherently bad things, but God does work even through those challenges for His glory and honor.

For the missionary team in Naknek, Alaska, there are many challenges that can come to mind. Serving in a remote village far away from family is difficult, and news can often be slow to reach your loved ones, even with technological advances at your disposal. Yet for these missionaries, challenges can be flipped and viewed as blessings, opportunities to share the gospel with those in need.

Jeremy and Lacey Crowell serve in Alaska with their son, Malachi. When asked about the challenges and blessing of

BLESSINGS & CHALLENGES

BY JOE FRECH

serving in such a role, Lacey responded: “There are seasons that are particularly hard in Bush Alaska, but the rewards are greater. The majority of our Sunday school kids are foster kids, so when they leave, sometimes quicker than we would like, it’s always hard to say goodbye. While we have them, we strive to instill in them God’s Word. They have also received their own Bibles from the church due to a generous donation.” How wonderful it is to hear of the faithfulness of our God to this family even after 12 years on the field.

Another article in this issue is from Pastor Jeff Swanson (pages 8-9), who after many years serving as the missionary pastor in Naknek, has retired and is now serving as the Alaska Coordinator for AFLC Home Missions. I had the opportunity to pick him up from the airport in Minneapolis and heard story after story of the blessings that God had provided for Jeff and Jane. Yes, there were struggles, but God was faithful to them, and those challenges were seen as blessings.

Heather Hansen, a 2014 Bible college graduate, has been serving alongside the Alaska missionaries for seven years, beginning on the Alaska vacation Bible school team and then full time. She has worked primarily with youth and

children, and had this to say: “Serving in remote Alaska is the hardest thing I’ve done in my life, but one I find great joy in. The hardest thing is to trust God. So often I want life my way. I don’t want to pay \$200 to fill up my vehicle with gas. I wish the stories of kids [having] horrible home [lives] didn’t exist. I don’t want to go to the funeral of a 12-year-old [child] who committed suicide. My heart breaks when I think of the high levels of addiction ... No matter how many tears I cry it has to be Jesus. He alone has the power to save and the power to change people. I have to trust that He will do that up here amidst the spiritual battle.”

Pray for the team in Alaska, pray for Jeremy and Lacey, Jeff and Jane, Heather, Josh Fish, and Bob and Margaret Lee. Pray for the VBS team and the NET volunteers this summer. Alaska is full of challenges, and these brave people face them every day. But there are also many blessings for those who hear the Word of God.

Frech, who is serving his seminary internship at Grace Free Lutheran, Valley City, N.D., most recently worked in administration for Home Missions.

Bible College plans alumni summer picnics

Summer picnic gatherings have been planned for alumni of the Free Lutheran Bible College, Plymouth, Minn. Find more information and register at flbc.edu/events. Sites include:

- July 17, Bassett Creek Park, Crystal, Minn.
- July 24, Oakland Park, Thief River Falls, Minn.
- Aug. 6, Sherman Park, Sioux Falls, S.D.
- Aug. 14, Lindenwood Park, Fargo, N.D.

FLBC Golf Scramble planned for July 29

The Free Lutheran Bible College Golf Scramble has been planned for July 29 at The Refuge Golf Club in Oak Grove, Minn. All funds raised are designated toward FLBC student scholarships. Registration for teams or individuals is open until July 22. For more information and to register, visit flbc.edu/events.

Seminary to host SIT

The Free Lutheran Seminary will host the Summer Institute of Theology Aug. 1-5 on the Plymouth, Minn., campus. Information is available at flbc.edu/events.



Slim Buttes church completes addition

Members of Slim Buttes Free Lutheran, Reva, S.D., marked the completion of a construction project which added a fellowship hall to the existing structure. The project included a kitchen, accessible bathrooms, and a ground-level accessible entrance to the sanctuary. The addition has been put to use, most recently with a vacation Bible school.



FLBCS to host Lutheran studies room at Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting

The Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary will sponsor a series of lectures at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) Nov. 15-17 in Denver, Colo. Those presenting will include Dr. Joel Biermann, professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis; Dr. Mark Mattes, Luther scholar from Grand View University in Des Moines, Iowa; and Dr. Jordan Cooper, president of the American Lutheran Theological Seminary (AALC) in Fort Wayne, Ind. The theme of the ETS conference is "Holiness."

"Speaking beyond our tradition has always been a passion [and] desire of mine, and I am excited to be able to participate,"

said Dr. Cooper.

Founded in 1949, ETS is a membership society of "scholars, teachers, pastors, students, and others dedicated to the oral exchange and written expression of theological thought and research," and, according to its constitution, its purpose is "to foster conservative biblical scholarship by providing a medium for the oral exchange and written expression of thought and research in the general field of the theological disciplines as centered in the Scriptures."

Bible College and Seminary faculty who attend the event each year appreciate the organizations devotion to the inerrancy and

inspiration of the Scriptures and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

President Wade Mobley reflected on the opportunity to host elective sessions at this year's event: "Lutheran theology has been under-represented in American evangelicalism for decades, and we think that our viewpoint has a lot to offer. Many of today's cultural and theological controversies could be explored more fruitfully by considering the Lutheran theological perspective."

Organizers hope to see more presenters from the AFLC and the Church of the Lutheran Brethren in future years. To learn more about this event visit etsjets.org.



OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE

BY LIZ MCCARLSON

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith” (Romans 1:16-17).

Recently, I had the pleasure of presenting at a WMF event at Grace Free Lutheran in Valley City, N.D., and attending my district’s Spring Rally at Hope Lutheran in Minneapolis, Minn. I was not surprised to hear a common theme at both events: the centrality of the Word of God. Gathering around the Word has been a focus of the Women’s Missionary Federation of the AFLC since our ministry was founded in 1962. God’s Word is both the seed planted to create faith and the spiritual nourishment that causes growth. It is essential, therefore, to share God’s Word with younger generations and pass on a legacy of faith in Jesus Christ. In each women’s group

at every AFLC congregation, the Word of God should be the primary focus.

The Word of God is vital because it delivers to us law and gospel. The law shows us how we ought to live in relation to God and to the people around us. It also shows us that on our own, it is impossible to do what we ought in a way that is pleasing to God. Even though our actions make us feel good and may look good to the people around us, our deeds are filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). When we realize that we fail to do what the law demands, we see our need for a Savior.

The gospel delivers that Savior to us. The gospel shows and reminds us that Jesus Christ fulfilled the law for us, that we are reconciled to God through Christ’s death and resurrection, and that when “... we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). The gospel gives assurance of salvation, testifying that we are secure in the eternal promises of God. He has taken care of everything we need for life and salvation, and out of that assurance, out of our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, flow works that are pleasing to Him.



As we seek to do works that are beneficial to others and pleasing to God, may we look to God’s Word to find the strength and desire for what He has called us to do. When we fail to do those works well, may we turn to Jesus Christ in repentance and find comfort and assurance in the promises of the gospel.

McCarlson, a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis, is the second vice president of the national WMF.

Hicks to headline worship seminar in Sioux Falls

Members of Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., will host a one-day worship seminar featuring Zac Hicks, author of *The Worship Pastor*. Called “What Serving in Worship Really Means,” the seminar is geared towards those in the church who support the weekly gathering of corporate worship.

The conference, scheduled for 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Sept. 17, will bring encouragement to the church in word and song, offering four teaching sessions to spur on church volunteers and staff to a better understanding and vision of the vital importance of their role in the weekly routine of gathered worship.

Registration is open to pastors, ministry leaders, musicians, technicians, and any interested lay members. To register, visit abidingsavior.church/worship. Find more information on the Facebook event page at fb.me/e/2iFuuWgkv.



Zac Hicks, pictured at the 2021 Summer Institute of Theology at FLBCS, Plymouth, Minn., will speak at the worship seminar in Sioux Falls, S.D.



Team teaches VBS in remote Alaska villages

A group of four volunteers are teaching vacation Bible school in seven remote Alaska villages as they serve with the Alaska Mission, Naknek. Pictured (from left) missionary Joshua Fish flew Zach and Katy Kupser, Jessica Nikunen, and missionary Heather Hansen to Ekwok on May 30. The team will spend a week in each village, traveling back to Naknek on the weekends to resupply. The schedule (May 30 through July 15) also includes the villages of Koliganek, Manokotak, Levelock, Igiugig, Egegik, and Kokhanok.



Lombardo celebrates ordination anniversary

Members of Helmar Lutheran, Newark, Ill., celebrated the 50th anniversary of the ordination of Pastor Steve Lombardo (pictured with his wife, Angi) on June 12. The event was part of Helmar Lutheran's 175th anniversary celebration.

FLY Beyond scheduled for July 17-21

FLY Beyond, the national youth-equipping camp hosted every two years by AFLC Youth Ministries, will be held July 17-21 at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis.

The theme for the camp, taken from Ephesians 4:11-16, is “Upward,” and featured sessions will include daily Bible study, an apologetics session, group discussions, and an evening session with Pastor Ryan Tonneson. For more information, visit the event website at aflc.org/youth/fly-beyond.



RETURNING TO THE JOURNEY IN AFLC MISSIONS

After a dry spell without missions trips, Journey Missions started this year with a lot of activity. My family and I led a team to Nogales, Ariz., in February to work with our AFLC congregation there. This was our first trip since January 2020, and it was exciting to work alongside Pastor Darwin Jackson and members of Triumph Lutheran Church.

This spring, I had the opportunity to teach the Intro to Cross Cultural Ministry class at the Free Lutheran Bible College. Twenty-four students traveled to work with a ministry in Oaxaca, Mexico, the first international Journey Missions trip in two and a half years. The students had servant hearts, and teaching the class was incredibly rewarding.

These two trips have been encouraging as we begin again the work that God has called Journey Missions to do. Our upcoming ministry opportunities include

BY JON NELSON

our summer Uganda trip (scheduled from June 22 to July 13) as well as our fall Israel trip (from Nov. 1 to 10).

At the end of 2021, our missionary assistant program sent two young men, Zach Ritland and Caleb Korhonen, to Brazil over their college winter break. They returned in January after working on manual labor projects with Pastor Paul and Becky Abel, our AFLC missionaries serving in Curitiba. In February, we sent another missionary assistant, Ellen Dalager, to serve in Brazil at the Miriam Home with Jonni Sliver; Ellen will be serving there until July. She spent the spring semester of her senior year of high school volunteering in Campo Mourao, looking to the Lord for His guidance. Then, Jared and Erica Trost and their four children worked with our ministry in Uganda from February 23 to April 6. Jared is a gifted hydrologist, and his

goal was to work with a well-water ministry. We are excited that the family was able to collaborate with Pastor Brent and Emily Raan and their family in the Raans' new community of Gulu.

We are so thankful for each of these people seeking to serve. As these individuals continue in the plan the Lord has for them, the Holy Spirit keeps working in mighty ways. We have seen how the Lord uses the skills and abilities He gives to each person for His purpose. In turn, we use those gifts as an act of worship. How great and amazing is our God!

Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support of Journey Missions. We are grateful for you.

Nelson is the department head for AFLC Journey Missions.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Living Stone Chinese Fellowship, an AFLC Home Missions church plant in St. Paul, Minn., was added to the AFLC congregational roster in February by members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee.

Pastor Nick Schultz has accepted a call to serve St. Olaf Lutheran, Chamberlain, S.D., and Pukwana Free Lutheran, Pukwana, S.D. Schultz will step down in July from his call to Our Redeemer Lutheran, Kirkland, Wash.

Pastor John Kent, who has served Reformation Lutheran, El Cajon, Calif., for 25 years, has announced his retirement at the end of June. Along with his wife, Nanette, they will relocate to Indio, Calif.

Seth Larson has resigned from his role as youth director at Prince of Peace Lutheran, Beulah, N.D. He will leave at the end of July.

John Peterson has resigned from his role as youth leader at Calvary Free Lutheran, Fosston, Minn. He will leave at the end of July.

Regan Johnson has resigned from his role as youth director at Ruthfred Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa. He will leave in mid-August.

Josh and Ruthie Wagner, AFLC missionaries on loan to Lutheran Bible Translators, have transitioned from their roles working with the Themne Old Testament Translation Project in Sierra Leone. Josh will continue as a support volunteer with LBT and Ruthie has accepted the roles of archive curator and exegete for the Kerewe Bible Translation Project in Tanzania. The Wagners, who served for seven years in Sierra Leone, now reside in Northfield, Minn.

Pastor Andrew and Alexis Olson, AFLC missionaries on loan to Lutheran Bible Translators, have resigned from their call to the Kerewe Bible Translation Project in Tanzania and to LBT. The Olsons have started a nonprofit, They Need the Bible, which will offer bible resources and translation to Bibleless people groups. They currently live in Plymouth, Minn.



New members were received at Slim Buttes Free Lutheran, Reva, S.D. Pictured (from left) are Dennis and Linda Hathaway, Ida and Eric Sander with their children, Kinley and Kyle, Amy Johnson, and Pastor Henry Mohagen, who serves the congregation.

Tordenskjold congregation marks 150 years

Members of Tordenskjold Free Lutheran, Dalton, Minn., will celebrate the congregation's 150th anniversary with a special day of events on July 17, beginning with a worship service at 10:30 a.m., followed by a luncheon, and a 1 p.m. anniversary celebration service, with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, bringing a message.

Tordenskjold began as an evangelical

Lutheran congregation on July 28, 1891. Its first called pastor was J.A. Bergh. In 1873, the congregation made the decision to build a sanctuary, which was completed in 1879, but was struck down by lightning in 1924. A new building, still in use today, was constructed later that year. The congregation, now part of the Dalton Parish, is served by Pastor Mark Johnson and Pastor Dan Hurner.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-May 31, 2022

FUND	REC'D IN MAY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$24,012	\$193,664	\$174,126
Evangelism	10,279	58,239	58,620
Youth Ministries	10,763	74,354	85,488
Parish Education	8,990	65,500	70,729
Seminary	28,318	123,013	133,908
Bible College	31,405	187,063	202,234
Home Missions	23,462	160,029	206,144
World Missions	38,392	212,128	192,631
WM Personal Support	47,830	330,344	377,439
TOTALS	\$223,452	\$1,404,333	\$1,501,318

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

MAY MEMORIALS

Bible College

Ellen Beaman
Ruth Claus
Dennis Bowman
John Larson

WMF

Vernon Nelson
Nellie Jenson
Marilyn Quanbeck

World Missions

Eunice Will

AFLC MISSIONS: YESTERDAY AND TODAY

"There has been in our congregations a deep love for missions both at home and abroad, and we pray that this love may grow exceedingly."

This statement introduced the series of missions recommendations approved 60 years ago, Oct. 25-28, at our organizational conference in Thief River Falls, Minn. The impending merger meant the loss of our mission fields, and the congregations were encouraged to find new ways to continue supporting and promoting missions.



Pastor Robert Lee

The 2022 Annual Conference will be history by the time that you read this editorial, and there will probably be some major changes considered in our missions programs. A committee has been at work since the last conference, and it sounds like there will be two corporations in the future, one for world and one for home missions.

Looking back, it is interesting and instructive to see that changes have been regularly made over the years, and our new changes may, after all, be nothing new. The first mission recommendation in 1962 was for home missions and included the concept of congregations and individuals "mothering" new congregations, a program that sounds like what our current Home Missions Committee has promoted.

The month of April 1963 saw the calling of missionary John Abel to be the first home and foreign missions director. Two months later, the Nominating Committee presented 100 names for the missions corporation to the annual conference, plus four nominated from the floor, with 50 to be elected.

In May of that same year, a former church building in Fargo, N.D., was purchased to be the missions center, which meant that the incorporation was in North Dakota. The building would also host a new Home Missions congregation. The

congregation relocated to a newer facility, but the address for the corporation did not change until recently.

The 1964 Annual Conference approved the country of Brazil as our first official mission field, and recommended that Pastor John and Ruby Abel, together with Alvin and Frances Grothe, be commissioned to serve there. An independent mission in Nogales, Ariz., on the border of Mexico, was accepted as a home and foreign mission field. The conference also approved a goal of sending two new missionary families or single workers each year for the next three years.

Pastor Harold Schafer, who served an independent congregation in DeKalb, Ill., became the part-time missions director after the departure of the Abels to Brazil. He provided leadership for both home and foreign missions together with Robert Knutson, McVille, N.D., who was chairman of the board for 13 years. The 1969 conference report by Knutson stated that a Home Missions board had been created the previous year, and that Schafer had left the AFLC. Now the leadership for that area of our work fell on Pastor Herbert Franz, Cloquet, Minn., who was elected president of the new board. It is interesting to see the important role of the board and committee chairmen in providing active leadership.

The Foreign (later renamed World) Missions Board also was led by its chairman, Pastor Eugene Enderlein, Thief River Falls, Minn., who was elected in 1978. Two years later, he was named director. The position was part-time with his serving as a Bible school instructor and parish pastor, and was not increased to full-time until 1985. Enderlein was followed as director by Pastor Del Palmer, and the current director is Pastor Earl Korhonen.

Home Missions had a slightly different development. It was Pastor Elden Nelson, Eugene, Ore., who became the first Home Missions director in 1976, without also serving as chairman of the board. The position was part-time for a few years, with the director serving Home Missions congregations, and it was not until 1979 that it became full-time. Nelson was succeeded by Pastor Paul Nash and Pastor James L. Johnson, and the position is currently vacant.

So what does the future hold, the Lord willing, for AFLC missions? Still trusting Him, we should expect changes as our base of support declines.

What sort of changes? Members of the Home Missions Committee recently issued a statement seeking nominations for a new director, who may fill the role "either locally or remotely, either full- or part-time." The Alaska Mission now has a new coordinator.

... it is interesting and instructive to see that changes have been made over the years, and our new changes may, after all, be nothing new.

Are full-time directors still necessary? What about World Missions? Perhaps there could be separate coordinators for each field. Perhaps the board chairmen would provide more leadership, as in the past.

The two corporations will face these issues, and others, in the coming months, and God's people are called to prayer that He would lead and provide.

association retreat center

CONTINUE IN THE WORK OF THE LORD

BY KIRK RAUTIO

"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

~I Corinthians 15:58

As I sit here fresh off the ARC Family Work Weekend—tired, sore, weak, and attempting to write—I still find it amazing how God gives me the words to write every time. We were blessed again to have tons of volunteers launch us into the summer season with the work of their hands, the encouragement of their presence, and the blessings of their prayers. It was humbling to be a part of the love people displayed while they worked, ate, or just hung out; and we had fun partaking in work that we accomplished efficiently and safely, with each task focused on the Kingdom and the ARC family coming together.

The ARC and its staff were unbelievably

blessed through these volunteers. Yet the day after, I find myself wondering how much I still have in the tank for the rest of the season. The enemy asks the question, "For how much longer?" Immediately, though, God steps in with His perfect timing and blunt answer. Toby Mac's song "Till The Day I Die" starts to play through the speakers. I laugh out loud and realize that God answered the tempting question before I could ask it myself.

My mind starts to flood with truth. I woke up this morning; thus, He has already given me what I needed for today. I just have to be willing to move, and He will take care of the movements. We are called to simply show up and, once again, be willing to go wherever He tells us. It does not matter how full our tanks are. It just matters that there is enough for the day at hand. Go play, work, live, and love remembering that life here is temporary, and leave the outcome in His hands. My weakness is all

part of His plan. This may just be my loose interpretation of God's answer to my doubt, but I am sure I was told to "quit my belly-aching and get back at it." Once again, God gives me a moment of laughter and off I go to serve the best I am able.

I pray that as you read this, you are flooded with the memories of the times God has refreshed you, the times He has told you to get up and get back to it, and the times you needed to be reminded that He has the outcome in His hands. If you are in a moment of weakness right now, I pray that He sends you your own version of my experience. Whatever your current situation is, I pray that God would fill you with what you need to do the work for His Kingdom.

Rautio is the executive director of the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis.