



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

October 13, 1992



*Hitherto
the
LORD
has
helped us.*

**The 30th
Anniversary
of the AFLC**

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Thief River Falls, Minnesota
The Birthplace of the AFLC.
October 25-28, 1962

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Light on the Way

Founded On The Word

I will send a famine through the land — not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord (Amos 8:11).

One In Spirit and Purpose is the theme from the 30th Annual Conference that seems to ring throughout our AFLC. I sense a new "spirit and purpose" among colleagues and members of the AFLC. This is refreshing!

Many of us have received the 30th anniversary book entitled "Growth And New Challenges." We have experienced many warm memories paging through the book. It is good for us as friends and member of the AFLC to pause and reflect. As I recall my years as pastor in our AFLC, the main impression is the strong emphasis placed on the Word of God. May we continue this emphasis as we move into the 21st century.

Martin Luther once said that "the worst calamity that could befall a nation was when God deprived it of His Word." He went on to call it "the greatest plague and manifestation of God's wrath." Luther also said; "on the other hand, there is no greater manifestation of Grace than the sending of His Word."

Our AFLC has grown much over these past 30 years. As many of us look back, there have been many changes. It was a privilege and a blessing to watch this as a Home Mission board member in the decade of the 70s. The addition of many new congregations has been exciting to observe these last ten years. We have much to thank and praise God for as we pause to remember!

Even as we pause, we look forward to the future. We need to remain faithful to God and His Word for continued blessings in future years.

Luther also warned that "God's Word and Grace is a passing rain storm which does not return where it has once been." Where the Word of God is not honored or taken seriously it seems to disappear. Other teachings and philosophies take its place to the downfall of the individual, church or nation.

Amos warned the people of his day of such a catastrophe. The Jewish people had God's Word for centuries. They were "rich" in the Word! At the time when Amos wrote, they apparently were no longer listening to it. They were taking it for granted. Because they were no longer listening to it they were becoming dissatisfied, unthankful and even despised the Word of the Lord.

We recall Luther in the Reformation sounded the same warning to his people. He saw to it that the Word was again prominent in the lives of the people of his generation and beyond.

We look at the religious life of America today. There are some good things taking place. There is also a decline afoot as people replace the Word of the Lord with other religious ideas. God's Word is often taken for granted in our day also.

It is good that we focus on ways to relate God's Word to the people in our communities as we move into the 21st century.



— by Rev.
Larry Severson

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Joshua 4:1-7 and 21-24

Certainly it was a tremendous experience when Israel passed over the Jordan in the way they did. So God commanded that a memorial be built of stones so that when people came by that place in years to come they would ask, "What does this mean?" Then Israel would have the opportunity to tell them what it means.

We must confess with sadness that many of our last generation forgot the meaning and cause of free and living congregations. We pray that people and congregations seeing and hearing what is taking place here today will be given the meaning.

I thank God for our conference this year for again and again we have been busy reaffirming that which brought us together two years ago. I hope that we never have a conference without making that same affirmation, least we forget.

Now why are we rededicating ourselves and these grounds, and this building? Certainly because God has been good to us.

And while we have our struggles and our agony, they are as nothing in comparison to the heartache, the agony of those who, for no reason of their own, have been separated from and denied the privileges that we enjoy from week to week. And this is our Lord's doing! What is taking place here today is also because we believe in a mighty God who can move in mysterious ways His wonders to perform. A God who can make something out of nothing, and that something is majestic and great.

We have a God who has spoken in His Word. Some say God cannot or did not because it does not square with man's understanding, logic or study. In their mind, these are more reliable than God's Word. Many today no longer fear God or respect His Word.

We have a God who miraculously created the entire universe out of nothing. He made mankind a distinct creature, a creature who could disobey Him. The Word tells us that mankind sinned. God sent the flood as a judgment. (Perhaps the reason some try to explain away the flood is that they do not like the thought of judgment.) God was not content to leave man in his sin because He loved him, but sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, born of a virgin. He on Calvary's cross redeemed mankind. Thank God, our sins were on Him when He died. But He arose triumphantly, and ascended into heaven. He is coming again in triumph! There is to be another judgment, then the glorification when the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ are ushered into the eternal presence of the Savior to dwell forever. This is what the Word teaches and much, much more. And this is what you and I must be busy preaching, teaching, telling and living in such a way that God is honored and Christ is glorified as man's only Savior. The Word is to be preached and the Sacraments administered that man might become a new creature in Christ.

We have a God who not only created once, but He wants, through the Spirit, to remake man in the image of His Son. He does this through the church. Certainly the church becomes precious to man after his salvation, for through the church he has an opportunity for a kind of fellowship that looks after the needs of his soul. Together he has a part with other children of God in bringing the Gospel of Redemption to all corners of the world.

We want a church that makes the way of Salvation plain. We believe the doctrines of the Lutheran Church do this. The Scriptural doctrines of the Lutheran Church are precious to us. We have no intentions of leaving them. (Would to God all who call themselves Lutherans believed and practiced these truths.) But we also want to be "free" Lutherans or Lutherans where not only freedom in Christ is emphasized, but where the only authority over the congregations

**Message given
June 13, 1965,
at the dedica-
tion of the
building and
grounds at 3110
East Medicine
Lake Blvd.**



The AFLC headquarters building, 1965-92.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

is the Word and Spirit of God. We desire that the congregations be "living," where personal faith in Christ is such a vital relationship that the believers are different from the world's norms in a loving and compassionate way. Believers are strangers and sojourners in this world.

God has established the pastoral office in the church. The pastor is to be an instrument of God as an ambassador for Jesus Christ. He is to be the shepherd of the flock, the congregation. He is not an overlord but a servant. He is to have a humble concern for souls, no lover of money and completely devoted to the task of building the Kingdom of God. A man with a good reputation, not only among those within the church, but also among those outside the church. If there is to be this kind of pastor, there must be a place where they are nurtured. So a seminary becomes an absolute necessity for the congregations.

Jesus said, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." Those whom He called still had to be made into fishers of men. He nurtured His disciples for three years. Those called must be willing to be made. They will be challenged, tempted, tested and tried. And if the doors for some reason are not opened, maybe the call is not of God.

Not all who have the opportunity to study will be made into fishers of men. Judas spent

three years with Jesus. The church is admonished, "Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thus share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin," (1 Timothy 5:22). Not all called are chosen. The devil is always trying to put the wrong kind of people into the pulpits. People who may be gifted, who have the speech, but are not chosen. They may fool the elect, and even have what looks like fruit. All must be aware of this, especially the clergy. Even as I pray for the Association I often mention and think that the devil wants to use me. Only as we are completely dependent on God, having no confidence in the flesh, but looking to the Lord, do we have hope. False prophets and teachers do their work with tragic harm to the souls of men and to the church.

Not all Christians are to be pastors. It is the responsibility of the church to provide opportunities for nurturing and study for all. Who knows what will be built on these grounds? I hope much will be done that from this place will come humble, God-fearing servants of the Lord for the pew and the pulpit. The tasks are many, the laborers are few.

Well, what will people be saying as they go past 3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard? What answers will be given as they ask, "What does this mean?" The answers are more important than the stones!

Photo taken 1977.



— Rev. John Strand
AFLC President 1962-78
Remer, Minnesota



The first class at the seminary in 1964-65. Inset photo is the ground breaking for the women's dormitory in March, 1968.

WE WERE THERE IN 1962

Remembering and Reviewing

In remembering and reviewing the circumstances and events that led to formation of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC) we will take a look back to actions and direction of the Lutheran Free Church (LFC).

Looking at this from a personal viewpoint, my wife and I attended various churches and were blessed by the fellowship we found. At one time we were in on the start of a Home Mission Congregation of the Augustana Lutheran Synod. As we moved away from that community we needed to find a new church home. I believe we were led by God to an LFC church in Grafton, North Dakota even if I did not realize it at the time. The pastor was Rev. John Strand. We found the church fellowship that we needed. The sound teaching of the Word of God in its truth and purity led us to a true commitment to Jesus Christ.

During the years there, we learned to appreciate, understand and to support the work of the LFC.

In attending some of the annual conferences, I heard and saw the activity within the LFC to join together with other Lutheran groups to form a large synod. It appeared to me and many others that the result of this would mean the dissolution of the LFC as we had come to know and love it.

The question of union was put to a vote of the congregations in the fall of 1957 and was narrowly defeated. In 1961, the conference strongly approved a resolution for another referendum by the congregations which was conducted that fall and the resolution for union was approved.

This was reported to the 1962 conference and was accepted.

Those of us there who wanted the LFC to continue were certainly disappointed but not defeated.

I recall at that time an informal meeting was held in a Minneapolis hotel to discuss the situation. Many like-minded people were there who



The first national WMF officers, 1963: (L. to R.) Mrs. O. K. Ose; Mrs. Herbert Presteng; Mrs. Julius Hermunslie; Mrs. Ray Jacobson and Mrs. Albert Moen.

believed in and wanted to continue as Free Lutheran congregations.

After the foundation was made at the momentous conference in Thief River Falls in the fall of 1962, the AFLC met in Fargo in 1963 to convene as the first Annual Conference of the AFLC. Officers, committees, corporations, and boards were elected

at that time.

One point of interest from that conference is a resolution that was passed, stating: "We are thankful to God that, in spite of many adversities, we are privileged to meet as Free Lutheran congregations in the 67th Annual Conference."

That resolution shows that the group was standing on the principles of the LFC. From that time, however, the annual conferences consider the AFLC as a new beginning, a separate entity.

God has blessed the AFLC through the years, under the leadership of Pastors Strand, Snipstead and now Pastor Lee, and has given us much growth and spiritual fruit.

To God alone belongs the glory. We, as individual members of the AFLC, must live in His grace and mercy, seeking to do His will and His work here that He has given us to do.

In Lamentations 3:22-23, we read these comforting words: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness."

— Roy Mohagen
Grafton, North Dakota



AFLTS Class of '72: Elden Nelson, Henry Johanson, Bruce Dalager and Alvin Grothe. Also in the class but not pictured was Michael Brandt.

WE WERE THERE IN 1962

The Beginnings of the AFLC

My earliest memories of the formation of the AFLC began not with the conference in Thief River Falls, but with the period of time just prior to that meeting.

I belong to a small congregation in McVile, North Dakota, called New Luther Valley which 30 years ago was rather unique in at least two aspects. First of all, we were nearly unanimous in our determination to stay out of merger. Secondly, we were blessed with many younger couples and singles who were looking for an alternative to going along with the merger involving the Lutheran Free Church. This made it possible to have meetings in our church without the threat of splitting our congregation. I recall that these meetings had some very candid discussions on the pros and cons of the proposed merger, but it was out of such meetings as these that the idea for a new church body was born.

When it comes to the reason for taking the course we did I can only speak for myself. Two of the most important reasons for me were my belief in the sovereignty of the Christian congregation on earth and the infallibility of the Word as given to us in the Bible. For these any many other reasons I am thankful for the successful formation of the AFLC in Thief River Falls 30 years ago.

—Dale Quanbeck
McVile, North Dakota



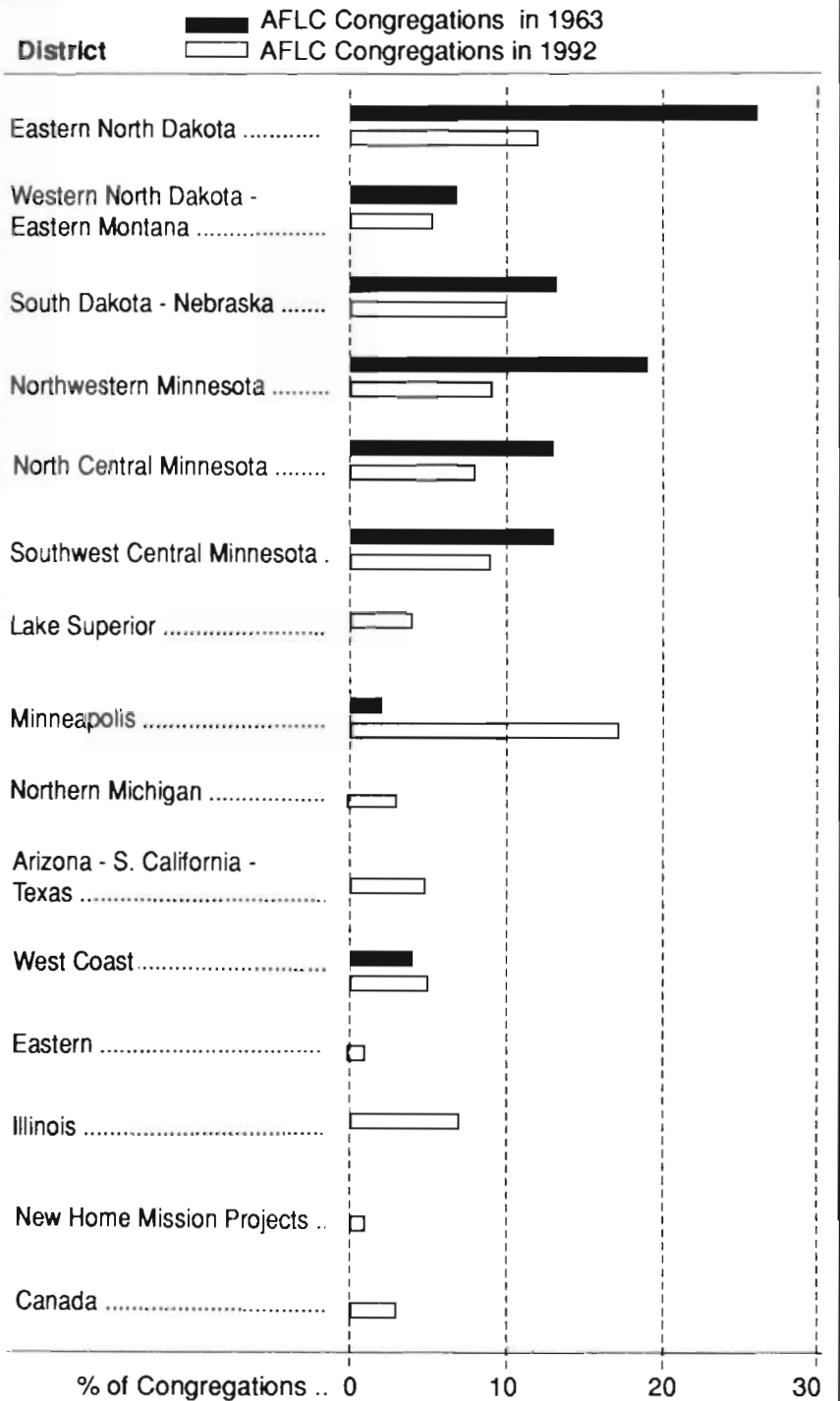
Rev. and Mrs. Trygve Dahle.

Those First Priorities

Prior to 1962, we did a lot of heart searching regarding the pending merger of the LFC. At

first we thought those opposed to the merger were simply afraid the LFC would lose its identity. But then we saw our youth return from Bible camp,

Then and Now



a Luther League Convention and college with liberal ideas on social entertainment, creation and ecumenism. We attended the last LFC Annual Conference at Augsburg

College with mixed emotions.

Back home our parish voted to go with the merger into the American Lutheran Church. Because we were now without a church home, we

looked forward to the October meeting in Thief River Falls, Minnesota. When we arrived there, it was like coming home.

Pastors and lay people freely shared their concerns. We recall one pastor was apprehensive about having a Luther League director because it might take Christian nurturing out of the home and away from the local pastor.

The conference theme was "Press On Toward The Goal." The priorities were clear. We needed a seminary to train young men for the parish ministry. We believed the Lord had called Pastor John Strand to be our first president and to organize the seminary.

Another priority was missions, (Proverbs 29:18). God had prepared John and Ruby Abel who challenged us to have a burden for Brazil. We will never forget Ruby Abel singing, "So Send I You."

The need for a church paper was also pressing. People were scattered and communication was vital to our survival. We thank God for the gifted and willing Pastor Huglen.

The ladies had their own priorities. They were ready to organize under the constitution of the former WMF. In our district, the former officers stayed on in their positions and continued to work for the cause of missions.

Another early concern was the need for a Bible school. An early prayer time was announced with discussion to follow. Most people shared the concern for a Bible school but could it be afforded at that time. One older gentleman said he would borrow \$1000 if that would enable a school to begin. Others of us realized how our own training at LBI had impacted our lives. Four years later, the AFLC opened its Bible school.

Another clear recollection of those days in Thief River Falls was the Sunday morning communion service and the message on forgiveness. Many of us were hurting but now it was time to join together in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us."

— Ray and Olive Jacobson
Wadena, Minnesota

The Prevailing Spirit

In looking back over the past 30 years of our AFLC, I'm reminded of the importance of making a **beginning**. The AFLC exists because individual God-fearing men and women filled the gap and rallied people to come apart and begin anew. Our hearts should be filled with gratitude to God of His faithfulness in calling and preserving our Association. We also need to remember individuals who had the courage and commitment to carry the torch of leadership for us. The Lord strengthened and guided as they obeyed. The rest of us followed with mixed joy and fear.

Today we can look back with thankful hearts. To God be the glory! We believe the AFLC was born and sustained as the Lord worked through individuals. Thus we can claim the promise of Philippians 1:6: "that He who began the good work in you will bring it to completion."

In recalling those first years of our fellowship, I think particularly of the **spirit** of its people:

There was **joy**. We were like toddlers taking those first steps. Each experience was new and wonderful.

There was **commitment**. Many joined at a great cost. For some it meant separation from former church affiliations and even family.

There was **enthusiasm**. Attendance often exceeded expectations as opportunities for fellowship were given. People were eager to share their faith through testimony when opportunity was given.

There was a **vision**. Needs for a Bible school and seminary and missions were presented early in the AFLC's life. Where would the finances be found? Vision became reality in a relatively short time as people gave their talents and finances.

There was a sense of **dependence** on God. Aware of our insignificance in the eye of men there was also the conviction "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Romans 8:31).

We can't go back to those days of our beginning. They are over. We can remember and unite in that same spirit of dedication that prevailed in those beginning days. May God so help us!

— Eula Mae Swenson
Fargo, North Dakota

	Congregations	2 point	3 point	4 or more	single
1963	52	33%	33%	30%	3%
1992	214	35%	7%	1 parish	55%

The Clergy Roster

	Number of Pastors	Average Age	Number of Lay Pastors
1963	22 (active and inactive)	58	2
1992	191 Total 150 Active	49.7 45.4	16

AFLBS Senior Class, 1972-73



Reflections from October, 1962

Knowing that merger was inevitable because we had experienced the disappointment of the merger votes of 1955, '57, and '61, several people would gather at house meetings in Grand Forks. Here we felt free to discuss our concern for the Lutheran Free Church as it began to enter the merger and how it would affect us.

Uppermost in our discussions was the "liberal theology" that we believed would enter the Sunday School material and the Luther League program. We were concerned for our children that they be nurtured by the church to firmly believe that God's Word is inspired and inerrant.

As adults, we knew the merger meant for us a loss of autonomy and reduced participation by the laity. This was contrary to the Fundamental Principles of the Lutheran Free Church as the "right form of the kingdom of God on earth" as based on the Book of Acts.

In October, 1962, we attended the Saturday and Sunday evening meetings at Thief River Falls, and we were inspired by the fellowship of believers who greeted us. Here we found others with like spiritual dedication.

As we heard Pastors John Strand, Julius Hermunslie and Fritjof Monseth, we received hope to believe that we could again establish a seminary and mission program with a supportive Women's Missionary Federation and again function under the principles that we believed were essential. We desired a church body where clergy and laity participated in the inclusive outreach of missionaries and evangelism.

Those were troubled times for which, in one sense, we are thankful. It was a time of soul-searching. Rather than radical and emotional rebellion against a merger, which we felt would lead to the wearing away of pietism, God gave us a conservative boldness to speak and the strength to stand firm in His grace. The days were difficult, too, because of division in church and families. But through it all God gave spiritual growth, deepening of conviction and thankfulness to God, His Word and His Holy Spirit our comfort.

We prayed for revival of soul, cleansing of heart and clarity of mind to discern God's will. We are called to do so now in these days of our church.

—Vernon and Betty Nelson
Grand Forks, North Dakota

Youth Work, Still A Frontier

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

Thanks to Jesus for the past 30 years of youth ministry in our AFLC. Thanks to the Lord for the work that has been done and continues to this day. The Lord has blessed the AFLC with many young men and women. Young men and women who are now serving AFLC congregations. We praise you Lord for what you are doing.

Yet, we are concerned. Should not more be done? The world presses in on every side. We believe that the things of God are often pushed aside. Still youth work continues to be a frontier!

Some are discouraged! Youth are busy. Parents are busy. Jesus is coming back soon. All the signs of the times point to the urgency of doing more to reach youth for Jesus. May the Lord reach into our AFLC congregations allowing His Holy Spirit to convict of sin and point our youth to Jesus. This is what it is all about. Reaching and training for ministry.

—Rev. Dennis Gray,
AFLC Youth Resources Director



ANNIVERSARY GREETINGS

Teaching God's Word To Every Generation

For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children, that the generation 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 of God but keep His commandments (Psalm 78:5-7).

God has not only given "the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation," in Old Testament times and now in these last days, but in His graciousness God has also commissioned His people to teach this Message to every generation. However, He has not asked us to carry out this commission in our own strength. We read in Mark 16:20 that "the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the Word ..." This great truth is our strength and the reason we even dare to try to teach God's Word to every generation.

As we reflect on the 30 years the AFLC Parish Education department has been in existence we readily admit that any accomplishments in the preparation of teaching materials have truly been the result of the Lord working with us, confirming His Word in our hearts. God has also confirmed His Word in the hearts of many girls and boys, men and women who have studied the Bible by way of "The Ambassador Sunday School Series." What a joy to witness the power of the Word transforming individual lives.

God provided the people, resources, finances, strength, times and seasons to complete the first "Ambassador Sunday

School Series" in 1978-79. He is faithful in the same provisions for the current revision of our materials as well as addition of many other devotional books, tracts, and new study books to teach the message of salvation.

As God's Word continues to be taught throughout our AFLC, may we experience the reality of our children coming to true and living faith; putting their confidence in God, remembering the works He has done and keeping His commandments.

—Katha M. Tjelta
Director of Parish Education

Home Missions, A Testimony Of God's Work

The Lord's loving kindness indeed never cease, for His compassion never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Thy faithfulness. On this 30th anniversary year of our AFLC it is wonderful to be able to say with Jeremiah: "Great is Thy faithfulness."

We have experienced many and rich blessings as an AFLC in these 30 years. The growth of the church, as congregations have been added to the roster year by year, has been a blessing. But even more so, it has been a blessing to see how our gracious God has worked in the hearts of the people to bring about spiritual growth. The concern for lost souls and winning them to Christ, which was true of the AFLC 30 years ago, continues to be a concern and priority in 1992.

To God be the glory for every blessing experienced in the development of new Home Mission congregations, as well as in every other work of the AFLC. Great is Thy faithfulness!

—Pastor Elden Nelson
Director of Home Missions

AND WE WILL BE LIKE A TREE

*"Thirty rings" in the AFLC trunk — revealing it a life story;
showing years of growth and struggle; moisture and drought.*

Out of small beginnings,

We are growing strong in the season of our years, Lord.

*May our root system grow deep and imbedded in the virgin soil of
Your Word and Your way —*

*Keeping us anchored and secure as adverse winds blow hard upon us,
yielding rich fruit in its season.*

*Cause "branches" to grow and adorn Your Church; reaching outward
so that*

the "birds of the air will come and nest in her branches."

O Holy Spirit of the Living God,

Rekindle our flame and keep us in fervent preparation for the harvest!

— Barb Skeie
New Hope, Minnesota

And he will be like a tree
planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season;
and its leaf does not wither;
and in whatever he does, he
prosperes (Psalm 1:3).

The Kingdom of heaven is
like a mustard seed which a
man took and sowed in his
field; and this is smaller than all
other seeds; but when it is full
grown, it is larger than the garden
plants and becomes a tree,
so that the birds of the air come
and nest in its branches
(Matthew 13:31-32).

ANNIVERSARY GREETINGS

Press On!

The Women's Missionary Federation joins the whole AFLC in giving praise to God for His blessings, leading, and protection over the past 30 years. All eternity will not exhaust the adoration and honor and love He deserves for His grace and amazing faithfulness to us. To God be the glory!

Looking back reassures us that He will also meet every need we face in the future. In a world where God's truth is increasingly rejected, we must stand firm in our commitment to God's holy and unchanging Word.

As I've pondered our goals for the future, this thought has come to mind: **The goal is never self-preservation, but outreach for the glory of God.** This is true for each WMF, each congregation, group or individual, as well as the whole AFLC. If we focus on ourselves and try to "maintain," we'll grow stale and "ingrown." Complacency is Satan's tool. **We must press on!** We need to grow in the likeness of Christ, in seeking to reach new people, and in developing new ways to more effectively meet the needs of people. You and I are called to serve, not to sit back. He will supply all we need.

"Life up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest," (John 4:35).

—Mrs. Lyndon Korhonen,
WMF President

God Has A Purpose For Us

His purpose is to prepare believers for service as workers in building up the body of Christ until all of us become one in our faith and in our knowledge of God's Son, until we become mature, until we reach the full height of Christ. Then we will not be babies any longer, tossed and driven by every doctrinal wind, by the trickery of people and their clever scheming to lead us astray. Rather, as we speak the truth with love, we will grow up into Him who is the Head, namely, Christ (Ephesians 4:12-15, New Evangelical Translation).

Our AFLC World Missions program lines up with God's purpose by evangelizing those who are lost, planting churches to nurture believers and establishing training ministries to equip leaders. Our goal is God's goal: to bring people to a saving knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Our AFLC is celebrating 30 years of service and ministry. From a small beginning in 1963, God has abundantly blessed our AFLC Missions with His mercy and grace. All

Mission Of The Seminary Continues

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me (us) all the days of my (our) life (lives) (Psalm 23:6).

As we pause to celebrate the 30th anniversary of our AFLC, it is remembrance of God's goodness and mercy to us over these years that is the most fitting reason for thanksgiving and praise.

In His goodness and mercy, God brought the original churches and individuals together in 1962 to form an association of free Lutheran congregations. One of the earliest concerns was to establish a seminary. The president wrote in his first message to the church: "We will need to get our seminary functioning as soon as possible. There are young men waiting to enter it. A faculty is the big need." In the resolutions adopted, the following statement was made:

"It is in His will that God shall give us faithful servants for the days ahead, for we realize that the heart of any kingdom work lies in such an institution as shall train our youth to be good pastors, teachers and church leaders."

In His goodness and mercy, God has provided "faithful servants" through the ministry of the seminary. More than 150 men have studied on the campus. Most of them are serving the church as pastors, teachers, missionaries, and leaders.

In His goodness and mercy, God has provided the need for a faculty through the years. Faculty members committed to Christ, His Word and His Church. By God's grace, the original charter for the seminary remains the earnest and prayerful endeavor of the Board of Trustees and faculty.

At this special moment in our history as a church fellowship, let us praise God with heart and voice for His goodness and mercy to us all in Christ! Let us rejoice in His faithfulness and commit ourselves afresh to the great mission He has entrusted to us.

—Dr. Francis W. Monseth
Dean of the Seminary

that we see as accomplished has been because of His faithfulness to us. He has opened up doors of opportunity and burdened His people to pray and give support.

Let us press on and spare nothing. May we give sacrificially of our people and our resources to advance the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

—Eugene W. Enderlein
World Missions Director

In conclusion, with Samuel let us raise an Ebenezer and say, "Hitherto the Lord has helped us." Having done that, let us then advance for Christ, assured that there is a great work to do for Him and that we are privileged to have as large a part as we have the faith and will to assume.

—Rev. Raynard Huglen, from an editorial in *The Lutheran Ambassador*.

Women of Wisdom and The Word

RUTH

Part II
Chapters 3 & 4

Last month chapters 1 and 2 of Ruth were studied. The purpose of the lesson was to show God's sovereign grace in action and to show His powerful ministry in the life of Ruth. In Chapter 1 Ruth made an important **decision**. She decided to return to Judah with Naomi, her mother-in-law. By her decision, she became one of God's people. Ruth's **determination and God's provision** were illustrated in chapter 2. Ruth took advantage of God's law allowing the poor and the stranger to glean after the reapers. She found favor with Boaz, a close relative of Naomi.

Ruth's Devotion — Ruth 3:1-5, 9

1. What was the immediate need for Ruth and Naomi at this time? 1:21
2. How was the need met? 2:3, 17

"In the East, the position of unmarried women is dangerous and trying — only in the house of a husband can she be sure of respect and protection." Robert Lee, *The Outlined Bible*.

3. Naomi was thinking of Ruth when she gave her this counsel. What was it? 3:1-5, 9. What does that counsel really mean? Deuteronomy 25:5-10

12. Why do you think the author ended the book in this unusual way?

13. Matthew 1:1-17 states the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Who do you find in this genealogy? v. 5, 6 (Do you see the connection?)

14. What does that tell us about God and the events of history?

Life Response

Jesus gave His life for you at the cross. He is, like Boaz was for Ruth, your Kinsman-Redeemer. Let the wonder of His love encourage you today. Meditate upon it. Sing about it today. How about writing your own poem of gratitude to God for His gift of salvation? Perhaps the following will inspire you.

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou my God, shouldst die for me?

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick-'ning ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

— Charles Wesley, 1738

Boaz is a type or a picture of Christ. Boaz became Ruth's Kinsman-Redeemer. It was because of Ruth's need that she saw Boaz as her Kinsman-Redeemer. Jesus Christ is our Kinsman-Redeemer. Only when we see our own great spiritual need, can we see Jesus as our Kinsman-Redeemer.

This is the work of the law — to show us our need.

Life Response

Have you seen your need? Romans 3:23, 6:23a. Have you received Jesus as your Kinsman-Redeemer? John 1:12

"I have a great need for Christ, and I have a great Christ for my need."
C.H. Spurgeon

4. What was the response of Boaz? 3:8-13

5. What was the one "catch" in his plans? v. 12

6. What was Boaz going to do? v. 13

Boaz set up a meeting at the city gates to settle the matter. Community matters were decided at the city gate. It was not unlike a town courthouse.

7. What did the closer relative decide? 4:1, 6-8

8. What happened next? 4:13

9. List three requirements of a Kinsman-Redeemer, as stated in the Old Testament.

a. Leviticus 25:25

b. Leviticus 25:48, 49; Ruth 3:12, 13

c. Ruth 4:4-6

10. Compare how Jesus fulfilled the requirements of Kinsman-Redeemer as stated in the New Testament.

a. Galatians 4:4, 5

b. Hebrews 2:11

c. John 10:11-18

11. How does the book end? 4:18-22

Fundamental Principles of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

(Guiding Principles of the Lutheran Free Church since 1897)

1. According to the Word of God, the congregation is the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth.

2. The congregation consists of believers who, by using the means of grace and the spiritual gifts as directed by the Word of God, seek salvation and eternal blessedness for themselves and for their fellow men.

3. According to the New Testament, the congregation needs an external organization with membership roll, election of officers, stated times and places for its gatherings, and other similar provisions.

4. Members of the organized congregation are not, in every instance believers, and such members often derive false hope from their external connection with the congregation. It is therefore the sacred obligation of the congregation to purify itself by the quickening preaching of the Word of God, by earnest admonition and exhortation, and by expelling the openly sinful and perverse.

5. The congregation directs its own affairs, subject to the authority of the Word and the Spirit of God, and acknowledges no other ecclesiastical authority or government above itself.

6. A free congregation esteems and cherishes all the spiritual gifts which the Lord gives for its edification, and seeks to stimulate and encourage their use.

7. 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.

8. Such assistance consists partly in the mutual sharings of spiritual gifts among the congregations through conferences, exchange visits, lay activities, etc., whereby congregations are mutually edified, and partly in the voluntary and Spirit-prompted cooperation of congregations for the accomplishing of such tasks as exceed the ability of the individual congregation.

9. Among such tasks may be mentioned specifically the training of pastors, distribution of Bibles and other Christian literature, home missions, foreign missions, Jewish missions, deaconess homes, children's homes and other work of mercy.

10. Free congregations have no right to demand that other congregations shall submit to their opinion, will, judgment, or decision; therefore, domination by a majority of congregations over a minority is to be rejected.

11. Agencies found desirable for conducting the joint activities of congregations, such as conferences, committees, officers, etc., cannot in a Lutheran free church, impose any obligations or restrictions, exert any compulsion, or lay any burden upon the individual congregation, but have the right only to make recommendations to, and requests of, congregations and individuals.

12. Every free congregation, as well as every individual believer, is constrained by the Spirit of God and by the privileges of Christian love to do good and to work for the salvation of souls and the quickening of spiritual life, as far as its abilities and power permit. Such free spiritual activity is limited neither by parish nor by synodical bounds.



Ladies with a food shelf collection at Medicine Lake Lutheran Church, 1974.



A School's Corporation meeting, June, 1969.

Marie Sandvik

Marie Sandvik, 89, founder of the Marie Sandvik Center, formerly The Minneapolis Revival Mission, died September 13, 1992, of kidney failure.



Sandvik was born in Joranger, Hafslo, Norway, October 13, 1902. As a young girl, she walked up to evangelist Ludvig Hope and told him she was giving her heart to the Lord. The evangelist dedicated her to the work of the Lord and remarked "This little girl is going to move mountains." Sandvik indeed did move mountains.

She immigrated to North Dakota, in 1920 to pursue her education and graduated Magna Cum Laude from Minot State Teachers College. She edited "Nordvestern" while she attended college. She taught high school for three years and graduated from Temple Bar Congregational Seminary in Seattle.

She purchased the bankrupt Angelo's Bar on Washington Avenue in 1940 and converted it into a mission. She had no pulpit so she stood by the bar and gave God's invitation to over 200 souls in despair. "I have come to offer you a new life," she told them. Down through the years hundreds have found that new life and become productive citizens. Some have become ministers or missionaries.

Funeral services were held on Thursday, September 17, 1992, at Mindekieken Norwegian Lutheran Memorial Church, 924 E. 21st Street, Minneapolis, with entombment at Sunset Memorial Park.

AFLBS Missions Club is having a fund raiser to purchase men's and women's basketball uniforms. There will be a basket social Thursday evening, October 22nd with the theme, baskets and buckets. Theme verse will be Psalm 100:4.

Donations may be sent to AFLBS Uniform Project at the Bible School. Matching funds have been applied for through Lutheran Brotherhood.

Newark, Illinois — Helmar Lutheran Church hosted the morning sessions for the annual LEM area conference on September 21-23, with Rev. Roger Carlson and Rev. Kearney Frantsen conducting Bible study hours on the theme, "What Is the Spirit Saying to the Churches Today" (Revelation 1-2-3). The following AFLC churches conducted evening evangelistic services as a part of the conference: Fox River Lutheran Church, Norway (Pastor Ken Thoreson, speaker); Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Morris (Pastor Gary Skramstad, speaker); Helmar Lutheran Church, Newark (Pastor Willmore Gunderson, speaker); and Freedom Lutheran Church, Ottawa (Rev. Gary Jorgenson, speaker).

Mr. Wayne Welsch is the new Youth and Parish Education Director at Zion Lutheran Church, Tioga, North Dakota, beginning August 31. Wayne is a 1992 graduate of Association Free Lutheran Bible School. He replaces **Allison Mellgren**, who has returned to college after serving during the summer months.

Rev. Merle Knutson, Boscobel, Wisconsin, retired from the parish ministry on September 1, 1992. He had served Trinity Lutheran Church since 1984. He and his wife Arlys are living near Rollag, Minnesota.

Rev. D. Mark Antal, who serves as a military chaplain near Brussels, Belgium, has accepted a call to be the pastor of Lebanon and North Prairie Lutheran Churches, Leeds, North Dakota. The Antal family will return to the U.S. in December, and he plans to begin his ministry in Leeds on January 1, 1993.

Rev. Steven R. Ruechel, Thompson, North Dakota, who has served the rural Grand Forks parish (ELCA) since 1986, accepted a call from Christ the King Free Lutheran Church, East Grand Forks, Minnesota. Pastor Ruechel, who is included on the AFLC Fellowship Roster after colloquy with the Co-ordinating Committee, will begin serving his new parish on November 1.

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AFLC Benevolences - February 1 - August 31, 1992

FUND	TOTAL BUDGET	REC'D IN AUGUST	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$295,450.00	\$14,461.91	\$104,457.79	35
Schools - (AFLTS) . .	149,535.00	4,261.44	41,923.39	28
(AFLBS) . .	208,625.00	7,943.29	65,229.30	31
Home Missions	433,616.00	10,992.51	138,786.58	32
World Missions	409,715.00	14,437.11	166,298.38	41
Capital Investment . .	30,000.00	567.42	12,561.19	42
Parish Education . . .	84,385.00	3,576.96	36,524.89	43
ARC	20,000.00	584.90	4,731.67	24
TOTALS	\$1,631,326.00	\$56,825.54	\$570,513.19	35
1991 - 1992	\$1,537,681.00	\$73,430.88	\$541,196.15	35
Goal 58%				

LUTHERAN AND LOW CHURCH

The AFLC is a fellowship of low church Lutherans. "Low church" is most likely an unfortunate term, for it tends to create an image in our minds of something inferior. A search for dictionary definitions supports this impression, for we read of "low" described as lacking strength, health, or vitality ... of lesser degree or size ... falling short of some standard ... coarse, vulgar.

The roots of "low church," however, in a religious sense, are respectable ones, for they refer to a minimal emphasis on the ceremonial aspects of worship in favor of "evangelical principles."

What does it mean for us to describe the AFLC as "low church?" The following statements will clarify the concept:

* **The Word of God is the means of grace.** This does not mean that we do not accept Baptism and the Lord's Supper as means of grace, but it must be explained that they are only so in a secondary sense. "It is not the water indeed that does such great things, but the Word of God" Luther wrote in his small catechism, in which he also taught that it is not the bodily eating and drinking.

Everyone is not some sort of Christian by virtue of the sacraments, which "must always be met by the response of faith in the heart of the recipient to be efficacious." The fear of sacramentalism in the hearts and minds of our evangelical Lutheran forefathers was the result of their experiences with this poisonous spirit in the state churches from which they came. Sometimes they even expressed this conviction in the arrangement of the furnishings in their first churches, with the pulpits elevated above the altars and/or in the center.

* **The Word of God is the center of worship.** Some AFLC congregations prefer their pastors to wear robes and vestments; most of them do not. A variety of hymnals are used, from the LBW to the gospel songbook, and, although "Concordia II" has secured a semi-official status among us, the reality is that many different orders of worship are followed. "We make no recommendation as to the use of liturgy or vestments except that we encourage simplicity in worship."

Yet a commitment to the centrality of the Word of God in worship is a common feature of all AFLC congregations. The preaching of the Word is the heart of the service, and no forms or ceremonies can be allowed to detract from it.

* **Evangelism is a high priority.** A commitment to the Word of God as the means of grace, as well as the rejection of sacramentalism, results in a strong emphasis on reaching the lost. The AFLC *Fundamental Principles* mention a need for "the quickening preaching of the Word of God," recognizing that not every member of the congregation is necessarily a believer, as well as the fact that a world of souls without the Savior begins at our front doors.

It is the custom of most AFLC congregations to schedule "special meetings" at least once a year, to build up the believers and to win the lost. We are convinced that some are called to be evangelists, and this office is encouraged and honored among us. There is an openness, also, to new methods of evangelistic outreach, such as small groups, and

recent efforts have been directed toward meeting the need for training Christians to lead others to Christ.

It is no surprise to learn that the first Lutheran missionaries were commissioned centuries ago by evangelical pietists, for an evangelistic priority includes an emphasis on world missions. The commitment and concern for reaching the lost in other lands remains a mark of low church Lutherans today.

* **The lay people take their proper place in the life of the congregation.** Spiritual gifts are mentioned several times in our *Fundamental Principles*, to be cherished, stimulated, and encouraged by the congregation. Our heritage of lay activity is rooted in the clear teaching of the New Testament on mutual ministry, and renewed by the Reformation emphasis on the priesthood of all believers.

The AFLC *Declaration of Faith* states: "The Lord has given talents and gifts to Christian lay people as well as pastors, and opportunity should be given for the practice of these gifts in the life of the congregations, also in meetings of fellowship outside the congregation, and in service to a needy world."

* **There is a clear separation between the Christian and the world.** The transformed life is a separated life, for to follow Christ means to forsake sin. Christians are different, for the Spirit of Christ indwells us and His love constrains us to refrain from thoughts, words, and deeds contrary to the Scriptures, which we will also search for principles to guide our conduct in matters that are not mentioned by name.

The loss of Christian separation is license, and its abuse is legalism. Low church Lutherans are committed to the life-long struggle for striking a balance between cheap grace and salvation or sanctification by works.

Is there not a crying need for these commitments within modern Lutheranism? Have we not been raised up in this crucial hour to be a witness to an authentic evangelical Lutheran heritage?

The AFLC has sought for three decades to be an embodiment of the low church line. For our pride, we ask for pardon. For our failures, we ask forgiveness.

The introduction to our *Declaration of Faith*, though composed 30 years ago, still speaks clearly and relevantly of our convictions:

No man fully understands the times and the situations in which he lives. At best we see through a glass darkly. Nevertheless, each Christian must decide in the light of God's Word and the evidence which he has what course of action he should take and to what causes his life should be given. It is the same for the Christian congregations. Imperfect as it is, it must decide in what fellowship of other congregations it can best live out its purpose for being. Out of considerable soul-searching and prayer we have come to choose to continue as Lutheran free churches.

This is where we continue to stand. Humbly. Honestly. Imperfectly. Impatiently.

WORLD WATCH

New York — The American Bible Society has made an unprecedented \$100 million commitment to Bible work around the world.

The ABS Board of Trustees approved on September 10 a new, far reaching plan that not only expands its efforts to distribute the Holy Scriptures but also to enhance development of national Bible Societies and the infrastructure to support them.

The plan calls for a \$100,454,454 commitment from the ABS from 1993 to 1996.

"Probably no other similar organization in the United States has ever made a commitment of this magnitude," said ABS President and CEO Dr. Eugene Habecker.

Dr. Habecker said the \$100 million pledge provides the ABS with an opportunity to make a statement in a significant way about the level of its commitment to the worldwide Bible cause.

New York (ABS) — A new \$23.5 million grant commitment by the American Bible Society to Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union will help provide the Holy Scriptures for an estimated 400 million people, including 193 million Christians and 39 million Christian families.

"Let there be no mistake about our intentions; this part of the world is at a critical time in its history," Dr. Eugene Habecker, ABS President and CEO, explained. "We believe the Word of God can make a massive difference. The time is now to help share in that task."

While much of the region is embroiled in ethnic conflicts and their economic and political structures have been tottering since the collapse of Communism, Bible workers in the region have not been daunted. Between 1989 and 1990 nine new Bible Societies were formed, said Terje Hartberg, consultant for the Europe/Middle East region of the UBS. These new Bible Societies are interconfessionally based, serving a wide range of churches and confessions.

"Eight of the 15 former Soviet Republics now have their own national

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Bible Society," Mr. Hartberg said, adding that this new plan presents an opportunity for the Bible Society to support the work of existing churches in the territory as they strive to rebuild a strong and lasting Christian presence.

Most Bible Societies in that part of the world rely on churches as their main channel of distribution. A large amount of Scriptures are also provided to prisons, hospitals, schools and Sunday schools, mostly for free. By using church and mission networks, Scriptures are distributed widely within the various countries.

The most popular editions of Scripture in the region at the moment are the illustrated Bible stories or so-called "Children's Bible." Editions are available in a variety of languages. Bible workers have seen evidence that these "Children's Bibles" are used as much by adults as by youngsters.

Approximately one-half of the ABS money may be used for projects in Russia. This is in response to the new political and social climate of cooperation between Russia and the United States — both former rivals. Targets for Russia will include distribution in the six former Soviet Republics with Moslem majority populations where no Bible Society exists.

In allocating the ABS gift, high priority will be given to infrastructures, staff training and translation work by the new Bible Societies.

Countries included in the new plan are: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and former Yugoslavia.