



2025 • Issue 1

# News

The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

## Who We Are

### THE OPEN BIBLE

God's Word is the foundation of faith and life.

•

### THE ASCENDING DOVE

The Holy Spirit ascending is symbolic of the freedom of the congregation and the power and guidance of the Spirit.

•

### THE GREEN VINE

The vine is the emblem of the living congregation bearing fruit for the Lord.





# HOW TO LEAD LIKE JESUS

**T**he AFLC has historically placed a high value on “servant leadership.” This is in the spirit of Christ, who “came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” It is our prayer to love one another with the love of Christ that seeks the best for the other and not for ourselves.

Recently, I’ve been struck by a few observations related to that. First, the question lingers, “How does that apply to real situations?” What does servant leadership actually look like? On the one hand, there is a temptation to interpret servant leadership in such a way that it relieves the individual from the responsibility of actually leading in a particular situation. On the other hand, there’s the danger of a leader who thirsts for power and seeks to domineer over the people. Both extremes are abuses of the concept of servant leadership. In 2025, the AFLC President’s Office is seeking to engage with this question and provide resources and training on healthy, biblical, spiritual leadership. Contact us if you’re interested in hearing more about what that might look like in your congregation or district.

The other thing that has stood out to me as I ponder servant leadership in the AFLC is the role of our national offices. We must guard against the conscious (or unconscious) notion that the congregations exist to serve the ambitions of the national ministries. Instead, the ministries described on the following pages exist to support and encourage our congregations “for the advancement of the Kingdom of God” (Fundamental Principle #7). We want to equip you for the ministry that the Lord calls you to do. We want to facilitate and encourage cooperation among congregations, not for the selfish expansion of our own agenda, but rather so that congregations are mutually edified (FP #8).

As you read these ministry updates, prayerfully consider how these ministries can help you and your congregation. Thank you for your interest in the AFLC; more than that, thank you for investing in your local congregation. May God’s powerful and life-giving Word sustain and refresh your homes, your congregations, and your communities.

~ Pastor Micah Hjermstad

The AFLC is a fellowship of independent congregations who have chosen to be interdependent for the purpose of accomplishing service in the Kingdom of God that cannot best be done alone.



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# Let's talk about OUR FAITH



"All who call out to the Lord will be saved. How can people have faith in the Lord and ask him to save them, if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear, unless someone tells them?" (Romans 10:13–14, CEV)

**I**t's hard to remember a time when Americans seemed more divided than they do today, and one would think that would apply to religion as well. But in a study<sup>1</sup> conducted by Lifeway Research, Americans are in fact widely receptive to spiritual conversations in a variety of settings.

"This study reveals that most Americans are open to talking about faith," said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research. "It really isn't about religious liberty, people not wanting to hear, or religion being off-limits. The reason conversations are not happening about the Christian faith is that Christians are not bringing it up."

Half of Americans (51 percent) say they're curious as to why some people are so devoted to their faith, including 60 percent of the religiously unaffiliated. Amid this curiosity, however, most say their Christian friends don't often bring up their religious beliefs. Six in ten Americans say many of their friends who claim to be Christians rarely talk about their faith, including 52 percent of the religiously unaffiliated.

These results bring up great questions we can ask of ourselves. How likely am I to talk with others about my faith? How often do I mention God in my conversations with others, including non-Christians? Do I ever think about what their life is like now without Jesus or what it will be like in eternity without a

saving relationship with him?

AFLC Evangelism and Discipleship's mission is to encourage, equip, and assist our AFLC congregations and pastors in making and equipping disciples who then make and equip disciples. We want to come alongside you and your congregation to help you better understand the culture we have been called to reach and to equip you to engage those around you with a wide range of resources and tools that will help you and your church create spiritual "on-ramps" linking you and your community. We want to prepare your congregation to connect with them in ways that will be meaningful and effective in helping them draw closer to Jesus.

These resources and tools can be best accessed through our website, which has all the current information about our in-house equipping ministries as well as our Evangelism and Discipleship Library, which features new tools and resources, along with stories and testimonies from AFLC members and congregations. We are also glad to provide individual congregation support and recommendations through the form on our website to request assistance, or you can contact me directly by email. May we together seek to share this good news with all who want to hear.

~Pastor Randy Nelson

## BOARD MEMBERS

- Micah Johnson, Chairman
- Tom Philips
- Ignacio Dávalos
- Pastor Brady Arneson
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1. <https://research.lifeway.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Evangelism-Explosion-Survey-of-Americans-Report.pdf>

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# Mutual ASSISTANCE

"A free congregation gladly accepts the mutual assistance which congregations can give one another in the work for the advancement of the Kingdom of God."

**T**his—the seventh of the Fundamental Principles of the AFLC—describes the heart behind AFLC Youth Ministries. We exist in part to give opportunities for individuals and congregations to use their gifts to assist other congregations as they minister to teens. When you support Youth Ministries, your generosity extends to congregations across the AFLC in their ministry efforts to equip adult and teen leaders who will build up the body of Christ, to provide resources for effective ministry, and to give encouragement to congregational leaders.

## EQUIPPING

Financial gifts to Youth Ministries provide speakers, trainers, and staffing at Youth Workers' Weekends, FLY Beyond, and the Apprenticeship Program. These programs target our teen or adult leaders and seek to prepare them for ministry and to multiply workers in God's Kingdom.

## RESOURCES

Financial gifts to Youth Ministries provide resources to youth workers, parents, and teens. These resources include workshops hosted by congregations, districts, or FLBC to equip parents; books that are given out to youth workers to help them grow in their understanding of ministry; and working with volunteers from across the AFLC to provide the content for a new teen devotional.

## ENCOURAGEMENT

Financial gifts to Youth Ministries provide congregations with the encouragement they need during times of crisis and transition in ministry. Our staff work with congregations and their leaders as they navigate hiring youth workers, set up safety policies for their youth ministry, address popular teen culture trends that impact the everyday lives of teens and their families, minister to teens who just lost a loved one, think through scope and sequence for their Sunday school and youth group teaching and bible study times, and many other examples.

If you or your congregation have a heart to come alongside others in their work to equip youth workers and teens, to see quality resources available to congregations, or to provide encouragement to congregational leaders as they minister to teens, we invite you to consider a financial gift to Youth Ministries. Your support helps us serve AFLC congregations as they invest in the long-term spiritual life of teens. Join the congregations and individuals already partnering with us in the work of AFLC Youth Ministries.

~Adam McCarlson



## Prayer Spotlight

- That teens and leaders attending the 2025 FLY Convention June 30–July 5 would be receptive to the Word of God.
- That congregations looking for youth workers would be able to find caring adults who are willing to invest in teens' lives.
- For the two Youth Ministry Apprentices—Victor Hembree (Good Shepherd, Camarillo, Calif.) and Mathew Smith (Living Word, Sioux Falls, S.D.) as they finish their year of training.

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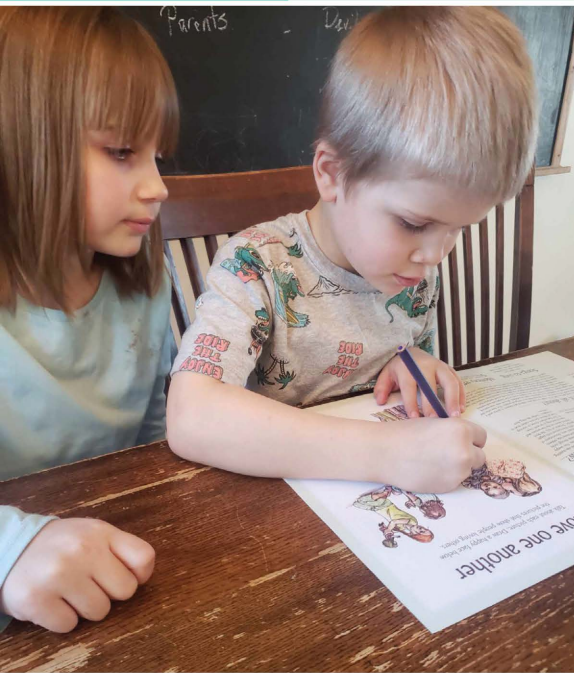
## YOUTH BOARD

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# *Sunday school* **CURRICULUM**

A testimonial by Leeanna Lunn



## **Pray for current projects**

- 10 Commandments board book for young children
- FLY devotional booklet for teens
- 2 Peter Bible study for adults
- Visual mission stories

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**I**n the world of Sunday school curriculum, there are seemingly hundreds of different choices, and it is easy to get lost in the options. One has fun songs, videos, and online teaching aids. Another has art styles modern students are familiar with and illustrations for the world they are living in right now. How is anyone supposed to decide?

As fantastic as teaching aids and art styles can be, they are simply the wrapping paper that holds the gift that is Christian education. If you look past the fun and the shiny and all you see is shallow, false, or harmful teaching, what is the paper worth? On the other hand, if what is contained is purposefully written and designed to raise children in a robust understanding of the way of the Lord, that curriculum is a welcome gift that can be life-transforming.

Having been in Christian education for nearly 20 years and having extensively researched different curriculums, I can confidently say that our unique presentation of Law and Gospel in the Ambassador curriculum, our way of understanding who Jesus is and who He would have us be, is not found anywhere else. Whereas some curriculums focus on practical application to the point of forgetting God's work on our behalf, and others focus on the Gospel to the point of forgetting to call students to walk in righteousness, while still others ignore the Bible entirely in order to push social justice and other pursuits of the world, Ambassador Sunday school curriculum clearly and systematically teaches the whole of Scripture to our children from preschool all the way through high school.

This is one of the primary reasons we, as a family, have chosen to use AFLC material as our homeschool Bible curriculum. I can know that, if we continue to work our way through Ambassador's lessons, my kids will graduate with a systematic and thorough understanding of not only Scripture but also the Small Catechism and the Creeds. In short, they will know God's will and ways better than I could have ever dreamt.

The levels of our curriculum in the pamphlet format for young children, in particular, are very conducive to home use. The Parent Page section provides daily devotionals, activities, songs, memory verses, and even some fun facts about each week's lessons. We find the concepts popping up for further discussion as we go about our lives, and the Word of God is being regularly written upon our hearts.

AFLC Parish Education also has available a variety of supplementary teaching resources, and many more teaching aids, such as coloring pages or videos of songs, can easily be found on the internet. But the solid teaching of Law and Gospel with the focus on Christ and His Word specifically and systematically written for children I have found only here: at Ambassador Publications.



# A publication FOR THE LOCAL CONGREGATION



## Free, with your support

- Paper version for individuals or groups
- Online version via Issuu.com
- We are funded by your generous gifts

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Enter your information for a free subscription.

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*The Lutheran Ambassador* is a monthly magazine published by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. Each month features a specific theme, carrying articles both practical and devotional. Our writers—all volunteer lay people and pastors from our local congregations—are a key feature in our publications. Our magazine also includes monthly columns geared toward building a strong devotional life, tackling the basics of our beliefs, and sharing life experiences in order to build up the Body of Christ. All of our articles and columns center around biblical, Lutheran doctrines and heritage.

Our magazine also features news and information from our local congregations, schools, and AFLC departments.

## DEVELOPMENT

# NEW FACES IN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

**A**fter several years of prayer and study, two staff members were added to AFLC Development in January. Together with Pastor Tonnes Pollestad, the department now has the expanded capability and capacity to serve the needs of our ministry partners within the AFLC.

As manager of the department, I will be working directly with the leaders of the many AFLC ministries while also serving individual partners and our churches. My prior work experience is in estate and gift planning and investments. I practiced law in western North Dakota and led trust departments in North and South Dakota. Angel Luttmann is our new administrative assistant. She has more than 18 years of experience in the healthcare industry. Angel is gifted with organizational skills and in utilizing technology. She will also be working to build relationships with partners in the AFLC.

The three of us are dedicated to serving the Lord through helping our partners to be good stewards of all that He has given them. We will seek to understand how God is leading our partners to give and then offer tools to help them learn about the many unique opportunities for giving throughout the AFLC. Please contact any of us for assistance. Our goal is to help you experience the joy of giving as we serve our Lord and Savior together.

~Mark Sivertson

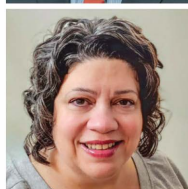
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# FLBCS: A BIBLE PLACE

**T**his spring, two pastors from outside the AFLC—both new to our campus—visited to consider us as a location for a summer event. We had exchanged some emails to get a sense of what a partnership might look like, but this was their first impression. When they got out of the car one of them said, “This is a Bible place!” He meant that as a compliment. It encouraged his soul—and mine.



We *are* a Bible place. There are many places to attend college, and a handful of them are exceptional expressions of Christian faith and practice. I wish students who did not come to FLBCS would find them. But amid the Christian higher education landscape, we are exceptional:

- Biblical focus: 40 percent of classes are verse by verse
- Full-time, in-person, on-campus: learning in Christian community
- Mostly full-time faculty: expensive, but focused
- Students learn to think, write, speak, read, and listen
- Unsurpassed value: No government funding, and limited student debt
- Extensive pastoral training: doctrine, practice, and personal touch

The result is Seminary graduates who are prepared to be servant leaders of free and living Lutheran congregations, and Bible College graduates who are prepared well to serve in their communities, congregations, and families. Truly: Start here, go anywhere, grounded in God’s Word.

Thank you for supporting the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary. We could not do what we do without you.

~Dr. Wade Mobley, FLBCS President



Are there potential FLBC students at your church?  
Connect them to the resources on our website:  
[flbc.edu/admissions](http://flbc.edu/admissions)  
or email:  
[admissions@flbc.edu](mailto:admissions@flbc.edu).



## *Engaging local congregations*

**W**e exist to establish students in God’s word in order to prepare them for life in his kingdom, that is the local congregation. FLBC students gain invaluable practical experience for congregational service through numerous opportunities to connect with existing churches. Choir tours, a cornerstone of the FLBC experience, provide a unique platform for future congregational leaders to witness firsthand the inner workings of congregations across the country and even internationally.



During these tours, students don’t just perform; they actively engage with the host congregations. They witness the practical aspects of church life, from the logistics of setting up for services to the often unseen work of serving food and hospitality. Staying in the homes of church members fosters personal connections, allowing students to experience the warmth and fellowship that are vital to a healthy congregation.

These interactions go beyond mere observation. Students participate in mutual encouragement, sharing their testimonies and in turn getting to hear how God is working in the lives of other believers in a variety of locales and settings. This exposure broadens their understanding of the congregation and equips them with the relational skills necessary for effective ministry. By seeing congregations function in various contexts and building these vital connections, FLBC students are well-prepared to serve and lead within their own future congregational roles.

~Pastor Adam Osier, Free Lutheran Bible College Dean

# Our unique TRAINING GROUNDS

**A**t the Free Lutheran Seminary we realize that there are many options as men consider training for ministry. There are other Lutheran seminaries, other modality options. Why would a student choose the Free Lutheran seminary? One of our newer students suggested that he hadn't even considered another seminary since this was the school with which he was familiar. He had attended our Bible College and had always considered FLS as his next step. Many of our students have attended AFLC congregations all their lives, gone to the FLY Convention and AFLC Bible Camps, and attended the Free Lutheran Bible College with little experience outside of the AFLC. Another of our "older" students was familiar with the Free Lutheran Seminary only through a friend. His dad was a great proponent of residential seminary training; since his denomination only offered online seminary courses, he decided to attend FLS.



Students find the experience at our seminary somewhat surprising. One of our students was surprised that the instructors were so willing to answer questions—even difficult questions. He didn't feel foolish asking questions, calling our professors "humble and willing to patiently answer questions." Another of our students was appreciative that he was given freedom to ask questions. He described the seminary as a "safe place." He said the classes were like "lab mode" in which they could take risks and ask questions without feeling that they were breaking a confession.

It is very important that students have freedom to grow in their understanding of Lutheran doctrine, but also pastoral ministry. Freedom to disagree and ask questions is vital to spiritual growth as a man, and in the vocation of pastor. We ask that our students be humble and teachable. We ask the same of our instructors.

Pastoral ministry is exciting. One of our men said that he is especially excited about sharing the gospel: "It's what gets me up in the morning." He can't wait to share the Word of God with the congregation he someday hopes to serve. Another student is excited about generating interest in discipleship. He is excited to have people discover a love for their calling to disciple people in the faith.

Our seminary program will likely have between 20 and 25 students attending this fall. Our students are from seven different states and three countries. They range in age from 22 to 54. Some of our students are single, some are married, and some have large families. These men and their families learn together, grow together, and sharpen one another as "iron sharpens iron" (Proverbs 27:17).

Our prayer for the men and their families at the seminary is that they are encouraged in their studies and grow as men of God and ministers of the gospel. From I Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

~Dr. James Molstre, Free Lutheran Seminary Dean



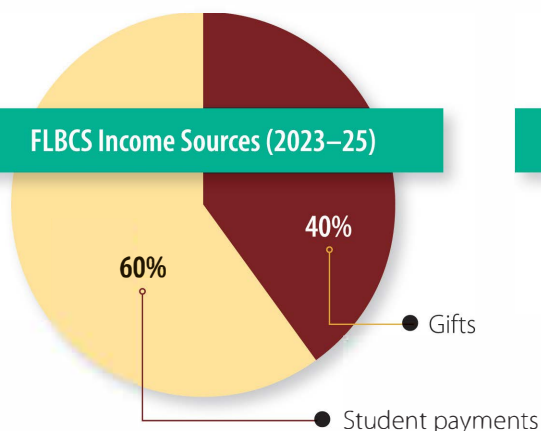
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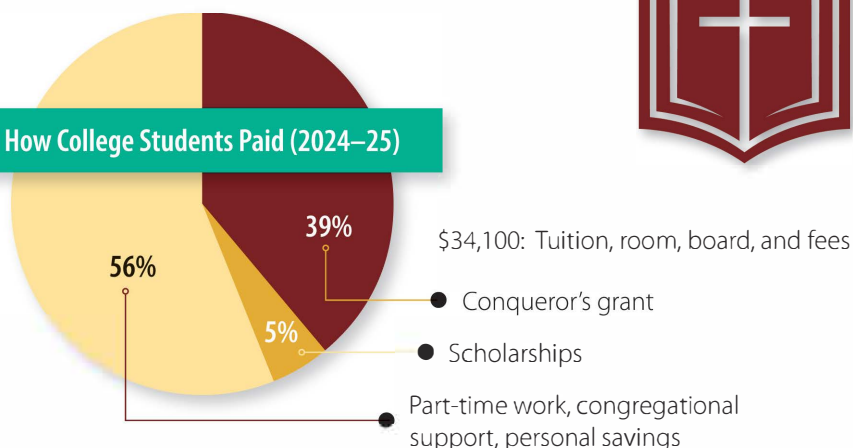




FLBCS Income Sources (2023–25)



How College Students Paid (2024–25)



## Funding the mission

**E**ducation is more than certification; it is transformation, and all the more in the realm of Christ-centered higher education. The impact of FLBCS on families, congregations, and communities is valuable, but it is not cheap. Every year FLBCS relies on at least \$1.5M from generous friends and congregations like yours. We call this our annual fund, and it includes almost every gift given to FLBCS during the year.

In a higher education landscape where one-third to one-half of a college's income comes from state and federal sources that FLBCS does not receive, this support is what keeps us going. Through your gifts, students see their bill reduced in the form of an automatic Conqueror's Grant and additional merit and need-based scholarships (see pie graph). This helps them leave established in God's Word for life in Jesus Christ with no student debt.

To give to FLBCS or make a promise to give to the 2025–2026 Annual Fund, please follow this link or contact Sherry Mork, director of Donor Relations. We can also help you with planned giving, Required Minimum Distributions, and Qualified Charitable Distributions. Thank you for supporting FLBCS.



### New Resource

Volume 1 of *Sola Scriptura* is now available for purchase. This annual journal of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary is intended for pastors, members, and friends of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. Volume 1 includes articles from Dr. Brent Olson ("Ezekiel and Sola Scriptura"), Dr. Nathan Olson ("The Word of God That Elicits Faith"), Dr. James Molstre ("The Ministry of the Word in the Congregation"), seminarian Alex Monseth ("A Lutheran View of Romans 9"), and a sermon transcript from Larry Walker ("The Ruthless Love of Christ: John 11:20–21"). The name *Sola Scriptura* was chosen to reflect the journal's purpose, to bring God's Word to bear on different aspects of our faith and life, while affirming its infallibility, inerrancy, and authority.

To purchase the first volume of *Sola Scriptura*, visit our conference table or go to [flbc.edu/SolaScriptura](http://flbc.edu/SolaScriptura).



### Giving

To support the mission of FLBCS financially, follow the QR code or visit [flbc.edu/give](http://flbc.edu/give).

Contact Sherry Mork at [sherry.mork@flbc.edu](mailto:sherry.mork@flbc.edu) or 763.412.2004

### Upcoming Events

- July–August: Regional Alumni Picnics
- July 25: Golf Scramble
- July 26: Disc Golf Scramble
- Aug. 4–8: Summer Institute of Theology
- Oct. 16–17: UpClose
- Oct. 17–18: Alumni Basketball Tournament
- Dec. 5–7: Christmas at FLBC

Info and event registration at [flbc.edu/events](http://flbc.edu/events)

# The mission PIPELINE

**E**ven amidst the changing tides of the mission field, God's call remains the same. "Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest'" (Luke 10:2).

This year, Zachariah and Carey Ritland have been called to the mission field in Paraguay to serve alongside Matthew and Ednay Abel. Just like every other missionary, Zachariah and Carey had a starting point. Their journey on the mission pipeline started by obeying God's call to be missionary assistants. From there, God gave them a passion for mission work. More importantly, God gave them a passion for the people of Paraguay.

The Ritlands are just one example of how God calls people to ministry. He is still calling workers to the mission field. His timing is superior, and his call will continue. Every missionary with AFLC World Missions arrived to the mission field in their own way. There are multiple ways to start making missions more of a priority.

## Pipeline 1: Journey Missions

The Missionary Assistant Program and ministry trips are a great way to become more involved in missions. Invest in the unique opportunity to work alongside and be discipled by a missionary in their field of work.

## Pipeline 2: AFLC Congregations

Many of our congregations have mission boards that you can be involved in. If your church does not, then start one! Ask how you can pray for and support missionaries. We at World Missions have resources that you can use in your church, Sunday school, or Bible studies.

## Pipeline 3: Seminary

Many of our missionaries first completed seminary before going to the field. The skills cultivated at seminary can greatly help shepherd a congregation on one of our fields. Going to seminary can strengthen your faith, help you gain solid biblical knowledge, and help you develop the practical skills needed to impact communities worldwide for Christ.

## Pipeline 4: Other

The AFLC is built on the principle of freedom of the Christian. Where the Spirit moves, there is freedom (II Corinthians 3:17). If the Spirit is moving in your heart, softening you toward missions in any other way than those listed above, we want to come alongside you as you consider missions.



What is your role in missions? If you believe that God is still calling missionaries, then you, your friends, and your church must be involved. Not everyone belongs on the mission field long-term, although World Missions would be excited to introduce everyone to the mission field via a Journey Missions trip (wink, wink). But God is calling some of us to international, long-term missions.

We challenge you to pray earnestly about missions and your role. Ministry starts with a passion. If God has put a passion for a country or mission on your heart, take that passion and see where it goes. Start by being involved in missionary newsletters and consider a ministry trip to experience that culture and ministry. If you have any questions about how you can get involved, reach out to us at World Missions.

We are praying for more missionaries. As you pray and spend time with the Lord, ask where you fit into missions. Maybe God is calling you!

~Shelby Greven





# Beyond the TRI-NATION VISION



How will they call on him in  
whom they have not believed?  
And how are they to believe in  
him of whom they have never  
heard? And how are they to hear  
without someone preaching?

~Romans 10:14



**A**rgentina, Paraguay, and Brazil make up the tri-nation vision of our first AFLC missionary, John Abel. Those nations were chosen because missionaries Pastor John and Ruby Abel, who previously served in Brazil, had a network of friends and hoped to reach across the nearby borders of Paraguay and Argentina with the gospel. In the 1980s, the Charles Knapp family served in Paraguay, and now the Matthew and Ednay Abel and Zachariah and Carey Ritland families have calls there. But Argentina remains without an AFLC presence. Why? Because we have no one to send and we have no workers in that country.

AFLC World Missions needs workers to accomplish our church-planting vision. We have already gone well beyond the original tri-nation vision by starting works in Mexico, India, Uganda, and Switzerland. And now we have a pastor in Chile who desires fellowship with us.

Chile is a long, narrow, mountainous country along the west coast of South America. It is noted for its Patagonia mountains, rugged desert landscapes, Pacific islands—most notably Easter Island—and its capital, Santiago. However, Chile's most valuable resource is its people, and they need Jesus. Pastor Patricio Rivero Bravo is already discipling people in Santiago. But they desire to have an AFLC congregation.

For the past four years, Pastor Patricio has been seeking fellowship with a Lutheran, pietistic, and doctrinally sound group of congregations. After two years of communication with Matthew Abel in Paraguay, we invited him to the annual conference in Brazil, where he met with and was interviewed by our missionaries and the Brazilian leadership. The Brazil church approved Patricio for their clergy roster last November.

An engineer by trade, Patricio works full-time at a steel fabrication facility and serves as a volunteer chaplain for the fire department in Santiago. His care and ongoing discipleship with the firefighters and their families have shown him the need for a biblically sound congregation in the community.

Out of respect for our AFLC polity and dependence upon our congregations for prayer and financial support, the World Missions Board is seeking guidance from the World Missions Corporation and the AFLC Annual Conference to open Chile as a field of work. We are seeking immediate prayer support and guidance by the Holy Spirit for this new work. There is no financial commitment at this time, but we pray that God will one day call more workers or teams to encourage the work in Chile.

In Romans 10:14, the Apostle Paul asks the questions, “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” The point Paul is making is that people are necessary for Kingdom work. Instead of calling a missionary to begin the work in Chile, God has already provided Pastor Patricio to work the field. Please join us in prayer for this opportunity!

~Dr. Earl Korhonen



# Opportunities to serve ON THE MISSION FIELD

**W**e rejoice in the Lord for the many opportunities we've had this year and are looking forward to having in years to come. It's been truly a pleasure to be involved with our local congregations, missionaries, and, of course, our ministry team members and missionary assistants.

Journey Missions is an avenue to see and experience an AFLC foreign field that has been prayed for and supported over the years while personally participating in the work in a hands-on and tangible way. Whether on a short-term ministry trip or serving as a missionary assistant, the vision for this ministry is for people to serve our Lord Jesus cross-culturally.

As we look at 2025, we have trips scheduled again for churches and congregation members to join in with. This past spring, Journey Missions led a trip to Brazil for the ministry's Carnival camp and led the FLBC team to Mexico through the cross-cultural mission's program. Both these trips were a blessing in seeing young adults plugging into international ministry. Looking towards summer and later 2025, Journey Missions is planning two Israel trips (May and November) and a Oaxaca, Mexico, trip in August.

We also work with congregations on planning and coordinating trips, so if there's an additional trip that you would like to take to one of our fields, we are very happy to have those discussions too. We are here to serve our congregations and help our church members see the mission field.

In 2024, Journey Missions was blessed through our missionary assistants, who are seeking to serve internationally for a longer period of time under our missionaries and ministries. The Missionary Assistant Program gives opportunities for people to serve a time frame longer than a typical ministry trip and is suitable for college students through retirees. The hope is to give opportunities for people to invest in our fields in a way they wouldn't be able to on a short-term team.

So far in 2025, we have had two missionary assistants on the field. Shelby Greven and Kelly Greven served in Brazil and Paraguay from January to March, working with AFLC ministries. We are thankful for their service this spring.

As I think about the people who are serving, and who have served, with and through Journey Missions, I praise the Lord for those who "go," fulfilling the call the Lord has placed on their lives for this time. People are excited to travel and see the work the Lord has done, and we're thankful that they have chosen to utilize Journey Missions.

I also rejoice as the Lord calls and sends out others through your finances and prayers. You have provided, and continue to provide, fellow believers an opportunity to serve the Lord in a new and powerful way. We give glory to God and praise Him for you senders; you are having a great impact on the world for Jesus!



CONTACT

~Pastor Jon Nelson

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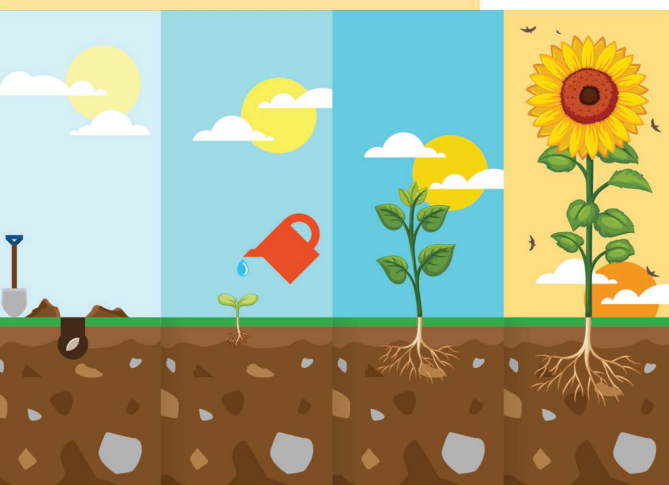
# Developing MISSION CLARITY

"The point is this:  
whoever sows sparingly  
will also reap sparingly,  
and whoever sows  
bountifully will also reap  
bountifully."

~II Corinthians 9:6

**O**ne of the realities within church planting is that the scope of origin and development is oftentimes vastly different between groups. The differences are quantitative as well as qualitative. This developmental variation makes perfect sense when considering the nature of growth. AFLC Home Missions desires to communicate with clarity and accountability to our AFLC family about the current stage of development of each active group. This allows for greater understanding and healthier expectations.

We have developed three clear categories for groups, along with descriptive markers. Our prayer is that every group would go through these three developmental stages of maturity. There will be exceptions, but we believe these categories will allow for greater clarity for all involved. Here are the three categories with their markers.



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Pastor Nick Schultz  
Hans Tanner  
Pastor Jon Langness  
John Greven  
Pastor Matthew Ballmann  
Jeremy Zeltinger

### Mission Gathering

Lay leadership team without an approved and called pastor; developing church plant ministry plan; offers Bible study, prayer, and fellowship ministry.

This is the discernment phase. It's very organic. They are seeking the Lord's direction as well as discerning if they have the strength, time, and giftings to put the work in to form a congregation. They are also studying and considering what kind of congregation they would like to be. They usually don't have a biblically qualified shepherd yet. Very little financial support is needed. It is a low-pressure "fleece" to see if God might open doors.

### Mission Congregation

Dedicated leadership team (AFLC-approved lay/ordained pastor and lay leadership); developing congregational governance plan; implementing church plant plan; public Word and sacrament ministry; financial partnerships with congregations, individuals, and AFLC Home Missions

This is the stage of maturing into a congregation. Strategy and intentionality are key in these years of development. The group now has a clear ministry plan that they are implementing, a biblically qualified shepherd (lay or ordained), and a strong support team. As the Lord adds committed believers, they progress into public Word and sacrament ministry. Effort is also given to working with the AFLC leadership to craft clear congregational governance. Within the Mission Congregation phase, there is an extremely high investment of people and resources that are needed.

### Established Congregation

Financial self-sufficiency; AFLC-approved governance

This is the goal of every mission gathering and congregation. This stage represents the Lord's great mercy and provision of committed people built around the cause of Christ. This is now a congregation that needs no or very little outside financial support and is fully governed with integrity and congregational principles. It is still very important to understand that while these types of congregations have the markers of establishment, they are still very young and still have volatility, given they have a growing commitment level without a deep history.



## *The body of Christ at* **WORK IN ALASKA**

**I** am constantly amazed by and reminded of the cooperation that happens amongst the various mission groups within Alaska, especially with aviation. “No man is an island” is an oft-quoted phrase that could be considered the motto of mission aviation in Alaska.

Sometimes, FLAPS is the beneficiary of this cooperation. In February, a team from Mission Aviation Training Academy (MATA), in Arlington, Wash., came for a week to perform the required annual inspections on both of our Piper Cherokees and also to fix squawks on all three planes in the FLAPS fleet. Without MATA’s help and support, it would be difficult and much more expensive to keep our planes flying. Also, in May I attended a mission aviation conference put on by the Missionary Aviation Repair Center in Soldotna. It was a great learning opportunity; the topics discussed ranged from maintenance to operations to survival and everything having to do with mission aviation in Alaska. It was also a time to meet and fellowship with fellow missionary pilots. We talked about our experiences and how we can help each other.

On the flip side, sometimes FLAPS is able to assist other mission groups. In March, we hosted a couple of missionaries with Alaska Village Missions out of Homer. They were flying from Homer to Sand Point (which is down the Alaska Peninsula, aka Aleutian Peninsula) in their Cessna 206. Due to weather, they were unable to safely complete the flight. We were able to

house them for the night and store their airplane in our hangar, which kept it free from the snow and ice we received that night. It also made it much easier for them to preheat their airplane the next morning. This is not the first time we have helped them on their way to and from Sand Point; Naknek is a great stopping point midway on their journey. It is always a blessing to visit and fellowship with them, plus do a little bit to help them with their ministry down the peninsula.

The greatest example of FLAPS helping other ministries is the flying we do in the summer for Tanalian Bible Camp in Port Alsworth. This is now my fourth summer of flying kids and youth from Bristol Bay to and from Port Alsworth every Monday in June and July for a week of Bible camp. Former FLAPS missionary Jeremy Crowell made these flights for many summers before I took over. Many of these kids come from broken homes and terrible situations. This one week of camp is the only chance many of them have to hear the gospel. Without these flights, they would not be able to attend camp. Alaska truly is the last frontier; there are no roads leading out of their villages, and there are no roads leading into camp. Flying is the only practical way of getting around.

To God be the glory for the resource He has provided us in aviation.

~Josh Fish, Director of Maintenance

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# How the WMF is at work LOCALLY & ABROAD

## W is for Women in the Women's Missionary Federation of the AFLC.

Women throughout our AFLC gather weekly or monthly for fellowship in God's Word and prayer. Many local WMF groups have been doing our 2025 Bible study, *Seeing the Light of God in the Face of Christ*, which uses passages from the Book of John to point us to the true Light who has come into our world to bring us out of the domain of darkness. The WMF Board members are working with our 2026 author, Joyce Erickson, on her Bible study titled *I Believe*. Some of the lessons include Saving Faith, Jesus' Righteousness, and the Goodness of God. Stay tuned for details on when that study will be available for pre-order!

## M is for Missions—we offer prayer support and giving.

The WMF is known for sending quilts and cards, and in 2024, the women of the AFLC gave more than \$100,000 to our project ministries. Praise the Lord! Many gifts have been designated to or used for the following:

- World Missions: Missionary personal support and missionary assistants serving in Paraguay and Brazil.
- Home Missions: AFLC church plants, church planting resources, and the Alaska Mission.
- Parish Education: Sunday school curriculum, the *Jesus A-Z* children's book, and resources on AFLC history and missions.
- Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary: Furniture for common spaces and dorm rooms, seminarian book expenses, and financial gifts to seminary students and their families.

All these project funds come from the generosity of AFLC women, working together to make a difference in each of these AFLC ministries.

## F is for Federation—smaller groups joining together for Christian fellowship and service.

Many district WMFs have gathered for their spring rallies and are already planning ahead for their fall gatherings. The rallies move to different churches within each district as they are hosted by local WMF groups. Some district Bible camps have time set aside for a WMF gathering. Each year, our national convention, known as WMF Day, brings together women from across the country for a day of spiritual growth, time in prayer, and a business meeting. It is held in conjunction with the Annual Conference. We also plan the Mission Festival service during the conference. Highlights from these 2025 events will include hearing from Bible study author Vicki Johnson, AFLC missionaries Jonni Sliver and Paul and Becky Abel, and Dr. Nathan Olson; a chalk art presentation by Linda Mohagen; a greeting from Vardhini Dasari of AFLC-India; the commissioning of new missionaries Zachariah and Carey Ritland; and a lot of good music!

The national WMF Board recently hired a new executive secretary, Jennifer Thorson. She has a background in communications, website development, and marketing. She is also a pastor's wife and mother of four children who is a member of Living Word Free Lutheran in Sioux Falls, S.D. Contact Jenn (see email below) to order Bible studies and join our email newsletter list.

If you'd like to learn more about women's ministry and mission support in the AFLC, the national board members are willing to come to your local WMF and district rally to share our mission and vision!

~Karen Pederson



## CONTACT

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Liz McCarlson, Second Vice President  
Linda Fugleberg, Communications Sec.  
Karen Floan, Recording Secretary  
Margie Lee, Treasurer

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## ASSOCIATION RETREAT CENTER

# LEARNING TO ABIDE

**T**he summer season brings hope of new life, new growth, and new promises. As we step into this season, let's look at the field. Are you abiding in Him (John 15:4)? Abiding is a process. It can sometimes hurt; it can sometimes be a season of great striding. It can sometimes be a season of quietness. This is all the process of abiding. However, being firmly grafted into the True Vine is what we seek after—the process of being firmly grafted into the Father. This is where we are at. We practice steadfast hope as we press firmly into the Father. We call on Him for his guidance and direction. This is how we abide in Him: taking our direction, planning, and guidance from Him.

The Association Retreat Center, in its uniqueness, is not exactly a camp, nor is it a convention center. It is the perfect blend of both, and this positions the ARC to accommodate a vast array of individuals and groups. This also enables the ARC staff to meet many different cultures and Christian groups. Being shoulder to shoulder in ministry with our brothers and sisters from different cities, states, and even countries is exciting and humbling. Knowing that we are a small part of something eternally huge is motivation to push forward.

If you are looking for a place to retreat, a volunteer event, or even a work event, please reach out. We would be honored to see you in whatever capacity God leads you here.

~**Kirk Rautio**  
Executive director



### ARC Events

We are excited for our ARC camps schedule this year and hope to see you at one or more of our events:

#### **Fire UP:**

June 22–26, grades 5–8

#### **Family Camp:**

July 27–August 2

Evening speaker:

Pastor Nate Jore

Youth:

Pastor Nick Dyrud

Young Adults:

Dr. Jarrod Hylden

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