

THE 

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LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

The Word & Call

LIFE AT THE
FREE LUTHERAN
BIBLE COLLEGE
& SEMINARY





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STEPPING OUTSIDE OF TIME

BY TIM HERSET

The presence of pineapple on pizza polarizes guests at the dinner table like discussing politics does at a party. Humans love to disagree. But in this age of disagreement, there is one thing that brings people into agreement.

This thing is fleeting. Everyone wishes they had more of it. In feeble attempts to save it, it is so easily gone. We frantically prepare plans for how we will spend it, yet another unexpected crash foils our plan. No, it is not money. It is time.

Twenty-four hours each day, seven days every week, three-hundred-sixty-five days a year. Every fourth year we get an extra day, but this is never enough. Not for the 4-year-old screaming at bedtime. Not for the teenager trying to get homework done. Not for mom and dad going from work to sports, to the grocery store, to dinner, and then to bed. Not even for the newly retired person with a whole new perspective on time. Everyone wishes they had more time.

The ancient Greeks had two words for time—*chronos* and *kairos*—which inform our biblical understanding of time. *Chronos* is the time that keeps on ticking, every second of every day, minute by minute, life constantly moving forward. *Kairos* is life lived and experienced, referring to the right or opportune moment. *Kairos* is the definition of time Paul writes about when he says “... be very careful then how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of your time

...” (see Ephesians 5:15-16).

From time to time, we experience *kairos*. It’s that moment of focus when the ticktock of the clock seems to stop. When the words of Scripture seem to jump off the page. Those “aha!” moments when something makes sense. Or when all sounds fade away and you hear the heart behind the words the person looking you in the eye is saying. Or when the fading evening light reflects the leaves of the trees on the glassy surface of the lake. It is here when we lose track of time while having the best of times.

God exists outside of these confines of time. But God created time when He created this world for us to inhabit and care for, to fill with humans who bear His image. The sun rises and the sun sets. We wake and we sleep. God established a rhythm so the song we sing with our lives won’t spiral out of control. Six days we work. One day we rest. It’s called Sabbath. No, we don’t stop time. Yes, we stop the work we do within time to acknowledge our existence. We worship our Creator God who stepped into time when it was the “fullness of time.”

Set aside one day of seven to enjoy and savor the *kairos* time that God gives you here in the midst of *chronos* time.

Herset is a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Kalispell, Mont.

Above all things, the principal and most general subject of study, both in the higher and the lower schools, should be the Holy Scriptures.

—Martin Luther

Any worldview in which the ultimate authority is the individual will lack an objective basis for defining and defending some of our culture's most cherished values.

—Natasha Crain

Without education, we are in a horrible and deadly danger of taking educated people seriously.

—G.K. Chesterton

I traveled over much sea and land, and whomever I found walking in the rule of godliness, those I set down as fathers, and made them my soul's guides in my journey to God.

—Basil the Great

After all, where Christianity is going to make its greatest impact is where it is lived out in the local community, where the world sees the Christ-life in an individual ...

—A Statement on the Historical Situation (1962)



WEN CHEN IS A FIRST-YEAR SEMINARY STUDENT FROM CHINA. THIS IS HIS TESTIMONY.

The Call

By Katie Strommen

In 2017, Wen Chen's family was given the opportunity to leave China so that his wife could teach at Indiana University Bloomington. One day, his wife invited him to a Bible study. At first, Wen was opposed because he thought it would be a lot of arguing about faith. However, his wife explained that it was not a place for disagreement, but a place to study the Bible and to learn more about Christ. Wen heard the gospel message for the first time and felt an incredible sense of peace. Wen had known about Yesu, but only as a historical character, a common belief in China. Now, he believed that Christ had lived and died to save him from his sins; he accepted God into his life. In February 2018, both Wen and his son were baptized.

Wen is a first-generation Christian, so when his family returned to China, he faced many trials in his young faith. The biggest struggle was to continue a Christian lifestyle where religion is not encouraged or talked about openly. Initially, Wen's family attended a government church, but he was aware that it was monitored and that not all of its members had genuine faith.

After the fourth time attending the service, the officials asked him to remove his son. In China it is illegal to raise a teenager in the faith. Wen was extremely upset. He argued with the officials but decided that it was best for them to leave the service because he did not want the church to be shut down because of his actions. This was a major turning point in his life; he realized the value of being able to raise his son in the Christian faith.

Wen also struggled with the fear of being persecuted by the government. He says that he carries a sense of guilt within him for being unable to share the gospel with his colleagues and family in China. He continues to pray for more opportunities.

In 2020, Wen joined an online community of Christians in China, which helped him to grow in faith. It was difficult, however, to feel connected when identities were kept secret to avoid government persecution. Wen recounted one tactic he used to avoid detection: he walked his dog every night at midnight so that he could pray to God without fear.

It was in 2021 that a miraculous opportunity presented itself to Wen's family. The Communist influence in Chinese schools had been a growing concern. Somehow, God worked out the details for Wen's son to attend a Lutheran high school in Missouri. Shortly after his son departed, the borders between China and America were closed again.

In 2022, in the midst of the pandemic and all of the worldwide tragedies, Wen began to feel hopeless. He could sense God calling him but was unsure what that call was. Back in 2018, Wen had felt a desire to go to seminary. He

was encouraged to consider the Free Lutheran Seminary (FLS) through his connection with Pastor Holmes Zhao, a Chinese student at FLS who graduated in 2019 and now serves Living Stone Chinese Church, St. Paul, Minn. Despite his connection and the encouragement, Wen did not sense a call to apply.

Last summer, as China began to lift travel restrictions, God worked many miracles for Wen to travel to the U.S. to see his son. They spent the summer at Indiana University Bloomington. While he was there, Holmes and his sponsor, Doris, talked to him again about attending seminary. This time, he sensed a call.

Wen applied to FLS and was accepted shortly after his interview. But with only a six-month tourist visa, he would need to return to China by the end of 2022. Wen applied for an new visa and asked the seminary to change his start date to January. At the time of his application, the government website predicted a wait of more than 8 months. However, our God is a God of miracles. Wen received a response much sooner than anticipated. He recalls that he prayed continuously before opening the email from the government. When he did, he shouted for joy because he had been approved. Pastor Holmes, his wife Jia, and Wen prayed together and thanked God for his provision.

Wen attests that God worked in his life to bring him to seminary and he is grateful. He has faced many times of difficulty, but he continues to ask God to give him the wisdom to continue studying. He also hopes that by being in seminary, he can be a living testimony to his family and friends.

Wen says that he feels God called him out of his home country into a new land so that God could continue to work in his life, similar to the story of Abraham. Even though he could not see what God's plans were, he knew he needed to continue to trust Him.

Wen has continued to pray with his wife and son that they would be reunited. Currently, his son is still studying in Missouri and his wife remains in China, where she is a university English professor. They hope to be reunited with each other in America, but they do not know where God will call them next.

"The place we go is not important," said Wen. "It is that we are united in Christ [wherever we are]."

Wen's story is living proof that whether God calls us to serve in our homeland or a foreign country, He will be by our side and remain faithful in His purpose for our lives.

Strommen, a second-year student at the Free Lutheran Bible College, volunteers at Living Stone Chinese Church, St. Paul.

Our Foundation

By Stephen Quanbeck

For anyone who went to, is going to, or is thinking about going to the Free Lutheran Bible College in Plymouth, Minn., you've probably heard questions just like this: "What good will going to Bible college have when you get to the real world?" Or, "If you're not going to be a pastor, why are you wasting two years learning about the Bible?" And, "Do you really need to go to school for Bible when you could just read it yourself instead?"

It is valid to ask what good it is to study at FLBC. But often the people who ask that question assume that FLBC is just another institution for higher learning. The Bible college, though, was created to be a place where people encounter God in a once-in-a-lifetime, radical way.

I think three things can happen at Bible college: you learn about God, you experience God, and your heart is changed by God.

YOU LEARN ABOUT GOD

I attended FLBC (formerly Association Free Lutheran Bible School) from 2009 to 2011 and enjoyed all the learning, growing, and friends I gained there. The big truths and big doctrines that are taught at Bible college may seem like a lot of head knowledge, but the head is connected to the heart. What you truly believe shapes your life. A common salvation analogy that I had learned before attending Bible college says we as sinful people are drowning, and Jesus, by his death and resurrection, has thrown us a life preserver to save us. I remember Pastor Phil Haugen turning this analogy on its head by reviewing Scripture that calls us dead in our sins (Ephesians 2:1)—we aren't drowning, we're at the bottom of the pool! We can't even grab the life preserver. The only thing we can do is be dead. Jesus has to do all of the work to save us.

Believing this doctrine changes how we live. Believing the original analogy, that we need to reach out and grab the life preserver to save ourselves, leads us to try and earn our salvation. Knowing the truth that we can't be saved by anything we do leads us straight to the arms of Christ. Whether you are a pastor, a software engineer, a stay-at-home mom, or a Walmart greeter, understanding the teachings of the Bible (like how truly terrible we are and how truly good Christ is) lays a foundation for understanding our world and ourselves.

YOU EXPERIENCE GOD

Maybe some of you have gone to a worship concert and tangibly felt God speak to you, calling you back to Him. Or maybe He has spoken to you in the quiet of a week-

long prayer retreat to tell you that you don't need to carry a burden of sin anymore. Many have dug deep into the Word of God for a full week at a marriage conference or a missions' conference and have seen God change their hearts to love a spouse or be drawn into world missions. Many people have a once-in-a-lifetime experience where they encounter God and He changes them in ways only He can.

What would it look like to have those types of encounters over the course of two years? That's what FLBC is, a focused environment that provides opportunities to encounter God daily in and through His Word. The times I remember feeling the closest to God, feeling blown away by God, or feeling like I must be the most horrible person in the world but in amazement realized I was still loved by God were during my two years of Bible college. Not to say those experiences and feelings weren't felt before or after Bible college, but they were pivotal to God changing my heart during that time.

YOUR HEART IS CHANGED BY GOD

I think a reason God gives us these experiences is so that we have opportunities for Him to work change in our hearts, to point us back to Him. The Bible college is an environment that is friendly to heart change, and it's that way by design. Going to FLBC and living in the dorms takes you out of your normal, routine life and puts you in a new environment where God can mold you and change you. Going from high school's structure and routine to living on your own as an adult for the first time at Bible college is a huge change. The first few years of independence are when we develop personal values and belief systems that stick with us for most of our lives. New life situations produce change.

Bible college is geared toward learning Scripture thoroughly and knowing Christ intimately. Introducing the truths of Scripture into the early development of our personal belief system is what can ground us to Christ and his Word for the rest of our lives. In a world where many people lose their faith when they go to college, FLBC seeks to equip young adults to know the truth of Christ and set their faith on the solid rock of Scripture.

It's worth going to Bible college because you learn about God, you experience God, and your heart is changed by God in ways that are unlikely to happen again.

Quanbeck, a member of Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn., is the president of the FLBC Alumni Association.





Discipleship

THE WORD · COMMUNITY · OPPORTUNITY

By Nick Lunde

When I was 15, God called me out of my pit of despair. I had grown up in the Christian faith, but it wasn't until I was at my lowest point that I called out to God for help. God used the transformative power of His Word to call me back to Him and give me new purpose.

Romans 1:16 is a verse that brought me new life, but also a new challenge. The Apostle Paul writes, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." I finally had been given my own faith, but I realized that this faith was not meant to be kept secret. Paul wrote that he was "not ashamed," so we too are called to be disciples and to share our faith boldly. We ought to reflect the shameless love of Christ for us.

The fire of my faith now had a flame, but I needed to keep and grow the fire. You cannot just throw gas on the flame and expect the fire to last. Just as quickly as it grows big and bright, it diminishes into nothing if it is not properly attended. A lasting fire needs wood, oxygen, and a dry environment. In the same way, a Christian needs the Word, a congregation, and opportunities serve to have that faith solidify, grow, and spread the flame given by God.

Over the course of my time at FLBC, and through my time attending Emmaus Lutheran Church in Bloomington, Minn., I have been blessed with a wide variety of opportunities to pour into others and be poured into by others. One of the big emphases for me in living out an unashamed disciple-making life is through leading worship. The congregation at Emmaus has given me an opportunity to serve on their staff in music ministries. This job has helped me grow in faith. I realize that it is not just about a musical instrument to play or a song to lead, but a lifestyle of worship both inside and outside the church walls. The congregation has pushed me deeper into faith because at the center of their concern for me is that I say yes to Jesus and be a part of His ministry as a disciple.

One of the foremost callings of FLBC is to take what we learn in class and apply it to the ministry we have been called to, no matter the vocation. The teaching has been

edifying and inspiring. And we have been given guidance in how to share our perfectly loving God with others. I have received many opportunities to follow God's calling in class, in student life, and in chapel, including leading the student body in worship during chapel services, leading devotions, and even in small things like one-on-one conversations.

But, just as much as I have been called to minister in Christian circles, God has also been faithful to help me take what I have learned and share it with those who do not have a personal relationship with Christ. I have had a strong calling from the Lord to love those who are hurting. He has helped me see that the ground is level at the foot of the cross. There is no pedestal for me to stand on.

Navigating all of this has been a challenge as I am also someone who is broken and in need of a Savior. Discipleship often includes vulnerability and surrendering that brokenness to God. God has used others to disciple me, including pastors, mentors, and new friends who are pointing me to Christ. Over the last two years at FLBC, God has given me consistent support through the people he has placed in my life. Being able to have brothers and sisters bear the burden with me has created lifelong bonds that have been so essential to my growth and identity in Christ.

God has also used the congregation at Emmaus to edify me in my walk. They have been vessels of God's mercy, grace, and love. I have been reminded so often through my time here that church is a hospital for sinners and not a showcase of the self-righteous. Here I have been encouraged even in my weaknesses, knowing that perfection is not possible. But grace is possible only through the perfect life, death, and resurrection of Christ. From that, I have borne fruit, not as a measure of my salvation, but as a way to worship God. That is why it is called the fruit of the Spirit and not the fruit of a Christian. I praise God that I can say with Paul, I am unashamed to be his disciple because God, through Jesus Christ, saved me, for His kingdom and His glory.

Lunde, a second-year student at FLBC, is from Fergus Falls, Minn.

Higher Ed

ACADEMICS · EXCELLENCE · PURPOSE

By Dr. Nathan Olson

College classes. College debt. College influence. Sometimes those words strike fear in our hearts—worry about institutional drift, the exaltation of humanistic philosophy, higher criticism, or the cost of all this abounds in the minds of parents and students alike.

Just as Nathaniel asks Philip if anything good could come out of Nazareth, the parallel question could equally be asked: “Is there any good that can come out of academia?”

Perhaps you’ve found yourself asking that question before. I sure have, and I ask it often.

I’ve seen students graduate from high school and go off to college only to see them return more messed up than when they left. I’ve seen students who have gone to study and come back as know-it-alls, thinking that they are better than everyone. I’ve seen students pile up debt that is larger than the cost of some homes. I’ve seen academia become a counterfeit god, where someone’s whole identity can get wrapped up in their schooling. I’ve seen higher education change people, and often to their detriment.

So, it seems to me to be a legitimate question: “Is there any good that can come out of academia?”

In contemplating the value of higher education, here’s where I’ve landed: Anything can be used or pushed in a wrong direction. Anything can be abused. But that doesn’t mean that the “thing” itself is inherently bad.

As someone who has spent years in college, my prayer has always been that my studies would be a means to a greater end. I want to be sharpened in what I believe. I want to know more about the God whom I love and serve. I want to be able to reach out with the tenets of the faith to a culture which is increasingly post-Christian. I want to engage with those who think about things differently so that I can know why I believe the things that I do. I want to live as a lifelong learner who isn’t just studying for a test or a paper but who is seeking to mature and develop for a lifetime.

And these are the things that we continue to push our students toward, as well.

Here, at the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary, we desire to develop students through a different kind of higher education. Our textbook each day is the Bible, the highest and best source of all knowledge. It’s God’s Word—inspired, inerrant, and true from cover to cover.

We want to train our students, challenge them academically, and call them to excellence, but we do this with an intentional focus in mind. We want to prepare students for a life of faith in Jesus Christ and faithful service in His kingdom.

We want to see an increase in learning God’s Word from our students, but we do so with a higher purpose—to know God and to make Him known. We don’t want our students to be puffed up with knowledge and to stand back and boast about all they have learned and how much they have accomplished. We want our students to mature in their understanding of God and to grow as lifelong learners. We want them to witness how all of Scripture points to the promised plan of God for their salvation and how God calls them to live holy lives for Him as they engage in the world around them.

This is a very different from most other higher education indeed.

You see, someone can be a wise and learned scholar, but it can still amount to nothing in his life. He may have just turned into a clanging gong who waxes eloquently for hours about what he has learned. But God is after a different heart for His people. A heart that expresses the love of our Savior to those around us.

Paul writes in I Corinthians 13: “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”

So, if you think of it, please pray for us and for the work of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary. Pray that hearts are transformed and that we don’t just fill heads with information. Pray that we can push our students to grow in their love for God and His Word. Pray that we don’t exist as a white ivory tower of scholarship, but as a catalyst for launching and catapulting students as they live out their faith through service in their local congregations and beyond.

Olson, who serves Living Word, Egan, Minn., is a professor of New Testament and systematic theology at the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary.



A New life

THEN HE SAID TO ME,
“PROPHECY TO THESE BONES
AND SAY TO THEM, ‘DRY BONES,
HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD!’


By Heather Olson

Each fall, a new class of young men and women arrive on the campus of the Free Lutheran Bible College (FLBC). Campus buzzes with some nervousness, but mostly excitement. After the fog of orientation and syllabi shock wears off, it is common to hear students say how excited they are and how much they love FLBC. Everyone and everything are great! These young people are so happy to be on campus, one would think they were at Walt Disney World, “the greatest place on earth.” Every time a student says how great things are, I smile and affirm their comments while inside I cringe and think, “Just wait until October. The bottom will fall out.”

Inevitably, it happens. Several weeks into the fall semester, life appears to fall apart. Students no longer think of FLBC as a theme park or summer camp. In fact, I’ve heard students say FLBC is a disappointment. People are cliquy. Classes are boring and they aren’t learning anything new. They may even start to think about not coming back for spring semester, or they talk about not coming back for a second year.

As a counselor at FLBC, I have many conversations with these students. I advise them to get more sleep. I remind them that all of us on campus are imperfect. I ask them what their expectations of FLBC were and caution that nothing temporal is a magic cure-all. Satan does not want people studying God’s Word so he will do everything he can to tempt students away from it and cause struggles. I also ask them





I WILL MAKE BREATH ENTER YOU,
AND YOU WILL COME TO LIFE ...
AND I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT WITHIN
YOU, AND YOU SHALL LIVE.”

if sin and conviction of sin are being revealed. Discipline in the moment hurts and pruning is a part of the journey. They need to be reminded that better things are coming.

When those who were questioning their time at FLBC do come back for second year, more often than not, their attitudes are different. The fighting and struggling stops. Their desire for control releases to surrender. These young people are more relaxed, willing, and settled. It is often during this second year that we, as staff and faculty, see their spiritual growth, the fruit of studying God's Word, and a growing love for Jesus and for others.

What are the effects of being surrounded by a Christian community coupled with daily reading and hearing the Word of God? There is joy. There is sorrow and sadness over sin. There are times of encouragement. There are times when the Word of God and Christian community feel loathsome. Can you relate?

As we begin our faith journey, there can be great joy. There is excitement, a “fire” for Jesus that seemingly cannot be snuffed out. However, as we spend more time with our holy, holy, holy God and come to understand our sinful and wicked hearts, God's Word cuts. It hurts. Does anyone like discipline or coming face to face with deeply rooted sin? We want to avoid the pain, the anxiety, the honest truth. We like our sin. We like our idols. We may want to run because we think following Jesus is too hard. We may even feel depleted, exhausted, or dead.

Ezekiel 37 shows us the power of God's Word. It was through the spoken word of God that a valley full of dry bones were able to stand up, be filled with breath, and become a vast army. God's Word transforms. God's Word gives life. God's Word brings hope. God's Word raises up an army.

One of my greatest joys is watching the Lord use our students after they graduate to spread the gospel of Jesus beyond our tiny little campus on Medicine Lake. Often, those having an impact are the students who back in October were convinced they could not stay even one more day, and yet found themselves back for a second year, ready and willing to hear God's Word and receive God's calling on their lives. After spending two years sitting under God's Word and walking each day with other believers, they are willing and ready to go forth and live for Jesus, knowing whatever comes next, God's Word will be their guide, their hope, their life.

Our students often need this reminder. Perhaps you do, too. Valleys of dry bones will come alive again. We need not despair. We cannot turn from our Source of life. Return to Him, daily. Hear the Word of the Lord. Confess and pray with trusted believers. Be revived.

Olson, a member of Hauge Lutheran, Kenyon, Minn., is the school counselor at the Free Lutheran Bible College, Plymouth, Minn.



Christian education historically begins in the home and is nurtured in the congregation through the preaching of the Word, Sunday school, and confirmation classes. Early in the 20th century more formal Bible education became a reality. But what about the Bible school movement within the Lutheran church? We can get an idea by focusing on the history of the Lutheran Bible Institute (LBI) in Minnesota and its impact on the decision to start a Bible school after the AFLC was formed.

LBI was born in September 1919 out of a concern for educating young people in the Bible at a time when the higher critical view of Scripture was becoming more prevalent. There was a concern about the lack of focus on Bible study in the Lutheran church. The individuals who helped plan for the formation of LBI desired it to be thoroughly Lutheran in doctrine and spirit. Even though there were many Lutheran colleges and academies at the time, these schools did not provide a program of study

focused on the Bible and deepening the Christian life. While LBI was never officially operated by a specific Lutheran group or synod, it was heavily sponsored by the Augustana Synod at the beginning. Thorvald O. Burntvedt of the LFC (Lutheran Free Church) and A.B. Anderson of the NLCA (Norwegian Lutheran Church of America) both served on the faculty, which exemplifies how LBI was supported by various Lutheran groups.

Samuel Miller, who served as the first dean, would help found LBI in a time when there was significant moral and social upheaval. The U.S. had emerged from WWI and the flu epidemic, and many pastors of the time had a pessimistic outlook on the world. The first academic year saw a class of 25 students and classes were held at First Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minn. The school constructed their own building at 1619 Portland Avenue in Minneapolis and began the 1929 school year there. LBI would remain there until it moved to the suburbs and became Golden Valley Lutheran College;



Bible school Movement

By Timothy Larson

established: Seattle (1944), New York (1947), and Los Angeles (1951). The Los Angeles LBI is often referred to as CLBS (California Lutheran Bible School); Pastor Maynard Force served as president of this school. Out of the four campuses, CLBS was the most biblically sound in the mid-century, and by the later 1950s and into the 1960s it was often the school of choice for students wishing to attend a strictly Lutheran Bible school. AFLC pastors Elden Nelson and Connely Dyrud are two men who were significantly impacted by their time at CLBS. Many students from CLBS, specifically, were sent out on gospel teams sponsored by the Lutheran Evangelistic Movement (LEM) from the mid-1960s into the mid-1980s. These teams were used mightily by God to impact the communities that they served.

What impact did LBI have on the formation of the AFLC Bible school? From the very beginning there was a concern among people in our association that young people should have a school where they would be trained in the Scriptures and serve in congregations and in their vocations. Several of those present at the earlier AFLC Annual Conferences had LBI connections, but they were not as comfortable with what LBI had become; the focus on the Bible was being lost. At an early conference (1966) morning session, there was discussion about forming a Bible school; some were against it and said it was not doable. A motion was made, and passed, to wait until the afternoon to vote on the issue. During the noon hour a large group came together to pray, and by the afternoon session the mood had changed. When the vote was taken, it passed; there would be a Bible school! AFLBS began in the fall of 1966 with 13 students. Today FLBC, after almost 60 years, “exists to establish students in the eternal and inerrant Word of God for a life of faith in Jesus Christ and faithful service in His Kingdom.” Its motto is, “Start Here. Go Anywhere. Grounded in God’s Word.” Considering the way so many of our Bible college graduates are serving in Kingdom work, we can confidently say that this mission is being put into practice. To God be the glory!

Larson, Osakis, Minn., is a 2009 graduate of the Free Lutheran Bible College.

this branch of LBI would ultimately close in 1985.

The main program at LBI was through the two-year day school, which had courses in personal evangelism, Sunday school, Bible classes, and Luther League work. Other classes were related to home and foreign missions. After the new building opened in 1929, a three-year evening school program began. Records indicate that 45 students received certificates from this program in 1932; it was clearly well received. This program was given the name Christian Leadership Training School. LBI also offered training through correspondence and even a summer school program that was held at Maple Hill Farm near Maple Plain, Minn. We should not neglect to mention one of the lasting vestiges of LBI—Mount Carmel Bible Camp, now Mount Carmel Ministries, which opened in 1938 and is located on Lake Carlos near Alexandria, Minn. Many students from AFLBS/FLBC have worked at this camp over the years.

As time progressed, three other branches of LBI were

AFLC FOUNDATION

SERVING AFLC MINISTRIES

The greatest pleasure for a child of God is serving His kingdom. It comes naturally to those who have received the new nature in Christ. They have been freed from the law's obligation and they serve freely with joy as the result of being His children. As God's limitless grace pours out through His people, it is a joyous privilege to behold.

Paul's words in II Corinthians 9:11 speak to us, "You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous

on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God." The Lord loves to see His grace at work in His people. He loves a cheerful giver.

A believer's testimony continues beyond death (Hebrews 11:4b). In the same way, serving God with our finances begins at salvation and continues after we depart our earthly

disbursement. AFLC ministries may submit grant requests annually to members of the Foundation Board, which is composed of representatives from the Association Retreat Center, Coordinating Committee, World and Home Missions Corporations, and Schools Corporation. These members review each grant request and may fully fund, partially fund, or deny the request. Last year, requests totaling \$32,500 in funding were submitted, and \$25,911 was dispersed.

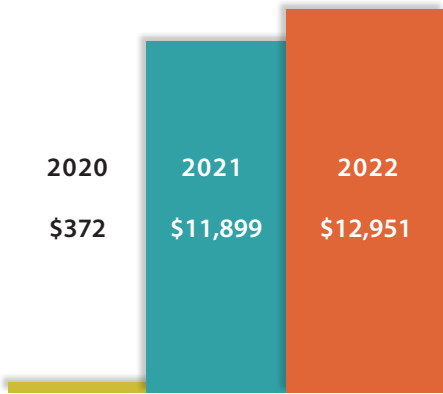
AFLC ministries are using these grants to fund a wide variety of projects. For instance, the Free Lutheran Bible College used a grant to remodel the women's dorm kitchen area. A grant also paid a two-month internship for an assistant editor for *The Lutheran Ambassador* as well as covering the cost of publishing a digital version of the magazine for one year. A grant made possible the FLY Convention Podcast project, as well as the digital camp for FLY Beyond, allowing the impact of these ministries to reach a worldwide audience.

Your AFLC Foundation also manages investment accounts for AFLC ministries. One of those accounts includes an endowment for the AFLC Development office, made possible through a large contribution to the AFLC (2019-2021). This financial gift provided both immediate and long-term financial impacts to AFLC ministries. Prior to the endowment, the Development office was funded from the annual operational budget of several ministries. Now these ministries may maintain the service of the Development office without the annual expense. In the long term, the Development office will have secure funding to be able to strategically plan funding for all ministries of the AFLC. This large gift is a wonderful example of using earthly treasures to fulfill our common mission.

However, most ministries have not received directed investment donations in the past several years. As time passes, it will be important to continue to grow the fund values so that ministries may receive annual grant funding from greater collective earnings.

We ask that you prayerfully consider current and legacy giving to the AFLC Foundation. Ensure future blessings which will outlive you and will glorify the Lord in His work. For more information, visit aflc.org/foundation.

~Your AFLC Foundation Board



GIFTS TO THE FOUNDATION
(Excluding Development endowment)

bodies. The AFLC Foundation was established to provide perpetual funding of AFLC ministries. Gifts received by the Foundation go into investment funds, where they grow beyond the lifespan of givers. These funds become a constant source of blessing in God's kingdom.

The Foundation was established in 1995 with the goal of carrying out the charitable purposes of the corporations of the AFLC. What does that really mean? As with any foundation, the primary purpose is to provide a financial instrument to support the work of the organization in a manner that gives greater value for contributors collectively than individually. They also provide an organization with long-term financial security outside of its normal income. Funds given to the Foundation are not intended to be a replacement for, or an alternative to, direct gifts to the AFLC Ministries.

After the gifts to the Foundation have been invested and have begun earning interest, they are ready for



What if there was a place where the sovereign, transcendent, eternal, and loving God promised to be substantially present with you in a regular and seemingly ordinary feast—a place where he promises that this heavenly food actually gives you life and spiritual strength?

What if this same God actually spoke and His Word was written down for you in human language so that you could hear and know him—a written word that was more than simply words, but a powerful, life-creating Word?

What if there was a place where called and trained leaders' main vocation and passion was to help you understand this life-giving Word—a place where a weary soul could come and receive shepherding care and support?

What if there was a place that was radically rooted and grounded in forgiveness and

CAN YOU IMAGINE?

BY PASTOR ANDY COYLE

mercy—a place where you could belong, be truly loved, serve, and be served? What if that place is intergenerational, familial, and communal in a way that would help you battle the desire to do spiritual life alone?

What if there was a place where you would receive loving accountability—a community where families could be supported and formed in the faith? Can you imagine a place where the message was so strong, compelling, and sweet that it could drown out the societal noise that distracts?

Can you imagine this place? It sounds like a dream. It's radical and beautiful. It's entirely supernatural. If such a place existed, it would truly be one of God's greatest gifts to you.

Friends, such a place does exist. God has literally designed this kind of a place for you. It is your local congregation. This is the place where the ministry of Christ happens. Isn't it amazing? What a precious gift.

Consider also, then, the missional and sacramental nature of this kind of place in a dark, confused, and hurting world. This beautiful gift is designed to be life-giving to others, also. The

congregation is given for the life of the world.

This beautiful picture of the congregation directly and naturally connects to Home Missions. More congregations like this leads to more lives transformed. More congregations like this means more of Christ's ministry to lost and weary sinners. More congregations like this means more souls nourished and fed by the Lord.

So, what does this mean for you? First, cherish your congregation. It is God's gift to you. You need it. Second, invest in your congregation. Live, serve, sacrifice, and celebrate. It needs you. Last, participate in planting new congregations. Pray, invest, and research how God would help you partner in spreading this gift regionally, nationally, and globally.

Home Missions exists for the sole purpose of helping establish more of these God-designed gifts to plant the gospel of Jesus Christ. Join us in this great mission endeavor.

Coyle, who serves Shiloh Church, Blackhawk, S.D., is the director of AFLC Home Missions.



Pearcey headlines Spotlight event

Best-selling author Nancy Pearcey (above and right) was on the campus of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary, Plymouth, Minn., for a two-day conference March 12-13 on gender and worldview. Pearcey, who is also a professor of apologetics and scholar in residence at Houston Christian University, spoke on four topics taken from her best-selling books: “Love Thy Body,” “Total Truth,” “Transgender, Transreality,” and “Toxic Masculinity,” a new book releasing in June.

The event was open to the public, and live-streaming of three of the sessions was made available to those who preregistered.

Pearcey also led a Q&A session on March 13 for students in the Free Lutheran Seminary (below left and middle right).



WMF

WOMEN'S
MISSIONARY
FEDERATION



“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13-14).

W

hen I think about the biblical themes of rescue and redemption,

I often need to remind myself that we live in a state of “already, but not yet.” I am keenly aware of my own sin and deeply feel the effects of sin in the world, which makes me wonder if I have been rescued, if I am actually redeemed. God, then, points me to His Word where He has declared that in Christ Jesus I am rescued and redeemed. He also uses the sacraments to deliver these realities. In baptism, I was rescued from everlasting death as my sin was buried, and I was raised to new life as a child in the kingdom of the Son. Each time I receive the body and blood of Jesus, in, with, and under the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper, I receive the forgiveness of sins. When I hear God’s Word, remember my baptism, and partake of the Lord’s Supper, I am assured that my sins are forgiven and know I am a member of His kingdom, right now. These truths give

RESCUED AND REDEEMED

Make plans to attend WMF Day 2023

BY LIZ MCCARLSON

me comfort and peace as I continue to live in this fallen world. These truths also give me hope for the future, when, at Christ’s second coming, all will be made new, and my rescue and redemption will be made complete for all eternity.

Sister in Christ, you, too, have been rescued and redeemed, and you are invited to join the women of the AFLC as we celebrate these truths at our 2023 WMF Day. We will be meeting Wednesday, June 14, at the Best Western Plus Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center in Sioux Falls, S.D. Our day will include hearing from God’s Word, singing, encouragement, prayer, and fellowship. We are excited to hear from Michele Mobley, Dr. Brent Olson, Tami Demo, and Michelle Olson, and look forward to our memorial service time, led by Jenn Thorson. (If there are women from your congregation who have passed away, please send obituary information to Executive Secretary Dawn Johnson for inclusion in the memorial service.) We also

look forward to our Friday evening Mission Festival service which will be led by Pastor Andy Coyle, director of AFLC Home Missions. Pastor Nate Jore, AFLC missionary to Uganda, will share God’s Word with us that evening.

WMF Day check-in will be from 8:15-8:50 a.m. Please arrive early so that we are all ready for our 9 a.m. start. Additional details and registration are available online (aflc.org/women/wmf-day) and questions can be directed to WMF Treasurer Margie Lee at margieleend@gmail.com or 701-870-2259.

If you are unable to attend WMF Day or the Mission Festival service but would still like to contribute to the offerings of those events, checks can be written to WMF of AFLC and mailed to Margie Lee, PO Box 118, Beulah ND 58523.

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

FLBC announces AA, BA programs starting 2024

Board of Trustees adopts strategic plan

Members of the Board of Trustees of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary announced on March 16 the adoption of a five-point strategic plan, with a key goal of offering an Associate's and a Bachelor's degree in Bible and Ministry at FLBC. These two new programs will be offered in the fall of 2024, pending program development and accreditation. FLBC will continue to offer a Diploma in Biblical Studies.

According to the announcement, the program will extend the existing Bible and Ministry curriculum to include congregational emphases in worship and music ministry, pre-seminary studies, cross-cultural ministry, church planting studies (with AFLC Home Missions), and youth and family ministry studies (with

AFLC Youth Ministries).

"Students currently receive a collection of credits without a specified degree, making transfer and degree completion difficult," said FLBCS President Wade Mobley. "A portion of the student body finishes degrees in Bible and Ministry elsewhere, using our coursework as upper division classes. ... for students pursuing a degree in the one area that we teach, we want them to be able to finish on our campus and in an AFLC-led environment."

Some FLBC students already enroll with college-level credits achieved through Postsecondary Enrollment Options, Advanced Placement courses, or dual enrollment. Current FLBC classes will fulfill many of the general education requirements. Some courses will be added, including new courses in history, composition, Christian literature, and logic. Students will need to earn

approximately nine credits beyond the current curriculum to meet the AA requirements.

"Areas of interest will have specific congregational application, including (potentially) some internship/residency requirement," according to an FAQ document (flbc.edu/strategicplan).

The new strategic plan follows an 18-month-long focus on board governance training. One result was the formation of a strategic planning team comprised of six administrators, two alumni, and four members of the Board of Trustees. Over the last six months, the team worked on how to best fulfill the FLBC mission of "establishing students in the eternal and inerrant Word of God for a life of faith in Jesus Christ and faithful service in His Kingdom."

Their five-point plan was approved by the trustees at their January 2023 meeting. Other goals in the plan include:

- Successfully standing against the increased pressures of conformity and compromise.
 - Operating with a balanced budget, establishing a \$10 million endowment and a 9-month operating reserve.
 - Increasing enrollment to 160 at FLBC while maintaining theological integrity and campus culture.
 - Implementing at least three new outreach emphases and practices which employ the values and skills of students and graduates to impact the AFLC.
- The Trustees have not outlined specific areas of outreach ministry, but the FAQ mentioned potential options such as youth sports, urban, and crisis pregnancy ministries.
- The planning team also reformed the strategic planning process, creating a three-year rolling plan in which "FLBCS will always operate in 'year one' of its strategic plan," according to the FAQ document.

Free Lutheran Bible College to host ACCA basketball tournament 2024-26

The Free Lutheran Bible College, Plymouth, Minn., will host the spring basketball tournaments for the Association of Christian College Athletics (ACCA) for the 2024 to 2026 seasons.

The board of the ACCA announced the significant organizational changes on March 3. Previously, the tournaments were held at Ozark Christian College, Joplin, Mo. According to a statement released by the ACCA, the changes reflect a desire to serve more colleges and to emphasize the Christian character of participating institutions. Participating schools must meet ACCA guidelines, including teams comprised of full-time students and programs that require at least 20 credits of Bible.

"The goal of this decision is to serve more like-mission institutions that

perhaps have run out of year-end options for their athletes," said Dan Hovestol, ACCA board vice chairman.

Additionally, member schools will no longer pay dues, but instead will be charged a per-tournament entry fee.

The 2024 tournament will be March 12-15 in the Student Life Center, on the FLBC campus, coinciding with the National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA) tournament, which will be in the Minneapolis area.

Pastor Wade Mobley, who is the president of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary, also sits on the board of the ACCA. He stated, "Our conference tournament is a highlight every year, and we are thrilled to serve as the new home for the spring ACCA basketball tournaments for the next three years."

Annual Conference Schedule

Ramkota Conference Center, Sioux Falls, SD

Wednesday • June 14

9 a.m. Board/Conference Committees
7:30 p.m. Opening Ordination Service

Thursday-Saturday • June 15-17

8:30 a.m. Devotions
8:45 a.m. Business session
10:25 a.m. Morning break
10:50 a.m. Business session
11:40 a.m. Prayer time
Noon Lunch
1:15-2 p.m. Ministry electives (Th, Sat)
Lecture option (Fri)
1:15-3 p.m. Corporation meetings (Fri)
2:15-3 p.m. Ministry electives (Th, Sat)
Lecture option (Fri)
3:30 p.m. Business session
5 p.m. Pastor's banquet (Th)
5:30 p.m. Dinner (Th, Fri)
7:30 p.m. Communion service (Th)
Mission Festival service (Fri)



It was a couple weeks before Easter and my mother was visiting with a lady at the local coffee shop. The young mother was talking about Easter preparations for her family, which involved coloring eggs, getting candy and things like that. In the midst of the discussion, she said: "I don't know why the church makes such a big deal about Easter." She thought the church was trying to push its way into a holiday about bunnies and eggs.

My mom took advantage of the opportunity and let her know that Easter is really about Jesus, rising again from the dead. It is a celebration of the greatest news ever. The church isn't crowding into the world's holiday. The world has added other stuff to this day that means more than any other for the church.

This interaction in the coffee shop happened about 40 years ago in Astoria, Ore. The lady had grown up in the United States, but did not know Easter was about the resurrection of Jesus. She had never heard a clear presentation of the gospel.

It is easy for those of us

SOME HAVE NEVER HEARD

BY PASTOR CRAIG JOHNSON

who have spent much of our life in church to incorrectly assume everybody knows about Jesus. Many in the U.S. have grown up never being brought to Sunday school, never being taught the basic truths of the Bible, never hearing about Jesus dying for their sins and rising again from the dead. The same is true in other countries of the world. In some people groups, some have yet to hear the good news of Christ. That is why we do missions, both in the United States and around the world.

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Romans 10:14). How is the young mom in the coffee shop going to believe in the resurrection of Jesus if she never hears about it? How is the teenage boy in Uganda going to hear the good news of Jesus if there is no congregation in his community declaring the good news? How is the dad in Brazil going to call on Jesus for help if he is never told that Jesus wants to listen?

We should not assume someone else will tell

them. My mom did not assume someone else would tell her coffee shop friend. She knew she was the one who was given the responsibility and privilege of declaring the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection.

I had the privilege once of traveling with others to villages around India that had no congregations and where the gospel had most likely never been proclaimed. A Christian doctor had visited the villages earlier, doing medical camps and building relationships. I got to go with him and share Jesus. It was great to be able to proclaim the news they had yet to hear and the best news they would ever hear.

We go to a needy world with confidence in the gospel. It is the good news that is true, the good news every person needs to hear, and the good news with power to transform lives.

Johnson, who serves Triumph Lutheran, Ferndale, Wash., is the chairman of the World Missions Board of Directors.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Free Lutheran Seminary intern **James Scott Pierson** has accepted a call to serve the Trinity Lutheran Parish (St. Paul Lutheran, Dodge, N.D., and Golgotha Lutheran, Golden Valley, N.D.). Pierson will graduate in May.

Pastor Steve Carlson has resigned from Ruthfred Lutheran Church, Bethel Park, Pa. His last service was March 19.

Pastor Aaron Olson was installed Feb. 19 at Living Hope Church, Rogers, Minn., with Pastor Micah Hjermstad, AFLC president, officiating.

Pastor James Westgate, Pahrump, Nev., was moved from the AFLC Fellowship Roster to the AFLC Retired Clergy Roster by members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee during their March meeting.

Pastor Mark Antal, Apple Valley, Minn., who is serving in the honorary role of American Legion National Chaplain, gave the opening prayer on the U.S. Senate floor on Feb. 28. Antal prayed, "We come to you not in a state of slavish fear but in an attitude of love and reverence. From houses of worship and places of prayer, people all across our nation pray daily for these men and women assembled here in this chamber. Guard, keep, and protect these senators ... to you, oh God, belong the glory. Amen." Video of the prayer can be found online ([youtube.com/watch?v=LIVG3bDhRcc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIVG3bDhRcc)).

AFLC Home Missions hosted an informational meeting on church planting March 19 in Bismark, N.D. The meeting, led by North Dakota area pastors and Pastor Andy Coyle, director of Home Missions, focused on the potential of a church plant in the Bismark area. Area pastors have been praying about expansion and are in the exploratory phase.

Pastor Randy Nelson, director of AFLC Evangelism and Discipleship, and Pastor Micah Hjermstad, AFLC president, attended the **Southwest District Bible Conference** Feb. 24-26 at Joy Christian Community Church, Fountain Hills, Ariz.



Sylvia Sundby

Sylvia Sundby, 80, Outlook, Saskatchewan, died Feb. 14, 2023, at Outlook Regional Hospital. Born May 24, 1942, she was the daughter of Oscar and Inga Olson. She married Gene Sundby Dec. 27, 1966. He preceded her in death.

She grew up on the family farm near Saskatoon, where she attended Sunrise School and worshiped at Bethlehem Lutheran Church just north of Hawarden. She graduated from the Lutheran Collegiate Bible Institute (LCBI), Outlook. She taught piano lessons for 40 years and played piano and organ for church. With the death of her sister, Ruby, in December 1965, she married her sister's widower, becoming mom—instead of aunt—to three little girls and wife to a very busy preacher. They also had one son, Geoffrey. They served AFLC congregations in Newfolden and Greenbush, Minn., and Culbertson and Brockton, Mont. They returned to Canada where she took a part-time job at LCBI, working as a cook from 1974 to 1983. She volunteered with the music festival in Outlook and organized performances with the LCW at local senior's homes.

She is survived by four children: Heather (Ron) Haaland, Carren Blosky, Michele (Martin) Rude, and Geoffrey Sundby; three brothers, Lloyd (Carolyn) Olson, Merton (Shirley) Olson, and Paul (Kim) Olson; one sister, Phyllis (Arnold) Schellenberg; nine grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren.

A funeral service was held February 18 at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Outlook, Sask. Burial was in the Hawarden Bethlehem Church Cemetery. Memorial donations may be made to: AFLC Canada or the Elbow Bible Camp.

Rudowske installed as LBT executive director

Dr. Rich Rudowske was installed Feb. 4 as executive director and chief executive officer of Lutheran Bible Translators at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Concordia, Mo., with Lee Hagan, president of the Missouri District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, officiating as minister. Rudowske has served as a Bible translation advisor



Rudowske

in Botswana, regional director for Southern Africa, director for program ministries, and chief operating officer. He has an MDiv from Concordia Seminary (2005) and a PhD in Missiology from Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne (2022). Rudowske succeeds Dr. Mike Rodewald, who retired at the end of 2022.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-February 28, 2023

FUND	REC'D IN FEBRUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$32,974	\$79,078	\$110,067
Evangelism	10,117	19,400	23,148
Youth Ministries	11,087	26,114	39,443
Parish Education	9,681	20,461	20,138
Seminary	28,714	59,231	54,418
Bible College	24,306	64,725	78,671
Home Missions	26,681	56,934	86,026
World Missions	28,125	66,057	96,899
WM Personal Support	61,703	120,622	144,510
TOTALS	\$233,387	\$512,622	\$653,320

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

FEBRUARY MEMORIALS

Bible College

Joan Groon
Ruth Claus
Stan Corey

Seminary

Joan Groon
Mardene Slaathaug
Elden Harveland

World Missions

Eugene Field
Kathy Helms

I KNOW MY REDEEMER LIVES

Few things serve the proclamation of the gospel quite like music.

Martin Luther had a lot to say about music. “As long as we live there is never enough singing,” he famously claimed. “It is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us.”

God designed us to sing; music has always been one of the ways believers worship. We articulate our faith through song. We console, comfort, and build relationships with each other through song. And we offer whole-body praise and thanksgiving to God through song.



Pastor Andrew Kneeland

Music can beautifully serve the gospel. Luther knew this, and so did Samuel Medley.

Medley lived in England in the 18th century. Born in 1738 to a family of schoolmasters, Medley had a happy childhood and an unrivaled education. He was set up with a prestigious apprenticeship in London, but before he turned 18 rising tensions between England and France led once again to war. Medley joined the Royal Navy, where he served as a midshipman for several years and was involved in several important sea battles. In the Battle of Lagos in 1759, though, as his fleet successfully prevented a French invasion, Medley was injured and soon discharged from the military.

Back in England, Medley picked up the family trade and started his own school in London. Significantly, Medley became friends with a Baptist pastor who led him to Christ in 1760 and convinced him to become a minister. He was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1768 and began serving a church in Liverpool. Just about everyone who listened to Medley thought he was a gifted preacher. The way he tailored his sermons to resonate with everyday people—especially the blue-collar workers

who packed into his church every week—was remarkable. He preached in the same churches as George Whitefield and John Wesley, and in many ways was a part of their Great Awakening emphasis on revival and piety.

With a name like Medley, though, he was destined to be a hymn writer. He wrote many hymns over the last years of the century, penning nearly 200 of them before he passed away in 1799. His music mirrored his preaching: simple gospel messages available for everyone. His music served his gospel preaching.

Many of us will likely sing one of Medley’s most memorable hymns this Easter season: “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.” Using simple words and seemingly basic truths, Medley beautifully reminds us of what it means to have a risen and living Savior.

When we sing this Easter song, we are just finishing a season of Lent spent looking inward. We’ve thought often about our sinfulness, and rightfully so. But Medley helps us lift our heavy heads to joyfully gaze at the living Christ.

“I know that my Redeemer lives! What comfort this sweet sentence gives! He lives, he lives, who once was dead. He lives, my ever-living Head.”

Job was an Old Testament saint who endured heart-wrenching suffering and endless trials. But from the pit of his despair, through his God-given faith, Job was able to confidently look to his merciful and loving God. He said: “I know that my Redeemer lives!” Applying this famous confession to Christ’s resurrection, Medley’s hymn reminds us that even today Christ is still raised, he is still living, and

he will never die again. The good news of Easter was not just good news for a few days or weeks. The victories Jesus won through his death and resurrection are guaranteed forever by the empty tomb.

Medley’s hymn goes on to remind us that Christ is living for our benefit: “He lives to bless me with his love, he lives to plead for me above.” By rising from the grave Jesus defeated death itself, and now lives to love us. Scripture tells us that the risen Jesus is our advocate before the Father (I John 2:1); even now Jesus is standing before God, always praying and interceding for us (Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25). When we sin, Christ offers his perfection. When we doubt, Christ offers his encouragement.

The fourth stanza includes this moving line: “He lives to wipe away my tears, he lives to calm my troubled heart.” The Christian life will always be marked with

Medley’s hymn reminds us that even today Christ is still raised, he is still living, and he will never die again.

suffering, but Easter reminds us that Christ is alive for our sake. “He lives to comfort me when faint, he lives to hear my soul’s complaint.”

Read the fifth stanza of Medley’s hymn and be encouraged and comforted this Easter season by our always-living Christ.

“He lives, all glory to his name! He lives, my Jesus still the same. O the sweet joy this sentence gives: I know that my Redeemer lives!”

association retreat center

BENEATH THE SHIELD

BY KIRK RAUTIO

This winter has been a rough one for a lot of people I know personally. It is also apparent through our conversations that the enemy is using it to his advantage to bring people to a place where they feel lost and confused. My friends don't know where to go or if they should be moving at all. The feelings of loneliness and frustration are overwhelming sometimes. In our conversations, I remind them that they are not alone and encourage them to be honest in those moments. I am reminding myself that I am not alone, either.

The staff and leadership of the Association Retreat Center are at a beautiful point of planning where to go and what to do next. Financial blessings over the last few years have enabled us to start looking to the future for development of the property and creating new opportunities to serve the kingdom of God. In these opportunities there are so many different directions to choose to go. In deciding which direction God wants us to follow, our vision maybe fogged by the enemy. Our to-do list is large,

and we need to strategically invest God's provision. So, it is easy to get overwhelmed in the planning and decision processes.

But through this, I have benefited from yet another lesson from God. He is teaching me to hunker down and wait behind the shield of faith for his command to move. For those of you who know me, this is not something that comes easily. I like to move hard and fast, chipping away at whatever mountain is in front of me. Sitting and waiting is frustrating and seems like a waste of time and provisions. And it can be lonely sometimes.

Sitting behind my shield and waiting for direction was getting to me. I had so many opportunities to act, and just waiting was driving me up a wall. Then God, as always, put the right people in my circle. Through transparent conversations I realized that we are not alone if we are all behind our shields waiting together. In reaching out and having face-to-face conversations, it was clear that there are many people who are also praying and waiting. They were specifically praying for guidance and provision for the

ARC. My feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and frustration melted away as I envisioned all of my brothers and sisters in Christ with shields locked together, praying together, investing in one another, and sharing the load of defending against the enemy's attacks.

Surround yourself with individuals who pray. They may not all be totally like-minded in their views or skill sets, but it is better that way. Having a variety of different viewpoints on how to or when to do something ensures that you have your potential blind spots covered. When the enemy attacks hard by using distractions and disappointments to blind and deafen us to the gentle guiding of the Spirit, it is these people you need to call to lock shields with. Together underneath your shields of faith, pray and wait it out until the time comes to hear the clear call of God. Then move as God calls.

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