

THE 

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LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR



Our schools
Our mission



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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EDITOR

Pastor Robert L. Lee
rlee@aflc.org

MANAGING EDITOR

Ruth Gunderson
ruthg@aflc.org

CIRCULATION

Liz McCarlson
lasubscriptions@aflc.org

EDITORIAL BOARD

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lasubscriptions@aflc.org

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ENCOURAGING WORD

OUR TRUE CONDITION

BY PASTOR KENT SPERRY

Someone once told me, or perhaps I read it somewhere, that the more you grow in faith the more you recognize the depth of your sin. I can't recall where I came across this idea, but it's something I've found true in my life of faith. As we grow in our understanding of the Word of God, as we grow in our understanding of the gospel, the greatness of our sin is better realized.

As we encounter the gospel for the very first time, the reality of our sin is acknowledged. After all, it's our sin that has brought condemnation upon us. We are in need of a Savior because of our guilt. However, we don't think we are all that bad—it seems this is largely the state of Christians in our nation today. Overall, we think of ourselves as pretty good people. We tend to think that although we sin, our desires and intentions are basically good.

We look at our outward adherence to the Ten Commandments as the measure of our sin. If we haven't stolen, if we haven't killed anyone, if we have remained faithful to our spouse, we think we are doing pretty well. Even though we may acknowledge the fact that we are sinners, we don't believe our sin is all that great.

We learn in time that even if we haven't outwardly broken God's commands, we have done so in our heart. We find that our heart desires not to obey the Lord, but to disobey.

Although we haven't physically murdered anyone, we haven't desired their well-being, either. In fact, we've often desired their harm. We

may not have taken what doesn't belong to us, but we haven't sought to preserve our neighbor's wealth and property. We may not have cheated on our spouse, but adulterous desires have filled both our hearts and minds.

We then run across the words of Scripture that describe our true condition. For example, in Ephesians 2:1, Paul says that we were dead in the trespasses and sins in which we once walked. In Colossians 1:21, he says that we were alienated and hostile in mind. And in Romans 5:10, Paul says that we were enemies of God.

We learn that we're not a mostly innocent people who occasionally slip up. Our natural state is one of hostility and enmity toward God. It not only resists the will of God, but actively opposes it.

Although this may seem discouraging, it makes the gospel that much sweeter. It reveals to us the greatness of God's love. It shows the immensity of the grace He has lavished upon us.

Completing Paul's thought in Colossians 1, he says: "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him ..."

Our sin is greater than we can imagine. Despite our condition, God has reconciled us to Himself by the death of his Son. In this way, and in this way alone, are we counted holy and blameless before Him.

Sperry serves Prince of Peace Lutheran, Beulah, N.D.

It is the gospel of the cross of Jesus Christ that we want all our students, as well as faculty and staff, to grasp and experience daily.

—Amos O. Dyrud

The devil has no respect for the Word of God which reaches only to the brain. He himself knows the Bible on his fingertips, but it avails him nothing.

—Ludvig Hope

It is His sons whom God disciplines that they might bring honor to His name. He wants to teach and train them, to soften and sweeten them to strengthen and steady them, that they may show forth the excellencies of Him who told them, Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

—V. Raymond Edman

The answer, then, if there is any, to the question of whether a school can persevere in the faith is an imperative: Keep on persevering! Deliberately, and repeatedly.

—Harold O.J. Brown

In the study of the Word of God, nothing is more important for faithful and effective ministry than a proper division of law and gospel.

—Francis W. Monseth

At Our Seminary

*Where students are impacted by
the love of God and the
light of the Spirit of God*

BY DR. JAMES MOLSTRE

Last fall, the Free Lutheran Schools received accreditation through the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS). As part of accreditation, our Schools developed institutional objectives flowing from our mission 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.” Our seminary’s program outcomes flow from these institutional objectives, which in turn answer the question, why does this seminary exist?

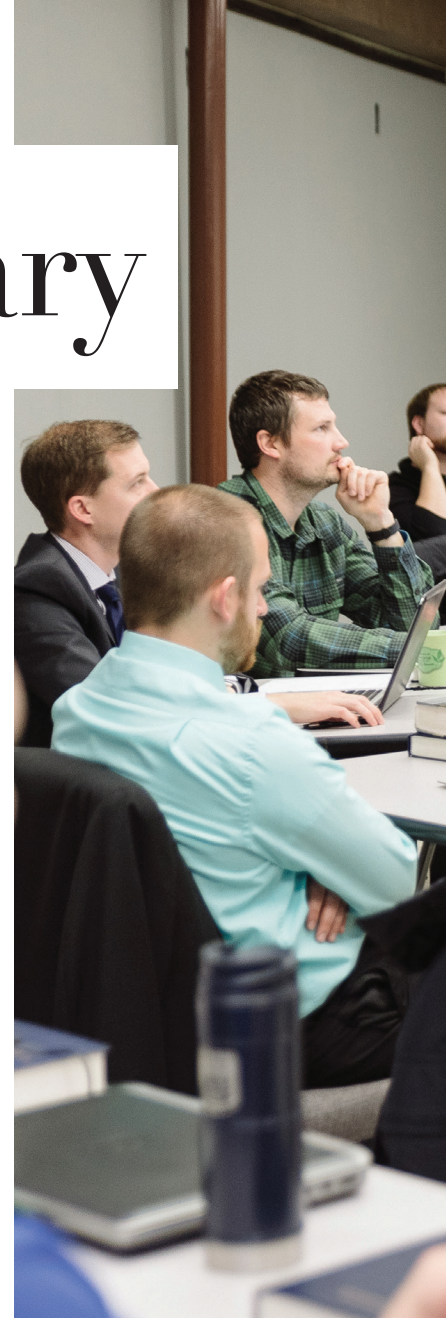
The four institutional objectives of the Free Lutheran Seminary are very closely tied to the seminary’s program outcomes. Together they essentially explain what we pray our seminary students learn and understand. But even more than a head knowledge, it is our prayer that the spirit and the heart of our students are profoundly changed. As Georg Sverdrup articulated in his message at the 25th anniversary of Augsburg Seminary, “Therefore is he best trained for the ministry whose heart is most thoroughly permeated by the love of God and whose spirit is most completely illumined by the light of the Spirit of God.” This is our desire at the Free Lutheran Seminary.

The first institutional objective is that our seminary students will demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of Scripture, subscribing to its inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy without reservation, confessing its authority and demonstrating the ability to accurately interpret it.

Our seminary program, in accordance with the first objective, emphasizes exegetical theology—the study of God’s Word, both Old Testament and New Testament. Currently more than one third of all seminary coursework is the direct study of God’s Word. All other courses taught—whether practical, systematic, or historic—also emphasize God’s Word. Our seminary’s position has been and continues to be that God’s Word is infallible and inerrant. We also believe it is authoritative. By authoritative, we mean that we believe and teach that the Word of God is sufficient and is completely adequate as the source and norm of Christian doctrine and life as our statement of faith declares. Our professors and our students place themselves under the authority of God’s Word, where there is power to change lives and influence souls for Jesus Christ.

The second institutional objective is that our seminary students will grow in spiritual maturity informed by the law and motivated and empowered by the gospel.

God’s Word teaches us that the “gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). It is therefore an objective of our seminary that students learn to properly distinguish law and gospel. The law convicts of sin, it shows us what to do and not to do, but it does not procure salvation for us. The gospel alone is the power of God for salvation. It is the gospel, too, that motivates us to live for Christ. Because of our concern that seminary students be “thoroughly permeated by the love of God” and that their spirit be “completely illumined by the light of the Spirit of God,” a regular time of devotion and





prayer is scheduled every morning before classes begin. Our students are also assigned a faculty mentor their first year and are encouraged to set aside a personal time of Scripture reading and prayer along with a family devotion time. It is our prayer that this four-year time of study reaches the heart of every seminary student for Jesus Christ.

The third institutional objective is that our seminary students understand the function of the local congregation and the place of the individual believer in its fellowship and ministry as guided by the AFLC Fundamental Principles.

The seminary understands well that we serve at the pleasure of the congregations. Our task is to provide men equipped to serve faithfully in the congregation. In order to serve faithfully, the men are taught an ecclesiology guided by the AFLC Fundamental Principles. The men also learn the role and relationship of the congregational pastor through the one-year internship, under

the supervision of a current AFLC pastor. This internship is required of all seminary students who wish to be ordained.

The fourth and final institutional objective is that our seminary students will participate in making disciples of all nations, especially through involvement in the local congregation.

Since the “congregation is the right form of the kingdom of God on earth” (first fundamental principle), the congregation is also where making disciples primarily takes place. Seminary students are taught the importance of the ministry of both Word and sacrament in accordance with the second fundamental principle, “The congregation consists of believers who, by using the means of grace and spiritual gifts as directed by the Word of God, seek salvation and eternal blessedness for themselves and for their fellow men.” The ministry of the Word often expresses itself in small group Bible studies, Sunday school classes, one-on-one mentoring, and of course the Sunday

morning worship service and sermon. Students, therefore, are taught to preach an expository sermon from God’s Word. Students are also taught to minister to the spiritual needs of the congregants. It is through this ministry of Word and sacrament, with much prayer, that disciples are made.

The ultimate outcome of all of these institutional objectives is that lives are changed, souls are saved, and the saints are equipped to proclaim the message of salvation and hope. May God in His mercy grant this to our seminary.

Molstre is the dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary.





Focus on the Word

BY DR. MARK OLSON

At the Free Lutheran Schools there are a number of things that we are passionate about, all of which flow from the mission that we believe that God has entrusted to us. We enthusiastically affirm that “our mission is to establish students in the eternal and inerrant Word of God for a life of faith in Jesus Christ and faithful service in His kingdom.”

In light of our mission we have four primary objectives at both the Bible school and seminary, the first of which emphasizes the importance of the Scriptures. It is our goal that students will become very familiar with, and appreciative of, the Bible. Our prayer is that the training students receive here will deeply impact both their hearts and minds. We teach them to understand and interpret the Word of God. We encourage them to confess its authority and to demonstrate an increasingly comprehensive understanding of it. Solid foundations for life and service are being laid each year on campus, and the Bible is central to all of this.

It is our conviction and confidence that our triune God has given us a great treasure in the Bible. It is trustworthy, true, and of immense value for our students. As they study the Scriptures, the message of the law clearly reveals the perfection and holiness of God, but it is the message of gospel that becomes most cherished. The good news of Jesus Christ comes alive in the pages of Scripture

and lives are transformed. What a joy it is to see students come to understand that God’s forgiveness

and favor are totally undeserved, yet readily and graciously available in and through the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

During their time here on campus students study the Bible from cover to cover. Each portion of Scripture is highly valued by our instructors and reflected in their teaching. The classroom experience becomes a time of intense discovery and learning. Students become grounded in their faith and aware of God’s perspective and His kingdom work. In a time when so much of the focus of higher education is centered almost

entirely on preparation for careers, our students gain a fuller understanding of the future for which God desires to prepare them. They learn that there is no greater foundation for life than the rock solid one that the Word of God provides. Careers are best understood in light of the biblical teachings regarding vocation, and the variety of vocations is much richer and more significant than most students have previously realized. Because each student has an existence that will never end, they are being prepared not just for the next few decades, but also for eternity.

Each year we appreciate the students whom God brings to our campus from across the country and around the world. As they leave their homes to journey here, not everyone they know understands their motives. While some of their family, friends, and others have joyfully encouraged them, very often there are those who do not understand the value of biblical studies and have sought to dissuade them from attending. While the choice to attend is at times difficult, it is also very beneficial. In surveys of hundreds of our alumni we consistently learn that given the opportunity, almost all (between 95 and 98 percent, depending on the year of the survey) would make the same decision to attend here again and would also recommend the Free Lutheran Schools to others.

At the end of each school year we have the opportunity to send forth our graduates. These graduates have been deeply impacted by their training in the Bible. They leave with new resources for life: a solid and more consistent worldview; an increasing amount of biblical wisdom, discernment, and critical thinking skills; and growth in their Savior’s love and the ability to reflect His heart for the varied peoples of the world. Their strength is not of their own making, but they are being renewed day by day in the grace and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. They have been established in the eternal and inerrant Word of God and have now also been equipped for a life of faith in Jesus Christ and faithful service in His kingdom. This is our mission. It is good. And the Word of God is central to it all.

Olson is the vice president of academic affairs and director of institutional effectiveness at the AFLC Schools.

*It is our conviction and confidence
that our triune God has given us a
great treasure in the Bible*

Growing in Christ

Spiritual maturity comes as a natural outcome of the work of Christ in the lives of His followers

BY BREANNA MCNEAR

There have been times in my life when I looked back at where I was a year before and didn't see a lot of change. Looking back now, however, at where I was even a year ago, I feel like a completely different person.

Growing up, I was blessed with parents who cared deeply about our own walks with the Lord, and despite our very messy humanness, made sure we were in the Word as a family. Devotional times weren't always consistent or joyful, but our study of the Word, however begrudging, helped lay the foundation of what my faith is today.

It came, however, with a lot of spiritual pride. Before attending Bible school, I thought myself already surrendered fully to the Lord, and that I'd be able to sail through anything life threw at me because of it. It was like I'd hit some mythical sweet spot with God, where trials would be a piece of cake because I was no longer fighting His will. All the while, in my head I was writing my future instead of truly letting God do that. I wanted to be in control of what happened in my life. But don't we all? And here's where I've seen God have to break me the most, throughout my entire lifetime, every single time I fall back into those habits.

A verse that has stuck out to me is Isaiah 57:15, "For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'" The Hebrew word for contrite is *daka'*: to crush, be crushed, be contrite, be broken. It's this idea of being so broken, so crushed, that we are made into dust. We might wonder, what good is dust? When something is broken, the pieces can be put back together, but what can you do with dust? It's from the dust, though, that God takes

us and makes us into something new. Something beautiful. He makes us into what He has called us to be.

When I first stepped foot on the AFLBS campus, God had already been doing a lot of breaking in me and was still doing so. In all honesty, I was bitter from it all. But despite that, He brought about a healing in my heart that I desperately needed. He breathed new life into me and put the pieces back together. During my first year at AFLBS, He gave me a joy I'd been lacking, and through the process, fixed my eyes back on Him, reminding me that He held my future, and that nothing to come was to harm me but simply draw me closer to Him.

The breaking in me was not yet done. Honestly, it never is in a Christian's life. We will always need our faith refined and strengthened. And sometimes God doesn't merely allow us to be broken but will actually engineer the circumstances that lead to our breaking. By the end of my first year of AFLBS, I'd let my focus wander and was seeking my hope and satisfaction outside of Him. He had blessed me with an amazing relationship, but I'd gotten so caught up in it that when the Lord chose to take it away, I kicked back. I will be honest, pushing through my commitment to summer teams and even returning to school was hard. Once again, I'd been caught writing my own future and God had to take the pen back. I wanted to throw myself down like a child and demand my way. Why wouldn't He let me have this? But little do I still understand the plans He has for me.

This past fall, the Lord gave me these words: unshakable hope, as reflected in Hebrews 12:27: "The words, 'once more' indicate



the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.” Up to this point I’d put my hope—my sense of worth, my satisfaction—into people and things. But people aren’t perfect. Things aren’t lasting. Why was I looking to them? All during this school year, the Lord has not just set this thought before me, but He has thrown it in my face—He is trustworthy. My God, who commands angel armies, holds me in His hands. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve stopped and thought about that. When my hope, my trust, and my faith are in Him, I have an unshakable foundation. It took a shaking to make me realize

the other things I depended on will fall at the slightest breath of wind. I’ve realized—through my time in classes, in music practices, in dorm devos, in random shenanigans around the dorms, in everyday life—that He alone is our ultimate foundation. When we choose to trust His timing, the most amazing peace and freedom surrounds us. And in that truth, I find an unshakable hope no amount of uncertainty or heartbreak can touch.

McNear, a senior at AFLBS, is from Jamestown, N.D.



How does a Bible school influence the local congregation? This is a story that can be traced through many congregations and ministries throughout the world. Here at Bethel Free Lutheran in Grafton, N.D., that question can be answered by four generations of free Lutherans.

Going back to the beginning of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations in 1962, a small group of believers determined that establishing a seminary and Bible school was every bit as important as building their own local church. These people thought forward to when local leaders would be needed to be workers in “the right form of the kingdom of God on earth”—the congregation (Fundamental Principles).

One such couple was Herb and Dorothy Presteng, charter members of my congregation. Herb and Dorothy worked hard and lived modestly as they raised their children in the newly formed AFLC. When the Association Free Lutheran Bible School was formed in

1966, Herb and Dorothy sent their daughter Jean to join the first class. Jean told me that even though she had grown up reading and memorizing Scripture in daily devotions, AFLBS caused her to go deeper into the Word. One of the most meaningful parts of AFLBS for Jean was being able to find Christian friends with whom she could enjoy consistent fellowship for the first time. It was there that Jean met her husband, Terry Olson, and there that both followed the call into full-time ministry. As Jean and her husband have served 16 different churches, Jean has made lasting Christian friends and has been involved in every church activity to support the ministry. Jean learned about true Christian fellowship and life in the body of Christ at AFLBS, lessons which were passed on to their four children who are all leaders in their local AFLC congregations.

Herb and Dorothy had another son, John, who attended AFLBS between a two-year enlistment in the

Our schools and the local congregation

BY ROSE CARLSON

home with, Bethel's emphasis on music and youth ministries has become well-known and appreciated in our community.

John and Anne had three boys, all of whom attended AFLBS. Two of these men are now leaders in their home congregation, while the third is living for the Lord with his family in different parts of the world where his work takes him. The eldest son, Mark, married an AFLBS alumna, Mia, and came back home to raise their family. Mia spoke of the influence of her time at Bible school in this way:

"I had always grown up having personal devotions and committing Scripture to memory, but my understanding of the Word was segmented. It was at AFLBS that I became a true *student* of the Word as I grew to understand the big picture of how the whole book fits together from Genesis to Revelation, and the role individual books play in the Bible's message. This understanding caused me to want to study the Word even more."

Mia is on the music ministry team and she has hosted Bible studies in her home where women in the community are catching her passion for God's Word. Mia emphasized her passion for Sunday school that was created at AFLBS. As she leads the Sunday school and vacation Bible school ministries, she desires that same firm foundation in the whole Word of God to be firmly established for her own six children and for every child who comes to Bethel.

Bethel hosts one of the largest VBS programs in our community each summer, where AFLBS summer teams have left a lasting impact on




our own youth and on the youth of the community. Without AFLBS summer teams, our church would struggle to provide the quality that our VBS is known for, drawing children from every denomination as well as unchurched kids who have been invited by friends. Herb and Dorothy's great-grandchildren are now

coming to the age when they can serve as VBS helpers, and they are making plans to attend AFLBS.

At some point in Bethel's history, our congregation decided to pay tuition for every AFLC Bible school and seminary student from our church. This simple and often sacrificial decision has resulted in our "wall of fame" that many have seen in our youth room containing around 60 photos of AFLBS alumni who were either church members or who later were associated with our church as youth workers or other leaders. My photo is on that wall, too, even though when I attended AFLBS 30 years ago I had never heard of Grafton, N.D. I am thankful that I could attend AFLBS as a young seminary wife where I learned about the foundations of the AFLC and the beauty of free and living congregations. Our own five children have received that same foundational teaching at our Bible school. The blessings of a systematic biblical education continue to multiply exponentially as AFLBS trains and sends out students of God's Word to serve in His kingdom.

Carlson is a member of Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, N.D.

army. John's stories of his AFLBS antics have become legendary, but he too carried his experiences at AFLBS back to the local congregation after meeting his future wife, Anne, and coming back home to start his family. John has faithfully served the local congregation as a deacon, trustee, chairman, and builder. His wife is the church organist and a music minister, as well as having served in leadership in the Women's Missionary Federation and children's ministries. Because of the strong spiritual foundation this couple came



*Following the example of Christ,
dorm staff focus on living out their
faith as they mentor students*

To be a disciple maker

BY EMILY KREGEL

We often hear people say, “Be an example of Christ,” “Do everything for His Glory!” Recently, I have been asking myself what that really means for me. And for others. What does it mean to be an example of Christ? How can I lead others on that path, as well?

Christ is the manifestation of everything good. This is shown in the way he loves people, sees people, and speaks to people. He is bold and courageous, yet kind and compassionate. These are not characteristics that define my life always, but they are attributes God has called us to live in. God has been continually teaching me that the only way we can exemplify Christ is to rely on Him to shine through us.

The AFLBS dorm staff are constantly being tested. Through these tests, we have seen God do amazing things. Recently, I was talking with my dorm assistants about some of the conversations we have with our students. When we are tired, emotionally drained, and have no words in our minds or mouths, God speaks through us, and boy, does He do some amazing things. The most impactful conversations happen when we feel we have nothing to give.

I think discipleship is a lot like this in many ways. It is doing real life with people, sharing struggles, joys, and how you’ve seen God working in your life lately. Discipleship is having nothing to give to a person, but solely relying on God to fill you with the things you need. Then, you get to trust that He is working through you. It is living a life of discipline to Jesus’ teachings and practices. Discipleship is encouraging others in their faith walk. It is walking

beside them and building them up in the unity of Christ. Discipleship is being intentional about growing a community in the name of Christ.

One way discipleship is happening at AFLBS is through our mentorship program. We prayerfully match mature women of faith with young women at the school. Women in local congregations, alumni of the school, seminary wives, and women who just plain love Jesus, get together with the students they have been paired with and share about their faith walks. They pray for the students, and the students seek them for advice and wisdom. They are reading God’s Word together, and applying it to real life situations they are going through. I believe God calls us to cross-generational relationships. God calls us to learn and grow in our faith, and then God gives us the opportunity to share that with others. In II Timothy 2:2 Paul says, “and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” We are meant to share the things God has been doing in our lives and in the lives of people around us. If the mature in faith never share their faith or experiences, how much wisdom is being held back from those new in faith?

Another way discipleship is happening at AFLBS is within the dorms. The dorm is divided up into four sections we like to call wings. Each wing has a dorm staff



member on it, either myself as resident head or one of three dorm assistants. Our roles on our wings is to mentor and disciple 10-12 girls. We want to encourage these young women on their walks with Christ, assisting them in applying the truths they are learning in class into their everyday lives. In the Book of James, he compares hearing the Word but not doing what it says to looking in the mirror at your own face and then forgetting what you look like the instant you turn away. It can be hard to apply what God is teaching us in His Word into practical ways, but that is just what God is telling us to do. He wants us to not only know His Word well, but to store it up in our hearts and to live it out in our daily lives.

As I think about the past, present, and future students of our Schools, I think about the ways their lives have been impacted by those living out the Word. The way they have been impacted also affects those around them. What we

say and do, and how we react to the world affects how others see us. As Christians, our actions also affect how non-believers perceive God. Jesus lived a life surrounded by negativity. He was publicly put down, He was disliked, disowned, and spat on. Through it all, Jesus reacted with compassion, forgiveness, mercy, acceptance, and trust. He trusted that God's plan was best, even if that meant going to the cross. Christ, being God himself, lived His human life in submission to the will of the Father. My prayer is that this is what discipleship looks like in my life, the lives of the AFLBS dorm staff and students, and in the lives of the body of Christ.

Kregel, from Milford, Ill., is the resident head of the women's dorm on the AFLBS campus in Plymouth, Minn.

1. a settled conviction as to God's character and preference and ways of working.
2. a simple common sense in weighing and deciding what best to do.

3. prayerful and life-long study and reading of the Word

The best thing you can do to prepare to know His will tomorrow (or any day, or any year) is to walk in fellowship with Him today. He shapes you and His Word and He abides in you. He shapes you and gives you wisdom and what you need so you can know His will tomorrow.



Leaving a legacy

Pastor Phil Haugen to step down from Schools faculty

If ever there was someone who had a job that was the right fit, it was Dr. Phil Haugen, known simply as “Pastor Haugen” by his many students. After 36 years of teaching New Testament classes at the AFLC Schools, Phil Haugen has decided it’s time to (kind of) retire. Two years before my first year at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, Pastor Haugen came to be an instructor at the Schools. He served in that capacity for 16 years, including my three years in seminary, and then took a call to be a parish pastor in Culbertson, Mont. I served in Minot, N.D., during many of those six years he spent in Culbertson, and we enjoyed a rich pastoral fellowship in that district. Pastor Haugen then returned to teach at the AFLC Schools for another 20 years, during which time five of my sons had the privilege of sitting under his teaching at AFLBS, and one of them was blessed with another three years of his instruction at seminary. Pastor Haugen’s humble approach to the Scriptures has shaped the way two generations of my family look at the Bible today, and my family is certainly not the only one which can say that.

Why am I so sure this job was the right fit for Phil Haugen? It is because he loved his work teaching students, and He himself was a humble student of God’s written Word. Any questions about what he thought on any subject would take him into the Scriptures for his answer. And if he didn’t have an answer from Scripture, he would unashamedly say, “I don’t know.” But Pastor Haugen did know the Scriptures well, and under his instruction a love for God’s Word and for the Christ of the Scriptures has been deeply embedded in countless hearts and lives.

Recently, Dr. James Molstre, the dean of our Free Lutheran Seminary, had asked Pastor Haugen if he would consider serving next fall as a part-time adjunct instructor for a couple of seminary classes. He had replied that he wanted to talk to his wife, Gwen, before giving an answer. Within a couple days he affirmed that he would. Dr. Molstre then said, “Okay, I’ve got you down for teaching Galatians and Greek II.” Pastor Haugen’s reply was, “Man, that’s great!”

Pastor Haugen, thank you for your friendship, and on behalf of the AFLC, thank you for your faithfulness to the Word of God and your humble service at AFLC Schools.

Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck, Moorhead, Minn., is chairman AFLC Schools Board of Trustees.

● In the summer of 1985, I arrived on the campus of AFLTS to take prerequisite Greek classes before beginning fall seminary classes. My instructor was Pastor Phil Haugen who over the next four years would become a vital influence in my seminary training. Under Pastor Haugen’s guidance I became a lifelong student of Scripture. He transformed my approach to Scripture from “what do I think it means?” to “what does the Scripture say?” as he taught me to let the rules of grammar and the text itself determine the meaning. Pastor Haugen was one of the few teachers I have ever had who was not afraid to answer my questions with the words, “I don’t know.” He taught me that if the Scripture is silent regarding speculative questions, then we too should be silent. As the 30th anniversary of my ordination approaches, I cannot help but realize that the AFLC has been influenced mightily by this humble man who has molded so many pastors who fill our pulpits. Thank you, Pastor Haugen!

Pastor Tim Carlson serves Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, N.D.

● Pastor Haugen’s teaching works because of his mild manner and bold conviction. He is a man of humble conviction. He teaches straight from the Bible text, implicitly declaring the source of his authority by pointing back to God’s word repeatedly. I would put the quality of his teaching up against any seminary or Bible college program. One thing people don’t know about him—he loves basketball, no matter the age or level.

Pastor Wade Mobley is president of AFLC Schools.

● I thank God for providing the AFLC with an educator of such quality. Pastor Haugen’s faithfulness to God’s Word, his thoughtful approach in the classroom, and his consistent proclamation of the good news of the gospel left an indelible mark on me. I’m sad to see him retire, but I know our schools will continue to provide an excellent education, and I’m excited for him and his family in this new chapter of life.

Pastor Micah Hjermstad serves St. Paul’s Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D.

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THE GENERAL FUND

BY LAVONNE WEST

I appreciate the special offerings we have received from our members. Thank you for your designation. We are grateful for your specific support of our projects to date. As of this writing, you have faithfully supported the Home Missions Conference in Mesa, Ariz. You have also supported our wonderful missionaries. In the Parish Education department, you have helped with the second grade Sunday school curriculum. At the Schools, you have provided books for our seminarians, and have renovated the women's dorm at AFLBS. This year, we are channeling these funds toward the men's dorm. Ladies, your generosity is greatly appreciated.

When last year's WMF budget was met I was overjoyed. Can we get an "amen," and praise the Lord together?

Some of your gifts will go toward the General Fund of the AFLC this month. Thank you for your generous support for this, as well. It's may not seem as exciting, but it is very necessary. Nuts and bolts are needed to get the job done.

I found the word "general" is used two times in the King James Version of the Bible. The first time it is used for Joab, the general of King David's army (I Chronicles 27:34). The second time it is used in Hebrews 12:23, where the writer refers to a general assembly.

We are generally assembling in Pennsylvania this year for WMF Day. This is both a blessing and a curse. Wait now, don't overreact and let me explain. The blessings include new territory explored for many in our fellowship, and new exposure to our AFLC for our Eastern family. However, extra miles will mean extra expenses for many, so please pray with us as we call on our great God to meet needs in the general fund for 2019.

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



2019 WMF Convention

June 11 • Spruce Lake Retreat Center • Canadensis, Pa.

The WMF will host the 2019 WMF convention on June 11 at Spruce Lake Retreat Center in Canadensis, Pa. The theme for the day will be "Faithful to All Generations!" from Psalm 145:4.

Please use the online form for the AFLC Annual Conference to register* for the WMF Convention. The registration cost is \$20. The form can be found at aflc.org/conferences. Registrations can also be made by calling the AFLC at 763-545-5631.

Registrations for housing and meals must be made directly with Spruce Lake Retreat Center. Call 800-822-7505 to reserve a room and register for meals.

**Registration is required for all attending the convention.*

Starting at Bible school

BY PASTOR ADAM OSIER

It was Labor Day afternoon in 2003, move-in day my first year at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School in Plymouth, Minn. I sat next to my mom in a pew near the back of the chapel at our AFLC Schools campus as AFLBS Dean Pastor Jim Johnson instructed us to write a parting note to our parents. I remember very little of that note except that I told my mom that everything would be okay even though I would be 300 miles from home. Really, it was an attempt to convince myself that what I was doing was the right thing. To many eyes, including my own, it seemed crazy that I was there. I had a full ride scholarship to my hometown university. I'd already attended one year there and was on my way to the career path of my choosing. But God, as He has often shown me, had a different path for me.

There has not been a time that I have regretted following that path. Even after only one year of college I knew the foundations of my faith were being challenged. Well-spoken professors had posited worldviews that I struggled to rebut. Student life centered around activities contrary to Christian faith and discipleship. Despite having the solid foundations of a good congregation and a godly home, I wasn't ready for those challenges to my faith that I faced on the college campus.

AFLBS provided that foundation. At AFLBS, I grew as Peter says, "in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18). I developed lifelong relationships with professors who truly cared about me, spent time getting to know me, and who rightly divided God's Word of truth, clearly defining the gospel of Jesus Christ. They taught me how to give an answer when questioned about my faith in Christ. They taught me what it meant to participate in God's kingdom as a member of a congregation.

While there, I was also surrounded by a network of other brothers and sisters in Christ pursuing and learning the same things. I developed many meaningful, eternal friendships.

I went on to get a teaching degree from the University of Northwestern—St. Paul and then attended our seminary. My friends went on to become engineers, lawyers, doctors, nurses, teachers, accountants, and many other things. But we started at AFLBS where we were grounded in God's Word.

Now, God has again called me down an unexpected path to be the dean of that school which



Osier and his wife, Courtney, have two children, Jacob (8) and Kaia (6).

has been so foundational to my faith. And though it is a humbling and challenging call, I see it as an incredible opportunity to be a part of God's work in the lives of young men and women. By God's grace and leading, my prayer and goal for AFLBS is to ensure that it continues to grow and develop in its commitment to provide an excellent, rigorous, and practical grounding in God's Word so that students will be equipped as Christ's ambassadors wherever they go—in their congregations, classrooms, workplaces, societies, and homes.

Osier serves as associate pastor of Ruthfred Evangelical Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa. He will begin duties on the Plymouth campus as the new AFLBS dean on July 1.



The gift of compassion in action

BY JOAN CULLER

As the spiritual gifts coordinator for St. Paul's Free Lutheran Church in Leitersburg, Md., I have the privilege of talking to different members about their passions, the things that tug at their hearts, the tasks to which God has called them. That inspires me in ways I would not have imagined.

I have been providing members with a spiritual gifts assessment to work through and then discussing the results with each person. Two people I spoke with recently are attracted to caring ministries, and we talked about their desire to provide for the hungry, needy, and homeless. Our conversations came around to the fact that we sometimes see people on the street, holding up a sign that says "homeless" or "unemployed," and are left feeling helpless and unsure of what we can do. Sometimes we're afraid giving cash isn't the best idea; sometimes we don't have cash with us. Paralyzed by indecision, we just drive by, feeling guilty.

Well, we came up with an idea. One friend said she saw a list online of items to include in a care package for the homeless—things like wipes, granola bars, raisins, socks, etc. I made two up, putting the items in a gallon-sized

freezer bag. When we publicized the idea to the congregation, our adult Sunday School class purchased some small New Testaments to include in the bags. I'm now carrying one bag in each of our cars.

I recently had an opportunity to give one out. The man I handed it to was so happy and told me how much he needed a pair of socks. He had a big smile on his face as he waved good bye when I drove on. Even better than giving him a few helpful items, I connected with him as a human being. It is a good feeling, not only to help, but to connect with people and let them know that God loves them and somebody cares.

I know this is just a small thing, but I believe Mother Theresa once said we don't need to do great things, we just need to do small things with great love. I am thankful to my fellow saints at my church who helped me find a way to do this. That's how it is with spiritual gifts: when we drop them in God's hands, the ripple effect goes far beyond our own lives.

Culler is a member of St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Leitersburg, Md.



Care package items

Are you interested in making a care package to hand out? Here are a few ideas.

- **Personal care products:** deodorant, lotion, toothbrush, toothpaste
- **Food and snacks:** raisins, granola bars, small can of tuna with spoon, gum, water or a drink
- **Cold weather clothing:** hat, glove, scarf or socks
- **Change:** quarters or dollar bills for vending machines
- **Healthcare items:** band aids, vitamins

CROSSING THE LINE

BY MICHAEL ROKENBRODT

0

ne day recently I was sitting in an alley waiting for my co-teacher to join me. I was

studying a passage from Genesis when a shadow fell over me.

After a brief hello, the stranger asked, “Why are you not a Muslim?”

I appreciated the man’s direct approach and his possible concern for the welfare of my soul. In my time as a missionary, I can’t say I have ever greeted a Muslim with, “Why are you not a Christian?”

“I’ve come with the good news that Jesus Christ has come to save the world,” I replied.

The man grinned. “Jesus could not save himself. Why would you think he could save the world?”

With this, he speedily ran away, keeping his smile. I waited, wondering if the encounter was over.

A few minutes later, he returned and said, “They took Jesus and killed him. So you should become Muslim.”

“Do you have time for me to show you something?” I asked.

“No, I have no time today. I must go.”

I ought to have just opened my Bible and showed him Isaiah 53. Instead, I paraphrased, “Jesus offered Himself as a sacrificial lamb to save the world.”

“If we meet again, we can talk more,” he said and did another fast disappearing act.

My bedroom wall is below a minaret. As late as 10 at night and as early as six in the morning, I wake up listening to the sounds of children in

the Islamic boarding school next to my house in Jinja, Uganda. On top of the minaret is the Islamic crescent. Its usage as their religious icon goes back to the days of the Ottoman Empire, but it has an even more ancient history.

We can trace the crescent all the way back to Genesis 31:53 when Laban said to Jacob, “May the God of Abraham and the god of his brother Nahor judge between us.” At the head of Laban and his grandfather’s pantheon was the moon god named Sin, the god of Haran and Ur. With those words, Laban requested that Jacob’s clan would stay on one side of the line while Laban’s clan would stay on the other. Ironically, Sin used the same crescent as Muslims do today. Do Christians and Muslims today also have a line between them?

I think God is pleased and at work when a person—like the man in the alley—dares to cross

the line, if only for a few seconds before running back again. It works toward the fulfillment of Isaiah 60:7: “All Kedar’s flocks will be gathered to you ... they will be accepted as offerings on my altar, and I will adorn My glorious temple.” Kedar, second son of Ishmael, is identified by Muslims as the ancestor of prophet Mohammed. I pray that God used our alley encounter, and others like it, to bring this man one step closer to decorating His temple.

As I listen to my young neighbors reciting their prayers to Allah, I ask myself, “Is it my turn to cross the line?” I pray that God continues to bring me courage so that I might also be willing to be a stranger in an alley.

Rokenbrodt is an AFLC missionary serving in Uganda.



AFLC's Commission on Evangelism is renamed

Change reflects ministry's focus on discipleship

The AFLC's Commission on Evangelism, with the encouragement and blessing from members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee, has changed its name to AFLC Evangelism and Discipleship (AED).

Director Jim Rasmussen said that the new name "is a very good picture of who we are as we believe both evangelism and discipleship are essential in growing God's Kingdom."

Rasmussen stated that the work will always have the focus that Jesus had, which is to seek and save the lost (Matthew 18:11), but that follow-up time with those new to Christ is also crucial, which is often called discipleship (Acts 2:42). "Discipleship is training new believers as they grow in their walk with Christ, and training them how to share the gospel with others," he said.

Home Missions to send out alumni teams

AFLC Home Missions is hosting an alumni vacation Bible school team to serve this summer. Members are AFLBS graduates who have experience serving on summer teams. The four team members have been selected for the South Barnabas team, including Zachary Lynnes (Leonard, N.D.), Regan Johnson (Metropolis, Ill.), Haley Thrasher (Roseau, Minn.), and Megan Thonsgaard (Louise, Texas).

Home Missions is also assembling an alumni team to serve in Alaska. Members include Heather Hansen (Abercrombie, N.D.) and Tyler Wiesbrook (Yorkville, Ill). Two more team members are needed to serve this summer. If interested, contact Home Missions at 763-545-5631 or email homemissions@aflc.org.

Annual Conference housing and meal registration now available online

Housing and meal registration is now open for those planning to attend the 2019 annual conference, scheduled for June 11-14 at Spruce Lake Retreat Center in Canadensis, Pa. A comprehensive list of facilities is available on the camp website at sprucelake.org. To reserve a room and pay for meals, call the camp at 800-822-7505.

The conference will be hosted by the Eastern District of the AFLC under the theme taken from Joshua 24:15, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

Conference committees will meet beginning the morning of June 11, and conference business begins on June 12 and will conclude on June 14.

2019 SEMINARY GRADUATES

DAVID NIEMELA

Cokato, Minn.

My early life growing up in Cokato, Minn., consisted of a sparse but essential knowledge of Jesus. I was born on July 10, 1992, to Nathan and Nancy Niemela, and was baptized that same year. I learned of important doctrines in my early years, like Christ dying on the cross for my sins, and the existence of heaven and hell, along with some Bible stories.

My immediate family and I went through a difficult time a few years before I went into high school. The difficult event for my parents and the siblings still at home was leaving a church in which we had many relations. As for myself, a cloud of conviction of my past and present life of sin hovered over me. We found Good Shepherd Free Lutheran Church in Cokato when I was in the ninth grade, and I returned to my baptismal faith in Christ at an evangelistic drama there. I was subsequently built up in God's Word through numerous ministries at Good Shepherd.

A number of my mentors at church attended AFLBS, which probably was the main factor for why I enrolled there after high school. I was called as youth director to Good Shepherd after Bible school and I completed my bachelor's degree online at Faith Evangelical College. At Good Shepherd, through ministry experience and the encouragement of others, I sensed a call to attend AFLTS.

I am very thankful for my time at AFLTS. The focus on God's Word makes it applicable for all areas of pastoral ministry. My internship in Roseau, Minn., has also been filled with new relationships in God's family, and a variety of ministry opportunities. I will be joined together in marriage with Jenny Von Ohlen in May, and we look forward to serving in God's kingdom together.



ISRAEL VAZQUES-FLORES

Leon, Mexico

I was born on June 17, 1993, to Juan and Alba Vazquez in Leon, Mexico. I was saved when I was baptized as an infant a few months after my birth. My parents have guided me in the ways of the Lord and have been my greatest support this far. I had the blessing of being raised in the pastoral family of my grandfather Samuel Flores, and to serve together with him in the last days of his ministry.

My involvement with the ministry of my home congregation (St. Andrew's Lutheran Church), the living testimony of my parents, and the need for a minister at the aging of my pastor, were all important aspects that God used to call me to be a pastor.

I graduated from DeLaSalle University with a bachelor's degree in intercultural studies. Although I always had seminary as my life goal, I certainly had times of questions and doubts during my college years. This is why my time in seminary had a great impact in my life, not just as a minister, but firstly as a Christian. The beauty of the gospel really set me free from all the doubts I had, and although I still have

many questions I know in whom I have believed. My prayer is that the Lord may continue preparing me spiritually and intellectually so that just as my pastors and professors at AFLTS helped me, I may also help others with their own battles.

As I finish my internship at St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church in Salinas, Calif., I take with me all the love and care that the beautiful congregation shared with me, praying that I may also share the same love with my future congregations, wherever the Lord wants me to serve.



We will feature three remaining graduates in our next issue.

H

ave you ever had an immediate and undeniable answer to prayer? I have, but none quite

like the day Pastor Al Monson walked into our building.

You see, several years ago, the Lord tugged on the hearts of four families to start a church plant in Mesa, Ariz., to reach the lost. We looked at the example in Acts where the believers talked with people at the temple courts and city gate, and we asked how we could do the same. This eventually led us to conceiving of something like a coffee shop ministry.

Over the next few years, the Lord led us through the ups and downs that naturally come with church planting. We rented school gyms on Sunday mornings, but soon saw how difficult this was for practical daily ministry. We had times of encouragement as well as hardships. One day our chairman, who began a children's book publishing company, asked if we wanted to rent a building together in which we could start a more permanent church. This was the idea we needed to take the next step. We found a building and over the next year we met there as we slowly transformed it into a usable space.

In March 2018, the leadership team of The Source Church—as we were now called—gathered to discuss the future of our congregation; we were at a point of significant

SOURCE OF ANSWERED PRAYER

BY ERIC JOHNSON

discouragement from the challenges of church planting. We spent time in prayer asking God what place He had for us in His kingdom.

The very next day, Pastor Monson of nearby Calvary Free Lutheran felt the tug of the Holy Spirit to walk into our building where he was greeted by our church chairman, Mel Sauder. Pastor Monson had been looking at our website and liked our description of what a coffee shop church could look like. This conversation led to several other discussions that included leaders from the AFLC and a Home Missions church plant in Mesa called The Gathering. We talked about working together to build the kingdom of God in our area.

The Gathering began meeting with The Source Church in April 2018. Our goal was to consider whether we could bring the two church plants together into one thriving congregation. In July, when the pastor of The Gathering announced he had accepted a position elsewhere, the three or four families from the congregation agreed to continue to meet with The Source. We began conversations about The Source becoming an AFLC church and coming under the leadership of

Home Missions. This even led to the formation of a combined youth ministry of all three churches.

My wife and I met with members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee, and our church began reworking our constitution in order to be approved as an AFLC church and myself as AFLC licensed pastor. On Jan. 13, members of The Source Church voted to accept the new constitution. We also approved a new 11-person leadership team that included families from The Gathering and The Source. We hope to gain final approval from Home Missions and the Coordinating Committee and begin a five-year church planting relationship.

In a nutshell, God answered our prayers! We didn't know it at the time, but Pastor Al's stepping into our building was the very next step God had planned for us all along. I can't wait to see what next steps He has for us as we strive to build a ministry that reaches the lost in our community.

Johnson serves The Source Church, a church plant in Mesa, Ariz.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Pastor Peter Ward has accepted a call to serve as associate pastor at St. Paul's Free Lutheran Church, Fargo, N.D. He was installed on March 10.

Justin Nelson, who will graduate in May from AFLTS, has accepted a call to Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., as family life pastor. His responsibilities will include ministry to youth and their families, children and adult education (discipleship and equipping), and connections.

Matthew Pillman, who will graduate in May from AFLTS, has accepted a call to Christ the King Free Lutheran, Pipestone, Minn., as associate pastor. Pillman served his internship year there.

David Niemela, who will graduate in May from the Free Lutheran Seminary, has accepted a call to United Free Lutheran, Greenbush, Minn.

Katie Johnson has been hired as the business manager for the AFLC. Johnson, a 2013 graduate of AFLBS, formerly worked as finance coordinator at AFLBS.

Emmaus Lutheran Church in Bloomington, Minn., will host a sending service for **Pastor Andrew and Alexis Olson** and daughters Mariah and Selah at 5 p.m. on April 13. Anyone interested in joining their sending team are welcome to attend. The Olsons, AFLC missionaries on loan to Lutheran Bible Translators, plan to leave for Tanzania in May.

Christopher Kumpula, a 2019 graduate of AFLTS, will be ordained and installed March 31 at Word of Life Free Lutheran, Mankato, Minn. Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, will officiate.

Welcome to the 2019 Annual Conference

We invite you to come to the 2019 AFLC Annual Conference June 11-14 at Spruce Lake Retreat Center, Canadensis, Pa., in the beautiful Pocono Mountains of Eastern Pennsylvania.

Nestled in the woods and mountains of central eastern Pennsylvania, Spruce Lake Retreat Center is only hours away from some of the most historic parts of America. New York is a short drive to your east (1.25 hours), with the beaches of the Atlantic Ocean situated just to the south in New Jersey. Philadelphia, the seat of our nation's independence with its Liberty Bell, is just more than a couple hours' drive to your south. The rolling hills of Lancaster County (Amish country) are only three hours' drive or so to the southwest. And the battle grounds of Valley Forge, Gettysburg, and Antietam lie to the south along the Pennsylvania and northern Maryland borders. You will be literally surrounded by early American history during your stay at Spruce Lake.

The place to begin your exciting journey to this year's conference is by visiting the AFLC Conference registration page at www.aflc.org/about-us/conferences. Here you will find the appropriate links to Spruce Lake Retreat Center's registration site (food and lodging), as well as the general registration information for the conference meetings, including WMF Day. Because of the recent heavy activity in registration at Spruce Lake, we suggest that you call the conference center directly at 800-822-7505 with your food and lodging needs. We encourage you to register early (by the end of April) to better secure your lodging selections and to assist in the preparations of Spruce Lake Retreat Center and the host congregations.

We pray and trust that the upcoming conference will be a special event for all who can take part. Let us know how we can serve you.

The conference will offer something for the whole family. We are planning a full morning and afternoon schedule for all children and youth. Because Spruce Lake Retreat Center is a Christian campground facility, it offers a wide variety of activities for youth while adults are in session. See you in Pennsylvania this June!

—The Eastern Churches of the Eastern District, 2019 Annual Conference Hosts



- See page 20 for more information on conference registration.
- See page 16 for more information about WMF Day registration.

JANUARY MEMORIALS

AFLBS

Clarice Dahl
Ruth Claus

AFLTS

Einar Unseth
Gertrude Franzen
Erling Huglen
Verna Dahl

Evangelism

Una Tvinnereim
Shirley Tvinnereim

Home Missions

Darlene Davidson

Vision

Helen Danielson
Breden

WMF

Curtis Lund
Daniel Slaven
Marcella Haakenson
Inez Stenbeck

Mervill Nelson

Una Tvinnereim

World Missions

David Haugen

AFLC BENEVOLENCES February 28, 2019

FUND	REC'D IN FEBRUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$40,077	\$102,326	\$98,144
Evangelism	7,646	27,815	23,252
Youth Ministries	7,671	25,093	27,756
Parish Education	7,473	32,658	32,111
Seminary	28,590	65,222	66,776
Bible School	38,264	101,653	103,777
Home Missions	32,007	81,795	85,474
World Missions	27,677	128,150	96,383
Personal Support	49,952	101,015	142,376
TOTALS	\$239,358	\$665,727	\$676,050

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

PREPARING LEADERS

The president of a denominational seminary noted that the mission and purpose statements of similar schools list the education and preparation of leaders as the task of their institutions. He



Pastor Robert Lee

also noticed, however, that nowhere do these schools define what leadership is. It was interesting to look in the recent catalog of our seminary and read the following under program outcomes (p. 8): “Understand and embrace the role of the servant pastor and the New Testament model of the congregation and its commitment to scriptural evangelism, discipleship, worship, education, and stewardship, as guided by the AFLC Fundamental Principles.”

Under our Biblical Foundation Statement (p. 12), we learn further that the pastor is first of all a servant of Christ and His Word, and also a servant of the congregation. This is not a new concept for our fellowship. Several years ago, in commemoration of the seminary’s 50th anniversary, Loiell Dyrud collected quotes from the reports of the seminary deans. In his report to the conference after the seminary’s first year of operation, Pastor John Strand wrote: “It wasn’t enough that pastors have a certain degree or a certain knowledge, but they were also to have a certain approach towards and concern for the local Christian congregation. They were to come as servants of the congregation concerned that souls be saved, that Christians be edified, and that all believers take their part in the work of spreading the Gospel.”

Servant leaders. Does it sound contradictory? Is it possible to lead and serve at the same time? A conflict is evident when we think of certain styles of leadership. Those of our readers with

German church roots will probably remember the expression, “Herr Pastor,” describing a type of authoritarian pastor who seeks to lead by coercion. This was the image of pastor that my father carried from his childhood, and he said that it was a fearful thing even to walk by the parsonage. “It’s my way or the highway,” demands the modern herr pastor, and years ago I even heard one pastor say, “When I say ‘jump,’ the only question you can ask is, ‘how high?’”

Some patterns of church organization seem prone to this style of leadership and its pitfalls. The news recently reported the fall of a modern celebrity pastor, accused of bullying, intimidation, financial mismanagement, etc. He was not the first celebrity pastor to resign in disgrace ... and probably will not be the last. The world enjoys reading about church scandals, and the trust of believers in their shepherds is shaken.

The servant leader model of pastor may also have its pitfalls, and one of them is that it can be no leadership at all. When I served as president of the AFLC, one congregation reported to me that they looked to their pastor for leadership, but his response was that all leadership was up to them, since he was a servant of the congregation. This is certainly a grave misunderstanding of his calling! Oh, yes, it takes time for pastor and congregation to work together in planning and programming, but the pastor’s Spirit-led and Spirit-empowered leadership in building consensus as options are considered is crucial.

Servant leadership is a concept that is not unknown in the corporate world,

and some even relate it to the example of Jesus, who had a vision, who attracted followers, and who shared His vision with His followers, enabling the group together to achieve a common goal. But somehow this fails to capture the heart of the servant leadership of Jesus, who said: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28).

Servant leaders. Does it sound contradictory? Is it possible to lead and serve at the same time?

The preparation of servant leadership is at the heart of our Bible school program, too, for our commitment to the biblical model of the priesthood of all believers includes a conviction that all Christians are called to lead in some way, and that grounding them in the Word of God shapes them for present and future service. Stand with us, please, in your prayers and support, as the AFLC Schools seek to make the vision for servant leaders a reality in pulpit and pew.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Periodicals

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

association retreat center

GROUNDING, AND BEYOND

BY KIRK RAUTIO

“Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

Spring is in the air and with spring comes new hope, hope for the future. That hope for the future brings hope for future generations. Asaph wrote about that future hope in Psalm 78: “That the generations to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children, that they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works for God but keep His commandments” (vs. 6-7). We are to be a generation of teaching and learning, and these verses call us to teach children yet to be born to put their confidence in God.

The Association Retreat Center staff has had the privilege of partnering with AFLBS leadership to launch the ARC

internship team in an effort to train harvest workers for His kingdom. The AFLBS motto is, “Start Here. Go Anywhere. Grounded in God’s Word.” The ARC staff are blessed to partner together with our schools in that first part—the grounding process—as students are enriched in their learning. And we hope to give them professional skills so that they can pursue the rest, going anywhere, grounded in God’s Word.

I have seen first-hand the deep and enriching ministry of AFLBS students as they have come out for camps and banquets and served on teams. The genuineness of the gospel that is portrayed through the servant heart of the students is humbling to me. I am not a graduate of our Bible school as I was not privileged to take part in that opportunity, however, I feel humbled and blessed to know that the ARC staff can work together with AFLBS to further the kingdom of God.

I’d like to consider the word, “focus.” At the ARC this can be defined as our foundational learning point. The ground is the base or foundation of anything, or the point where learning begins. When we are able to have a common ground or soil, that is where true growth can happen. Where does your growth come from? Are you rooted and grounded in Jesus? The Apostle Paul calls believers to be rooted and grounded in Christ in Colossians 2:7 and to be steadfast in faith in Colossians 1:23. These are two amazing pictures of the Christian walk, which is rooted in Him. We are never too old or too young to learn. Are you rooted and grounded in the eternal soil of Jesus? What is He asking you to learn today?

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