

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

April 2004



AFLTS at 40



Tame the tongue



Liz Johnson
Living Hope
St. Michael, MN

“It’s scary to think that the tongue is just like that — easy to scar but extremely difficult to control.”

Words. They hurt, heal, bless and bruise. They can tear down, or offer hope. A baby’s first words are written down and remembered for years. A meaningful quote is stuck to the refrigerator with a magnet. A public speech is listened to by millions. Words mean so much to us.

I know that actions speak louder than words, but sometimes words can speak pretty loud. James 3:5-6 says, “Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire.” Once a forest fire is started it’s almost impossible to put out. Even after it’s died down, the things that it consumed and destroyed can never be recovered. It’s scary to think that the tongue is just like that — easy to scar but extremely difficult to control.

I have a huge problem with gossip. I love to talk about other people. I struggle with it all the time. A friend of mine and I used to talk about a certain person every time we got together. Some of the things I said were so cruel I can’t believe I even said them. It took me a while to actually realize the ugliness of my words. Another friend had to show me. She asked me why I talked so nasty about that person all the time and told me how terrible it sounded. I felt so guilty, and I still regret everything I said.

James 3:9-10 says, “With the tongue we

praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.” Talking about other people one minute and worshipping God the next minute is so two-faced. The people I talk about are part of God’s design, and they are incredibly important to God. Putting them down is like knocking God’s creation. When I hear that someone’s been gossiping about me, it breaks my heart — and I don’t want to hurt anyone else that way.

Another big problem for me is lashing out with my words. When I get angry I tend to not think about what I’m saying until after I’ve already said it. But, once those words are out I won’t ever be able to shove them back in my mouth. I can apologize, but those words are still there — ringing in the ears of the person who heard them. I’m working on it, with God’s help, and I’m slowly getting better at holding my tongue; thinking before I speak. But I know it’s always going to be a huge issue for me.

Ephesians 4:29 has been a great reminder for me. It says, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their need, that it may benefit those who listen.” If the things I say aren’t helpful or needed, I just need to keep my mouth shut. God’s helping me hold my tongue. I still slip up a lot, but the more I ask Him to help me out, the more I remember to think about what I say before I say it.

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Editor Pastor Craig Johnson
craigj@teleport.com

Managing Editor Ruth Gunderson
ruthg@aflc.org

Editorial Board Pastor John Mundfrom
Oryen Benrud
Pastor Jerry Moan
Pastor James L. Johnson

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Turning 40

A look back at the founding of our seminary

One of the first concerns we had in the beginning of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations — actually before the church name was settled — was that there would have to be provision for training pastors for the future.

Fleeting consideration was given to cooperating with some already-established school of theology, but the consensus emerged that to have the education we felt was best for us, we needed to begin a theological seminary of our own.

Where should such a school be conducted? Fargo, Minneapolis, or some other place? What sort of building could be utilized? We owned St. Paul's Lutheran church in Fargo, but it had its drawbacks.

Who could be secured as faculty? Certainly none of us pastors had formal experience in teaching that I knew of, and assuredly not in seminary teaching. What men on the American scene shared our positions and would care to be identified with us?

The appeal was made to the whole fellowship to pray for men who felt the call to be pastors, for a place to put the school, for finances to begin a seminary, and for teachers to instruct those who came to study. There must have been much prayer, because things soon came together in a wonderful way.

The Hauge property on Medicine Lake in Plymouth, Minn., became available and was purchased. To this day the church/chapel is the home of the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary.

Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara, of Finland, was secured as the main instructor. He was a world-known conservative Lutheran theologian and had once taught at Suomi Seminary in Hancock, Mich. Pastor John Strand, president of the new fellowship, served as dean of

the school.

Nine men were in the first class. Not all of them carried through to graduation, but they were men who opened the way by casting their lot with the new institution.

The opening rally on Sept. 18-20, 1964, was a quiet, yet festive time. I wrote about it in the "Ambassador" for the Oct. 6 issue, "On the dignified, reverent and yet joyful spirit in which the services were held," and concluded by stating, "The rally is over, the people have gone home, classes have started. Now the real work begins as the students and professors wrestle with the learning and teaching process, and as the people of the church pray and give the money needed to operate the school. It was a historic occasion, the seminary rally. But it was only part of the story. We are proceeding now to write a history which we trust will be as fine as the start was."

Our seminary had some rough times in those early years. But when Dr. Iver Olson joined the faculty in 1965, he was a steadying influence, and I credit him as a key figure in the continuance of AFLTS. Down through history, thank God, those persons appear and are available, who keep the ship on a steady course. Dr. Olson was one of those.

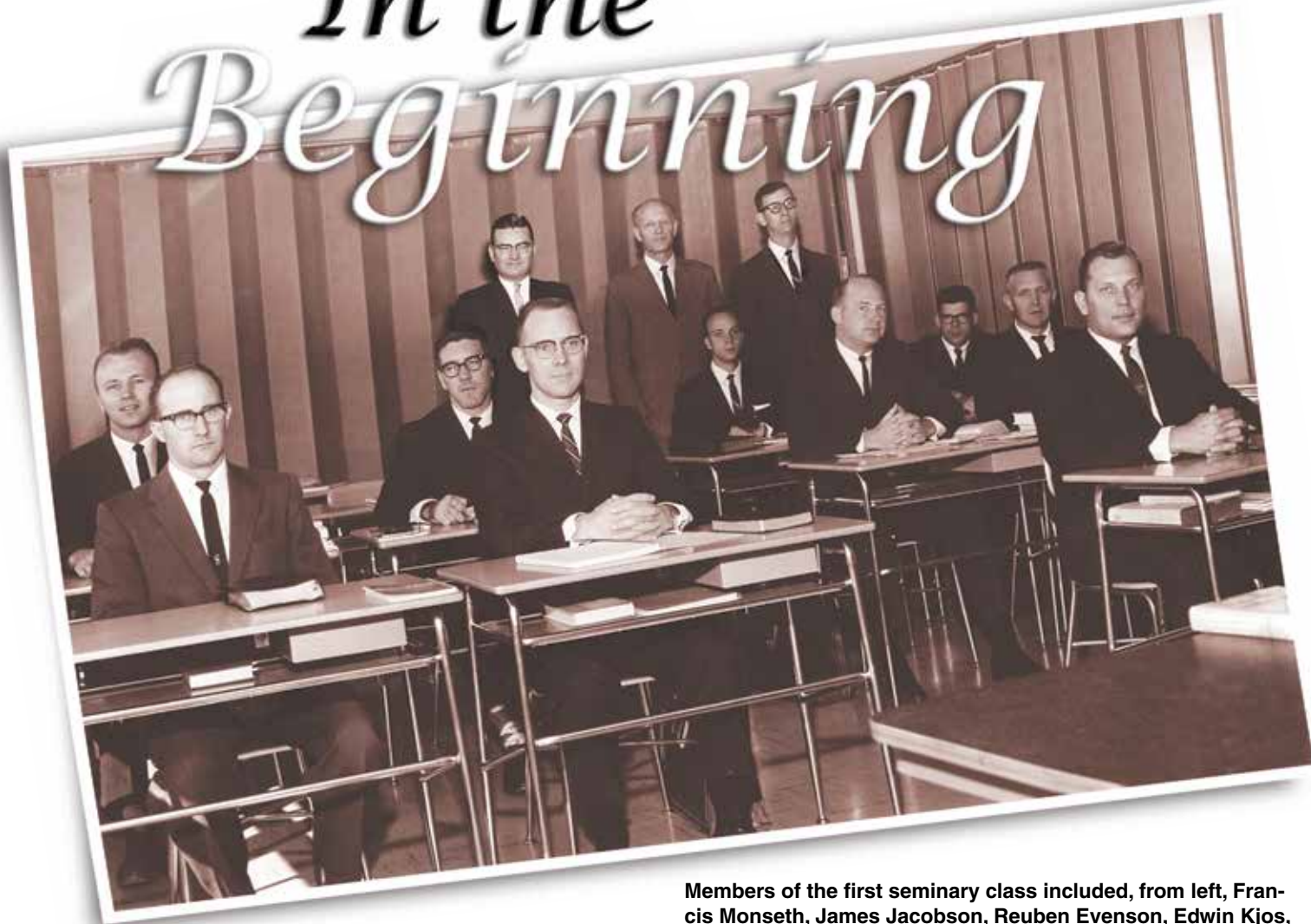
We wanted a school that would train men for the ministry who were in living relationships with Jesus Christ, who had the servant spirit, who were convinced that the Bible is God's Word in all its parts, and who bowed before it, were teachable and saw the ministry as a call from God, not simply as a vocation.

By the grace of God, this has remained the goal and spirit of AFLTS. May it always be so.

— Pastor Raynard Huglen
Newfolden, Minn.



In the Beginning



Members of the first seminary class included, from left, Francis Monseth, James Jacobson, Reuben Evenson, Edwin Kjos, David Molstre, Richard Gunderson, Robert Rieth, Howard Kjos, and Raymond Peterson. Instructors were Pastor John Strand, Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara, and Pastor Clair Jennings.

By Dr. Francis Monseth

What a thrilling day it was, the opening of Free Lutheran Seminary. Sept. 19, 1964. Turning off East Medicine Lake Boulevard onto a gravel road that went straight up a hill, my '61 Ford negotiated the bumps into the parking lot adjacent to the only building in sight, a large chapel. Ten of us had registered for that first semester. I was the youngest of them, 22 years old, the only single, but warmly welcomed by my "elderly" peers.

Reflecting on that first day and that first year, there are so many things that combined to make it most memorable and blessed. Fresh out of college, which for me had included exposure to liberal theology as well as to secular philosophy, I found it a refreshing contrast (shall I say, "Heaven on earth"?) to sit under professors who truly loved the Lord and loved His Word. They were not hesitant to declare

their full trust in the entirety of Scripture. They demonstrated that trust in saturating their lectures with Bible exposition. It seemed that we could ask any question on any subject as students, and receive a response something like, "Let's see what the Bible says." This was an example that inspired us even as it led us into the Scriptures as learners rather than as critics. The hours, the weeks, the months seemed to fly by during that first year in the enjoyment and blessing of studying the very Word of God.

I cannot forget the precious fellowship that existed among the students and their families as well as with the faculty during that first year. Fellowship as those redeemed by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Fellowship as members of the one holy Christian Church. Fellowship as those sensing God's call to serve Him in full-time ministry. Fellowship in our excitement about the newly-organized Associa-

tion of Free Lutheran Congregations, a Bible-believing church fellowship in Lutheranism. Fellowship in realizing increasingly our inadequacy to serve the Lord but daring to believe that His grace is made perfect in weakness. Fellowship in experiencing the spartan life of students and praying together with heightened earnestness, "Give us this day our daily bread." Fellowship in kneeling before our Lord together each morning, praying for one another as well as for our families and congregations. Fellowship in earnest discussions in classes and during the breaks. Fellowship in doing calisthenics during some of the breaks led by our physically-fit senior professor who thought most of us were out of shape. The words of the psalmist are appropriate in describing the fellowship of that first year of Free Lutheran Seminary, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1).

The encouragement that we received as seminary students from our congregations and pastors was a wonderful blessing during that first year of seminary. We were well aware that there were people who had requested a list of our names and were praying for us. Among the many faithful seminary prayer partners was a dear lady from central Minnesota who prayed for us every day and sent notes filled with uplifting Bible verses. The visits of the early AFLC pastors and laypeople to the campus were a special benediction to us. Their kind interest in us as students and offers to help in any way they could meant more than they would ever know. It was not uncommon for one of these dear saints to take a student aside and pray with him over a special need or concern. And yes, there were those dear campus visitors who expressed their loving interest by a warm handshake that left a crumpled bill in one's hand. Students testified to God's perfect timing in providing for their need of a tank of gas or a few groceries through these beloved friends.

Opportunities for students to preach in congregations abounded in those early moments of the AFLC and its seminary. And how royally we were treated as students by our hosts! I preached almost every Sunday throughout my seminary training, traveling to congregations at Doran, Minn., (Stiklesstad) and Abercrombie, N.D. (Bethany). Soon every curve and every dip on Highway 55 was predictable. Humbled by the gracious hospitality and the loving kindness shown, the people always seemed to put the best construction on mistakes that were made in preaching or leading the service. Returning to Minneapolis after such weekends, my heart was full of praise and my eyes filled with tears of joy and thanksgiving for the great privilege to serve our loving Lord among His precious people. And to think



they gave me an honorarium for this!

Forty years have so quickly passed since that first year of seminary, that first year of Free Lutheran Seminary! A generation has passed in these 40 years! The founders and first professors are home with the Lord. Some of the early students have joined them. By the grace of God, the biblical convictions of our founders remain solid at the seminary.

But a milestone such as is being observed this year gives pause to consider the future of the seminary. Will the original mission be kept intact and in focus? Will the confession of our absolute need to depend upon God in every decision and in every problem continue? Will prayer for the preservation and protection of the seminary as well as for the provision of the needs remain strong? Will prayer to the Lord of the harvest for more laborers continue? If it is to our own strength and wisdom we turn, we can only answer with great apprehension. However, in reliance upon God's abundant promises and assured by His power and grace, we can with joy entrust the seminary's future to Him who began this good work and who is pledged to honor His Word until forever.

Dr. Monseth, a 1967 graduate of AFLTS, has worked as the seminary's dean since 1981.



Called to prepare

An AFLTS student recalls why he was called to ministry

Does each new day look brighter? Does the new dawn bring good news of victories in our struggle against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12)? For you, in your personal walk with the Lord, I pray the answer is yes!



Cal Willard
Senior
AFLTS

But what of the larger struggle? Our nation, founded under God and rooted in evangelical Protestantism, awakens each new day to growing apostasy and advancing paganism. Looking across the sea, much of Europe is darkened by a lost faith, a lost hope. Another gospel preached (Galatians 1:7-8), called higher criticism, spread from 19th century Germany over that continent robbing the believers of the inerrant Word of God. American congregations, in their naivete, sent their sons to bring this other gospel to our shores, and it has cast a shadow over Christ's Church in America. And the shadows deepen each new day.

"Christ has work for you to do." These were the words of my call to ministry. The reality of a three-year academic program followed by a yearlong internship seemed daunting. However, with God's enabling, I remained committed to the course of

preparation deemed best by the leaders of our AFLC, through which the call came. Having completed those three years of academic and spiritual preparation, I thank God for our Free Lutheran Seminary. What a blessing these years have been for me and the other men studying here. Those behind FLS remain convinced that God's inerrant Word is the only norm for faith and life, guiding both pastoral and systematic theology.

Jesus said "... narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:14). So Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, advised Timothy and all pastors: "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (I Timothy 4:16).

Instructors at FLS prepare men to serve the Lord through two broad disciplines, each with many specific lessons and skills. The first is the work of the Holy Spirit, maturing students through three years of studying God's Word. Strength and faith in the Lord grow. And three years studying the Bible has left me humbly acknowledging that I must commit the rest of my life to its prayerful study.

The second discipline has been to learn the systematic doctrines taught in Scripture. When Martin Luther led the Church out of Romanism with all of its erroneous teachings of men, he led it back to

the authority of the Bible. And this resulted in a century or more of serious and prayerful study of the Scriptures, producing thoroughgoing published works explaining and defending the historic Christian faith. These Lutheran professors and pastors were without denominational bias and sought only to determine the true doctrines according to God's Word. And it is these truths, under the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit, which lead the Church through that narrow gate described by Jesus. Instructors at FLS teach the truth of biblical orthodox Christian doctrine so that pastors may lead their flock through the narrow gate and avoid the broad path, which leads to apostasy and destruction.

I praise God for those early leaders in our AFLC who saw the need for a biblical and orthodox seminary. I praise God for the men He calls to teach and help prepare future pastors for the Church. And I thank God for the men He calls to study there in love and fellowship to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" (II Peter 3:18).



Willard, a native of Salem, Ore., will complete his senior year at the seminary in May and will begin a 12-month internship in June at Peace Lutheran, Canal Winchester, Ohio, under the pastoral supervision of Pastor David Barnhart. Willard, a widower, has two sons, Samuel and Thomas.

Graduating Seminarists

Martin Lall Tallinn, Estonia

I was born in Tallinn, Estonia, on Nov. 3, 1964, as the second child of Ulo and Helle Lall. My first encounter with the Lord was at age 6. All my relatives were unbelievers, except my grandmother. She taught me the Lord's Prayer. I remember a special excitement I had when reading an old Bible or when going to the Methodist church with her. She died soon after this time, and I continued religious quests by myself.

In the beginning of the 1980s, I joined a group of believers in fighting against the Communist regime in Estonia. There I met my future wife, Marina Karis. We married in 1982. Marina led me to Christ in 1986. I was baptized together with our daughter, Anne-Liis. Our home congregation is Nomme Rahu Lutheran in Tallinn.

I have undergraduate degrees from Tartu University in history (1990) and in theology (2000). I have been in full-time Christian ministry since 1996 as a representative of the Churches Alive International in the Baltic States. Churches Alive's mission is to help local churches in the ministry of intentional discipling and small-group work. In my last year there, I served my home congregation as a youth director.

Since the fall of 2002, I have been a student at AFLTS. After years of training others, it makes me feel good to be back in school, being able to focus on systematic studies again. It has been a good time of fellowship and spiritual growth. There has been good balance in the seminary between studying God's Word and experiencing personally the saving power of the gospel.



Jason Siemens Camrose, Alberta

Turn to page 18 to read about more graduates. One graduate will be featured in the May issue.

Wow is the only word that comes to mind when I think about the journey the Lord has led my family through. Coming from the small town of Camrose, Alberta, Canada, to the bright lights of Minneapolis to embark upon the adventure of a lifetime was a big stretch for us.

Jeanne, my wife, felt so far away from her mom, and our son Austin left his classmates behind in kindergarten. At the age of 9, he has been to three different schools. My parents, David and Kathy Siemens, helped us make the big move to seminary housing. After seeing that we were settled, they returned home, leaving us alone many miles from anything familiar. But we knew this was where God had called us and opened the door for us.

I had felt the call to the ministry, although I didn't know what that would all entail, the night that Christ stepped into my life and saved me. I had lived my life selfishly, only wanting to please the flesh and all its dark lusts and desires. Anything that would bring pleasure was what I wanted. I was engaged and going to pre-marital counseling when the Lord stepped into my life and rescued me from the dark life I was living. Praise the Lord that He would have mercy upon such a wretch as me.

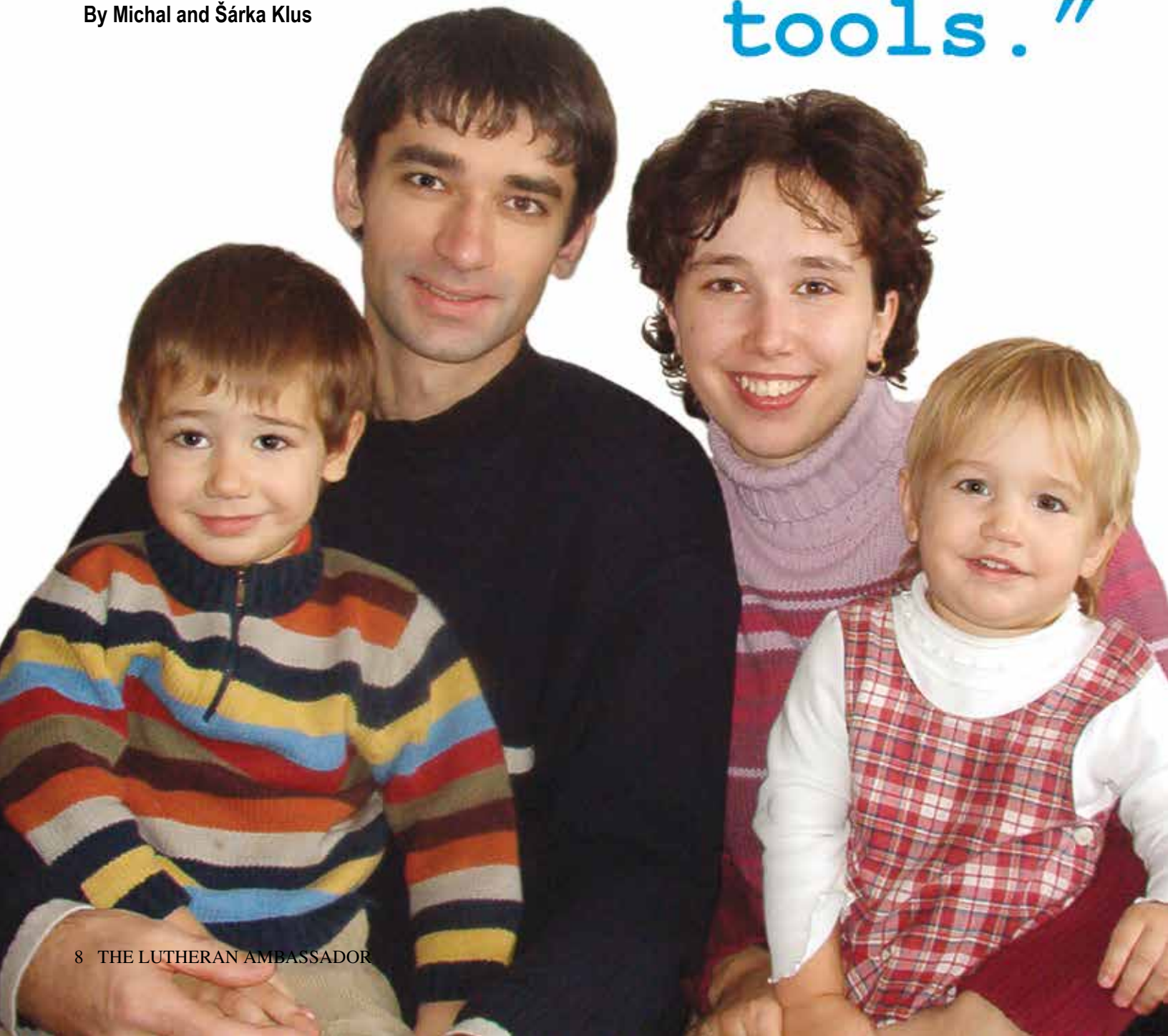
After high school, I started my own business. After seven years of struggling to make it work, I had an accident that left me without most of my right elbow. We were also struggling personally. Our daughter, Brooklyn, had been diagnosed with a terminal disease. The Lord took her home when she was just more than 2 years old. It was a bleak time, and yet the Lord used it to shape me and reaffirm our call to ministry. Praise the Lord He can use a wretch like me.

I had three wonderful years at seminary. I was challenged, shaped and molded as the Lord led me through. I was placed in Helmar, Ill., for my internship.

The greatest blessing for me has been looking back and seeing God's hand in it all. There were times when I was wondering what in the world God was doing to me. Now I see His faithful hand leading and guiding.

"We miss **friends,**
teaching, the campus. But
we brought a lot **home** with
us and it is more than just
memories. We brought the
tools."

By Michal and Šárka Klus



On Sept. 2, 1999, we were sitting in the small kitchen of AFLC headquarters where several AFLC employees, together with Pastor Robert Lee, were enjoying their lunch. With terrible English, shocked by differences in the new world and not sure about our future, we struggled to answer simple questions. It was only the fourth week of our marriage, and we were full of questions and expectations as we appeared in the very heart of the AFLC. This was just the beginning of our experience.

Looking back, it seems to us that everything went so fast. Looking back, it seems that we lived several different lives during those four years.

The first year was spent studying at the Bible school, but also learning English. Even though we were somehow separated from other students, we made some friends. But what influenced us the most was the Bible teaching and the constant encouragement to have personal devotional life. It was a perfect beginning for our marriage. We were everywhere together: at school, at work, at the dorm. There was no way to escape when conflicts appeared. We had just one room for ourselves; even the bathroom we shared with friends from the entire floor.

A time of questioning came when we found out we were expecting a child. We were almost sure that we would pack and go home. And even though we understood that God was calling Michal to the seminary, we did not see how it could happen. But God let us wait. He tested our faith, and, finally, He provided an answer. And as He does most often, He provided answers to prayer through people. Thank you dear friends.

Then the time of seminary studies came — when God taught us the most. It is a blessing to have teachers who teach the inerrant Word of God with such a passion and such convictions. We could write endlessly about the lessons the Holy Spirit taught us through them. We thank them, we thank God for them, and we pray that many more might be as blessed as we were.

This was also a time when new friendships were established. We were amazed that there were some who were willing to invest time in order to be with us. Even though we were so different, even though we had problems communicating and understanding their jokes, even though we never liked football and did not understand politics, they still offered their friendships to us. We thank God for them.

Our last year was again different. We moved from a nice, quiet seminary apartment into a dorm filled with 70 boys. This change meant that we did not receive only theological education, but also practical training. And even though we are not sure if we did what was expected of us, we know that the Lord used this time, and He blessed us through many dif-

ferent students.

And now we are in a different part of the world. Even though we are home in the Czech Republic, we miss a lot of things. We miss friends, teachers, teaching, our American home congregation, the library, and the campus. But we brought a lot home with us, and it is more than just memories. We brought the tools. We brought the tools that we are now using as we serve Trinec congregation in the Czech Republic.

And we are able to confess that the things that we have heard from you, dear AFLC friends, in the presence of many witnesses, we entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. And so each of you who are part of the AFLC and who support the seminary and seminarians with your prayers and your money, each of you was used to strengthen the ministry in one of the most atheistic countries in the world — the Czech Republic.

Michal started as an assistant pastor in the Trinec congregation in July 2003, and on Aug. 17 was ordained. This church is unofficially the largest non-Roman Catholic congregation in the country, and there is plenty to do. Michal focuses on the pre-marital and pre-baptismal counseling. During the summer it was not unusual that we had three weddings and even four baptisms in one weekend.

Both of us are involved in youth group. Here we can see the hunger for God in our young people. Just now we have about 45 young people attending our group. Most of them are from non-Christian families, single-parent families, or the families of alcoholics. They are coming because they are disappointed by their families and are searching for something stable. We are able to share Christ with them. And Christ is doing miracles in their lives. They are excited and are coming to study the Word of God and pray, even though they are facing a lot of opposition in their homes.

Please join us in prayer for our congregation, for the young couples who are coming, and for the teenagers who need to grow in Christ. And thank you, again, for the tools we were able to receive in your church body. God bless you.



*The Kluses now live in Trinec, Czech Republic.
Michal is a 2003 graduate of AFLTS.*

**“We could
write
endlessly
about the
lessons the
Holy Spirit
taught us
through them.”**



HERITAGE HALL

A place
to be
sent from



By Pastor James Johnson



Nearly 25 years ago this September, a new Bible student drove up the hill from East Medicine Lake Boulevard to move into the AFLC Bible school in Plymouth.

Two Christian friends accompanied him to help with the move. As the view of the AFLBS campus came into focus, a simple question came from the friends in the back seat.

"Where's the school?" they asked as they looked at the sparse buildings.

What those friends saw that day is what people have seen for decades.

"This is it," I told them. "It's just a chapel and two dorms."

I was the student. During the next two years, I was changed. And so was my answer to that question. The school is not "here." It's "out there."

I contend that a school is where its teachers are. The Bible school exists where its teachers go, where students carry the baton, where trainees make disciples and serve the Lord. The Bible school is on the mission field. The school is serving congregations. The school is working in youth groups, witnessing on streets, and leading Bible studies. All around the world, the Bible school, in Jesus' name, is a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden.

Last May we dedicated the ground where Heritage Hall was built. In December we dedicated the building to the service of the Lord. As we dedicated these halls, the question we asked was the same my high school friends asked the first time they drove up the hill. "Where's the school?"

Now that the building is in full use, the six classrooms, the library, the 140 students who learn and grow inside, might make it easy to answer the question as I did 25 years ago. It's right here, inside these walls, in this \$3.5 million structure. It's a little easier to drive up the hill and see a school building, a gift from God and the people of the AFLC. You can see it with your own two eyes.

But in a larger sense, to use the words of former American president Abraham Lincoln, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground, this building. We say with the stalwart Lincoln that the brave saints who fought the battles of faith and prayer before us appeared long before we dug into the ground with our shovels. During a prayer time last spring, with 40 students gathered around a campfire on the spot where the front entryway stands, AFLC president Bob Lee reminded us, using words from an author he appreciated, that we "ask the Lord not for a monument to us, but for an instrument for Him."

Jesus said in Matthew 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples."

We say, "Yes, Lord." We commit to the task, expecting nothing in return (see Luke 6:35), except to have a place to pray, a place to study God's Word, a place where Jesus is lifted up so He can draw all men to Himself. A school building dedicated to the study of the Scriptures, it gathers students. We send them out, wherever God wills.

I've been involved with the Bible school since 1980, when I was a first-year student. Ever since I've been involved, classes and students were divided in groups around the campus, one on the first-floor of the women's residence hall, one in the basement of the men's dormitory, one in the chapel basement. Now these students are all together. A huge library, the Francis W. Monseth library, to bring your Bible and find a solid Christian book or two — and get alone with God.

On the fifth day of January, when students walked into Heritage Hall for the first time of regular classes, two women scrambled down the steps with big smiles and wide eyes. "This is way better than I thought," said one.

"I feel like I go to a real school now," said another.

I smiled. They didn't see me. "We have a place to *be*," said the first.

I thanked the Lord in prayer. For now, it's a place to be. But soon, for both of those women students, it will be a place from which to go.

When that time comes, for those two, and the 42 who graduate this year, and the 62 who graduate next year, and the 202 who come and go into its classrooms in the near future, I pray that we can stand here, at 3134 E. Medicine Lake Boulevard, see the disciples, and ask: "Where's the school?"

"Not here," I will say. "But there."

Where God sends His workers into the harvest. Where the Word of God is living and active, sharper than a two-edged sword.

Where the seeds are transplanted from Heritage Hall to the rest of the world.



Johnson has served as the dean of AFLBS since 1996.

I thanked the Lord in prayer. For now, it's a place to be. But soon, for both of those women students, it will be a place from which to go.

BRAZIL

MTI internship



By Jeremy Vance



We had done it. We had actually passed our first test upon entering Brazil for our internship. It was a tough one, and the outcome was uncertain; yet, we had pulled it off. With our limited skills in Spanish and Portuguese, Dave Kennedy and I had been able to switch airplanes in São Paulo. Only once we had arrived at the airport did we know for certain that our final destination to Curitiba and the Abel's home was assured.

When I had learned that Dave and I were headed to Brazil, it took me a little bit of time to process it as I had been down there already on a FLY Team in 1992. Yet, I was to realize that a better place could have not been chosen for me to spend my time.

Dave and I had been sent to Brazil as part of the Ministry Training Institute's internship program. As we had chosen the missions track, we had already spent several months studying about missionary service, cross-cultural experience, and God's plan for missions. By the time February came around, we were in place to put all that training into action on the mission field.

The purpose of our internship was to give us an in-depth view of missionary life and service on the mission field. It was to stretch us, and we were to be like Gumby, the term we learned in class that was synonymous with flexibility. We learned to be flexible in a situation where I had caused two flat tires in Pastor John Abel's station wagon by driving over a pothole that was a lot larger and deeper up close than it was far away. We learned to be flexible with our time as we waited for that to get repaired.

An area that I was specifically stretched in was in ministry. I did not have a whole lot of experience with youth work up to this point, and yet three times a week I got on a bus headed to the Amecam program. Amecam is a government facility run by Christian Brazilians, and the program teaches work skills such as barbering, sewing and computer work to youths of Campo Mourão. These are the youths who cannot make it anywhere else. Often their only choices left are either Amecam or jail. Working at Amecam ended up being a highlight of my internship. The youths were not so far off from the kids I have worked with in the inner city of Minneapolis. They struggle with fear, depression and broken relationships. Beginning relationships with them was not difficult for Dave or me.

A few opportunities did open up for us to share our faith with the teens there, and I pray that seeds were planted. It was really hard to leave as I had so much that I wanted to share with them about having a relationship with Jesus Christ. The time was so short. Please pray for those youths and the Brazilian brothers and sisters working with them.

Dave and I also worked with the children at the Miriam Infant Home. We were scheduled to go there about two times a week to play with the children from mid-morning until lunchtime. We were able to choose between the volleyball/soccer court or climbing the trees and eating the fruit. Children around the world are the same anywhere else. If they do not know you, they test your limits. So Dave and I spent some time chasing the children or putting them in time-outs. Couple that with a limit on our language skills and I think you get the picture. Yet, the rewards are the same as well. We got to see the smiles, experience the hugs, and hear the children yell, "*chio, chio*" (uncle) when we would arrive.

After each week learning how to minister to different groups of people, we would spend some time with missionary

Connely Dyrud each Saturday going over Scripture and our experiences during the week. He would share with us about various needs in Brazil and train us from his experiences as a missionary. We were also given some assignments with a book and some Scripture passages. One thing that Pastor Dyrud impressed upon us is the need in Brazil for more missionaries. Brazil is so large and in such a need that we must "pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out work-



ers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:38 NAS).

When it came time to leave Brazil, the internship had become more than schooling. It was more than learning about missions work and studying a language. It saddened me that I had to leave behind opportunities to minister and reach out to people. Yet, as I look back on it now, I know that I should not look back on the opportunities lost over there but look to what opportunities I have today to reach out and minister to the people around me.



Jeremy Vance graduated from the MTI program in 2003. He is currently a part-time student at the Free Lutheran Seminary.

why this WASTE?

[Stewardship]

Have you ever looked at all of the questions surrounding the passion story of the Lord Jesus Christ? God's Word contains all the answers we need. And in Matthew 26:6-13, Jesus answers my questions about personal stewardship.

The Lord Jesus had entered Jerusalem with great celebration. The streets were lined with people praising God and honoring Christ with phrases such as, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" and "Hosanna in the highest!" (Matthew 21:9).

During that week a dinner was held in Jesus' honor. He was being praised and thanked for two specific things he had done: the raising of Lazarus from the dead and the cleansing of Simon the leper. During the celebration a very unique thing took place. Mary (John 12:3) took a very expensive container of perfume and applied it to Jesus' head and feet, and wiped it with her hair. The entire house was filled with the fragrance.

Jesus accepted this very precious gift as an act of humility and love. The disciples did not understand what had taken place, and they became indignant. They asked Jesus quite plainly, "Why this waste?" They began to reason that the perfume could have been sold and the money given to the poor. Many of us would agree with the disciples. It was unlike Jesus. He gave to others constantly. He healed many who had sickness and disease. Now, the disciples were seeing a different side of their master.

Mary did not even know the depth or purpose of her gift. She simply gave from her heart. Jesus reminded the disciples that they would always have opportunity to minister to the poor, yet He did not minimize their many sorrows and needs. In love, Jesus reminded the disciples that His time with them was very short. He told them that Mary had

anointed him to prepare his body for burial. In a few short hours He would be brutally beaten, scourged, spit on, mocked, nailed to a cross and crucified.

In his film, "The Passion of the Christ," Mel Gibson has helped me visualize, again, the depth of Jesus' sacrifice. Jesus died for me. He died in my place. He died as the complete payment for all my sins. The cruelty of a Roman cross brought God's perfect love. He rose again to show the world that Satan had no control over him. The grave could not contain Him. Death has lost its sting forever for all who come to Jesus.

To attempt to pay for such a gift would be a mockery to what God has done. Mary's gift was fitting for the Savior. She humbled herself and gave freely.

Is God asking you to give an expensive gift? Give as the Lord leads you. Give to your local church as a gift to Jesus, for the local congregation is the body of Christ. When you give, let go of your gift. Is there a special gift of time, talent or finances that God would like you to give? The AFLC does not demand that churches provide a portion of their church offerings for the common work of the church at large. Specific projects are often listed in reports for your prayer support, so that you might be aware of what is happening in our church body and for you to consider giving to further the work of Jesus Christ.



— Pastor D. Mark Antal
Victory Free Lutheran, Park River, N.D.
Grace Free Lutheran, Edinburg, N.D.

Brazil's new Springtime

The Lutheran Free Church is thriving and growing in Brazil. The Brazil Annual Conference was held Jan. 23-25 at a Bible camp just outside of the city of Londrina. It was evident by the spirited worship that the people of Brazil have been deeply touched by the gospel. Many whole families attended the conference to be refreshed by the preaching of God's Word and fellowship among loving brothers and sisters in the Lord. The comment was made at the first worship service that the main purpose of the conference was spiritual renewal and that business would take second place.



Del Palmer

The highlight of the conference was the dedication of the new Primavera Church in Londrina. Primavera is a cooperative project between the AFLC in the U.S. and the AFLC of Brazil to build one new church in Brazil every year. The agreement means the Brazilians purchase the land for a church building and supply the pastor. Americans provide \$10,000 for the church building.

At the dedication of this first building the comment was made, "This is the first new church in the Brazilian AFLC since Campo Grande started."

This project has given the Brazilian church a real boost. A goal of having 40 tithing churches by 2019 has been set. Brazilians now believe that this can be possible if each pastor and missionary starts two new churches in the next 15 years.

The word *primavera* means springtime in Portuguese, and the Primavera project has brought a new springtime to the Brazilian church. Primavera is also the name of a beautiful flower in Brazil. May this project bring the lasting fragrance of Christ to many.

Palmer serves as director of AFLC World Missions. He also serves Faith Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn.



Attendees of the 2004 Brazil Annual Conference took part in the dedication of the Primavera Church located in Londrina.



Members of the AFLC's Northwestern Minnesota District were major sponsors of the Primavera Project, giving \$10,000 to build the church building in Londrina.

INDIA'S CROWDS

By Pastor Craig Johnson

When I stepped out of the airport in Chennai, India, late in the evening on Jan. 29 I was met by a crowd. It was an appropriate way to begin my trip to this nation of 1 billion people.

You often encounter a crowd in India.

The AFLC of India is headquartered in the city of Chirala in the state of Andhra Pradesh. It has 25 congregations along with some areas where new congregations are being planted. In Chirala it operates a school the equivalent of our elementary and middle schools, with 250 students. The president of the church body is Pastor D. Luther Sastry.

During the first week of February pastors, gospel workers and Bible women from the various AFLC India congregations gathered in Chirala for a training seminar. Pastor Doug Wagley of Spokane, Wash., taught a class on the life of the Apostle Paul; Pastor David Wold of Pipestone, Minn., taught on Bible study methods; and I taught on free and living congregations.

These church leaders have had limited opportunity for biblical education and training. They serve the Lord while facing opposition, having limited resources, but surrounded by crowds of people who don't know Jesus.

On the weekends and some evenings we visited congregations in Chirala and in area villages. Often the AFLC congregation was the only Christian work in the area. Sometimes the congregation had a building. Sometimes it was a simple hut. Other times we met on the road or on some other patch of ground.

The congregations with a building often had a speaker on a pole outside. The buildings were small and there was no need for a speaker inside. Activity would start with music being sung or played over the speaker so that the village would know a worship service was begin-

ning. When it appeared most had arrived, one of us would preach, and our messages would be translated into Telugu, the language of that part of India.

At the conclusion of the services many would come and ask for prayer for physical or spiritual needs. Often because of the language barrier I didn't know exactly what the need was, but I could still pray for them with confidence that God knows.

The ones seeking prayer were an indication of the many hurting people in the land. Medical care is sorely lacking for those who are poor and live in the villages of India. Dr. Anand Kumar is a medical doctor and church planter who works with the AFLC India in the city of Piler. During my time in India I visited Piler and saw the work going on there. I'll be reporting more on that in a future article.

My time in India made me think of Matthew 9:35-36: "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

Jesus is visiting towns and villages in India today. One evening we went down a rough road to a rather remote village. There the "Jesus" film was being shown on the side of a building. It was a reminder of how the Lord is interested in each village and each soul, no matter how remote the place may seem.

The Christians in India are often harassed and helpless. They are harassed by the difficulties of life and often by Hindus who do not want the good news of Jesus proclaimed. I heard of Christian workers being threatened and church services being disrupted. In a number of states



in India, anti-conversion laws have been passed making it illegal to encourage someone to convert to a different religion. In some states, before a person changes religions the law says they must receive permission from the government. Baptisms are sometimes looked at as illegal acts.

Jesus had compassion on the crowds of His day, just as He has compassion on the crowds of India. He also made a declaration that applies to India today: "Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field'" (Matthew 9:37-38).

The harvest is plentiful in India. Many are interested and searching. They are looking for something to give them hope.

The workers are few. One pastor told of being the one pastor of the only Christian church in his village of 800 homes. Others are in similar situations or surrounded by even greater numbers of unreached people. The government does not allow missionaries from other countries to come in, so this small number of Christian workers have a huge harvest field to work in. I encourage you to be in prayer for our brothers and sisters in India.

Jesus saw the crowds and their great needs, but He did not despair. Instead, His words provide hope and optimism. "The harvest is plentiful." The potential exists for many to come to Christ. That is most certainly the case in India. Many are coming now, and we may see greater things in the days ahead.

Often there seems to be times when God does a special work in a nation. The good news of Jesus spreads like wildfire and large numbers of lives are transformed. A time like that may soon be coming to the great nation of India.



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT:

Craig Johnson sits with a group of children during a Sunday school class in Chirala.

A teacher leads a class at St. Paul's Lutheran School in Chirala.

A crowd starts to gather outside a place of worship in one of the villages.

A group of men stand on the site of a future church in a village near Piler.

Two young girls attend St. Paul's Lutheran School.

Graduating Seminarists

Karl Anderson St. James, Minn.



I was born in 1960 to James and Ardith Anderson. During high school, I was very active in youth group activities at Redeemer Lutheran in Fridley, Minn. Building on that experience, I enrolled in a missions training course after graduation. Even then, I felt God's call on my life, though at that time I felt I would be better suited for a ministry support position than teaching and preaching. After a time of intense training with Youth With A Mission (YWAM) in Washington, California and Texas, I returned to Minnesota to continue my education.

Over the next four years I dabbled in numerous fields, including training in aircraft mechanics and small business management. During that time I also struggled with my faith, questioning my worthiness before God. I felt like I had burned out trying to prove to God I was good enough.

In the summer of 1985, I began meeting with a mature Christian who shared Scripture and prayed with me during weekly meetings. I came to realize that God knew I wasn't worthy of His love, but Jesus had been good on my behalf. His church had a vision of training ordinary Christians to work overseas in business, and I soon agreed to work with them in England. After serving two years in London, I moved back to a small town in Minnesota. Debbie Gerboth and I were

married in 1993. We now have three daughters, Kaelyn (8), Sarah (6), and Leona, who was born in February.

Shortly after returning to Minnesota, a co-worker invited me to attend a Bible study at Hosanna Free Lutheran in St. James, Minn. There, I found a wonderful fellowship. The Word of God was honored and salvation by faith in Jesus Christ was proclaimed. Hosanna became my church home for the next 12 years. Sensing God's call to train for ministry, we moved to the AFLC campus in Plymouth, Minn., where I started seminary in 2000.

Last summer, we moved to the southeast corner of South Dakota to complete an internship at Trondhjem Lutheran Church in rural Volin. This has been a great year of ministry and learning as we prepare for whatever God has in store for us down the road.

During all this time, I have not been able to escape God's call to teach and preach the Word. I come away from seminary more convinced than ever of the need to stand upon the truth of God's Word.

Philemon Ngare Nairobi, Kenya

I was born on Sept. 10, 1970, in Nyanza Province of Kenya to Martin and Esther Ngare. My wife, Eva's, maiden name is Dahlback. We have been blessed to have two children: Rachel Tumaini (2) and Julia Amani (an infant). I was baptized and confirmed into the fellowship of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya [ELCK]. During my teen years I came to a basic understanding of Christian faith through participation in youth camps and Bible studies. I became an active member of the Christian Students' Movement in my high school, and it was during this time when I felt God's challenge and calling upon my life and heart. I wanted to live for Him and serve Him for the rest of my life.

During the early part of the 1990s, upon graduation from high school, I volunteered as a youth worker with the Kibera Lutheran parish in Nairobi. From 1993 to 1998 I attend the Matongo Lutheran Theological College, after which I was ordained and served in the ELCK Nairobi as a youth minister until 2000.

The Lord led me to AFLTS with the hope and prayer of being better and further equipped for continued ministry in Kenya. And I would most certainly say that my

hopes toward that end were blessedly met. Furthermore, God has taught me so much through the regular classes and times of fellowship and prayer. I would like to mention a few of them.

First, the Church of Christ Jesus is truly beyond the human boundaries that we have here. I say so because at AFLTS I was privileged to kneel in prayer and study the Bible daily in a meaningful way with many fellow sinners and saints from different parts



Concluded on page 19

God's Word repeatedly encourages us to trust in Him. Why can we put our trust in God? First, God is holy. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty" (Isaiah 6:3). The idea of holiness should attract us because God's holiness means that He is pure and absolutely reliable. More, we can put our trust in God because of His ability and desire to support those who serve Him. His perfect justice and wisdom guide the way He acts, and His love motivates Him to act (I John 4:8).

Growing up in a remote area of Uganda in the late 1970s, little did I know that I would grow up to be a pastor. My parents were humble, ordinary people and not anywhere near rich; but they loved and trusted the Lord.

By the time I was 10 in 1981, I had started looking after cattle. But that did not deny me education. Normally, government schools are church-founded, so we had an Anglican Church school. I grew up beating the drum and calling people to Sunday services at the church where I was baptized in 1976. This is when I started sensing God's call to the ministry.

As I grew up, the Lord helped me as I tried to embrace Christ more in my life. We had a special program of Scripture union among fellow students, and my desire grew more during these Scriptural meetings. Every program in the fellowship gave me more courage to witness and to praise Him.

After completing St. James Secondary School in Jinja, I attended a teacher training college. It was there that I met my wife, Alice Naigaga, who was in the same program. God has since blessed us with a bright son, Derick Natema, who turned 3 this spring.

James Musenze Mokono, Uganda

Until August 2001, I had never stepped onto a plane. That afternoon, I smiled as I witnessed one of the airport staff at Entebbe, Uganda, putting a neat stamp in one of my passport's crisp pages, allowing me to exit the country and come to America and study theology. The supreme power of God was now in motion, and God was acting. Praise God!



I have been so blessed to attend AFLTS. At the seminary, God has humbled me and shaped me, especially with the teaching of Jesus as the only way to salvation. I will cherish the memories that have been created during my three years here, which has also been a time of growth.

I pray that as I prepare to go back to Africa, I will continue leaning on Jesus and trusting Him as I serve in the Lutheran Church of Uganda. "Do not put your trust in the nobles nor in the son of earthly man, to whom no salvation belongs," wrote the psalmist (146:3). This inspired statement helps me acknowledge that Jesus is the Savior in whom we should trust.

Philemon Ngare

of the world.

Second, I was blessed through various classes that I took. I came to learn of various false teachings and threats to the biblical and ethical teachings of the Judeo-Christian faith, both within the church circles and the world. I have been somewhat reminded of the true steadfastness and faithfulness that God requires of those who name His name in our present world, even though it is so increasingly turning against God and the church in a number of ways.

Finally, I have learned during my study at the seminary that Scripture is such a rich and deep gem that requires much patience, faithfulness and consistency in studying it if we are to benefit from its grace and power for this life and eternity.

I give praise and thanks to our Lord and Savior for all the professors, individuals and congregations whose prayers and support have enabled me to experience such tremendous growth in the grace and Word of God through Bible-centered theological teachings at AFLTS. Hebrews 2:3-4. God bless and long live AFLTS! Amen.

Volunteers needed

AFLC Schools and FLAPS are jointly asking for volunteers to help refurbish the chapel building and dorm buildings on the AFLC Schools campus in Plymouth, Minn.

Several dates have been set aside for these work groups to organize on campus. They include June 1-12, July 15-17 and July 22-24.

If you are available to work during these days, please call Lavon Bohling with FLAPS at (763) 545-5631. Or email FLAPS at flaps@aflc.org.

HELPING prepare STUDENTS

When I was a student at AFLBS in the 1970s, the campus consisted of two dorm buildings (the men's dorm was new) and the chapel/dining room building. Changes soon came with an administration building in the early 1990s and much-needed seminary housing in the late 1990s. The newest building, Heritage Hall, was dedicated last December.

When I drove onto campus last fall to help my daughter move in, I was shocked to see the location of Heritage Hall. To my untrained eye, it seemed to be in the wrong spot. While touring the new building during the dedication weekend, I went upstairs to the library and realized that despite all the changes, the spectacular view of Medicine Lake is still there. But most important, the view of the Bible as God's inerrant Word is still alive and active in the classrooms of AFLBS, new and old. From these classrooms, God's Word has been taken all over the United States and overseas through the words and lives of AFLBS alumni.

The WMF has been privileged to be the channel through which more than \$20,000 has been donated for



AFLBS senior Brett Boe studies for mid-term exams in the upper level commons area of Heritage Hall. The furniture was purchased by the WMF through gifts given to furnish the new student center.

furnishing Heritage Hall. God has moved the hearts of many women to share what He has entrusted to them. These gifts, in turn, help furnish a facility for the training of young men and women to love and serve the Lord. May we be faithful to daily lift the teachers and students of our schools to God's throne in our prayers. By the grace of God, we have thankful hearts for the new building God has provided, but even more, for the work He is doing there.

— Lynn Wellumson, WMF treasurer
Emmanuel Free Lutheran
Williston, N.D.

Equipment needed

Donations sought for new library

The staff of AFLBS and the Francis W. Monseth Library thank the WMF for providing furniture in the library for students' use. Several needs, however, still exist, totalling \$6,340. These needs include:

- Three CPUs: \$300 each
- Two magazine shelves: \$550 each
- Book return cart: \$800
- Three tables: \$220 each
- Four computer desks: \$200 each
- 300 bookends: \$480 total
- TV and cart for A/V room: \$400
- Four end tables: \$50 each
- 20 upright chairs: \$50 each

If you can provide for any of these needs, please contact Esther Moberg, librarian, at (763) 412-2028.

Monseth readies for evangelism forum

Dr. Francis Monseth, AFLTS dean, has been selected to participate in the 2004 Forum for World Evangelization. The conference will be Sept. 29-Oct. 5 in Bangkok, Thailand. The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, which is sponsoring the forum, is bringing together 1,250 representatives from around the world to examine the trends and needs in evangelism. In response, the representatives will work to develop specific action plans for churches to consider as they seek to address challenging evangelism issues confronting them locally and globally.

Teams of 30 to 70 people will address 24 specific issues. Each group will include theologians, pastors, researchers, educators, evangelists, as well as leaders among denominations, mission agencies and prayer movements. Dr. Monseth has been assigned to a study group focusing on the evangelizing of Muslims.

Monseth submitted an application to the LCWE selection committee at the request of the AFLC Commission on Evangelism. To help support Monseth in this trip, please contact Pastor Jim Rasmussen, director of the AFLC Evangelism Department at (763) 545-5631.

Dell Lutheran Frost, Minn.

Dell Lutheran of rural Frost, Minn., began as Blue Earth Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church. It was officially organized in 1861 as the first Lutheran congregation in Faribault County. The village that all the locals called Dell lay alongside the Blue Earth River and included a two-room school house, general store (which still operated into the 1950s), the church, parsonage, and a number of farms and homes nearby. The longstanding wood-frame church building was lost in July 1976 to a lightning strike and fire. Up from the ashes rose a new building, one level without steps, that has served well for worship and ministry.

Dell Lutheran has a history of standing on the solid rock of God's Word as inerrant and infallible. The congregation organized under the banner of the Norwegian Synod, then moved to the United Norwegian Church of America. From there it joined the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the American Lutheran Church, the American Association of Lutheran Churches, and now, finally, to our home in the AFLC.

The AFLC's foundation on the Word, living faith, and free congregations together in mission has drawn Dell



Dell Lutheran, rural Frost, Minn., was welcomed into the AFLC in January. The church is served by Pastor Joe Ocker, who was approved for the AFLC fellowship roster.

Lutheran happily to this new affiliation.

The congregation of 213 continues steady growth in a rural setting. The Lord is sending folks to Dell because of our lively worship, solid Bible foundation and heart for missions. Dell has been served for more than five years by Pastor Joe Ocker, and for more than a year by youth director Dan Norman. The people of Dell are excited about new ministry and fellowship opportunities with the AFLC.

— Pastor Joe Ocker

Volunteers help bring new church to life

Mesa church to dedicate newly remodeled building with open house



In eight weeks, a former sewer plant was remodeled into a worship center for Calvary Free Lutheran, with the help of volunteers from AFLC congregations in Canada, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota and the West Coast. More than 160 people gathered on Feb. 22 for the first service in the new sanctuary. The congregation is planning a week of special events to commemorate the dedication of the building, starting March 24. A dedication service has been scheduled for March 28, with Pastor Paul Nash officiating.



People and Places

Pastor James Vineyard, Pleasanton, Texas, has resigned as pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran, Pleasanton. His future plans are not finalized.

Pastor Ron Pulsher, Rice Free Lutheran, Bagley, Minn., was approved by members of the Coordinating Committee for the regular clergy roster of the AFLC pastors. He had previously been on the fellowship roster.

Correction: The name of a hotel and its phone number were listed incorrectly on the conference registration page in the March issue. Osceola Valley Inn should have been listed as River Valley Inn with the phone number: (715) 294-4060.

Pastor Kevin Olson, AFLC Youth Ministries director, and his family are preparing for a nine-month teaching sabbatical to Tanzania. While there, Olson will teach at Waama Bible School, located in the Mbulu District, where students are trained as lay pastors and leaders in their churches. Please pray for the Olson family as they prepare to leave in September, for money to fund the trip and for the work of the Bible school. The Olsons will return to the United States in May 2005.

Pastor Steve Odegaard was installed as pastor of Calvary Lutheran, Everett, Wash., on Feb. 8. AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee officiated at the service.

Darwin and MaryAnn Jackson, AFLC missionaries on loan to World Mission Prayer League, have returned to Mexico following a term in Nogales, Ariz. They are now located in Mazatlan, where they are training leaders in evangelism.

WMF memorials — February

Pearl Decker, Morris, Ill.
Loretta McClain, Webster, S.D.
Myrtle Larson, Webster
Mildred Bjornson, Valley City, N.D.
Elsie Rue, Argyle, Minn.
Elva Ulven, Tioga, N.D.
Verna Drovdal, Webster

AFLC memorials — February

AFLBS	<i>phine Bohling,</i>
<i>Loretta McClain, Myrtle</i>	<i>Clarence Gerdeen</i>
<i>Tungseth, Alan Jacobson</i>	Vision 2004
AFLTS	<i>Emma Winther, Orlie Moland,</i>
<i>Clarence Gerdeen</i>	<i>Mary Jane Crawford, Eileen</i>
FLAPS	<i>Fuglesten, Mabel Ness, Sander</i>
<i>Josephine Bohling (2),</i>	<i>Horn, Elyria Hovey, Ethel</i>
<i>Robert Olson</i>	<i>Knudsvig, Pastor Chris</i>
General Fund	<i>Oswood, Lillian Bergan</i>
<i>Rachel Jordhiem</i>	World Missions
Home Missions	<i>Vance Goodfellow, Josephine</i>
<i>Vance Goodfellow, Pastor Chris</i>	<i>Bohling, Pastor Vince Will,</i>
<i>Oswood, Josephine Bohling</i>	<i>David Anderson</i>
Parish Education	Youth Ministries
<i>Pastor Chris Oswood, Jose-</i>	<i>Mary Crawford</i>

Tennessee church dedicates new building

Members of Ebenezer Free Lutheran, a new Home Missions church located in Humboldt, Tenn., dedicated a new worship building on Feb. 29. Located in a former strip mall, the new church was the site of the dedication service with Pastor Paul Nash, Home Missions director, and Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC vice president, officiating. The church is being served on a temporary basis by Pastor Orville Hiepler, Fallbrook, Calif.



Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC vice president; Larry McKibben, steering committee chairman; Pastor Paul Nash, Home Missions director; Carl Busse, worship leader; and Pastor Orville Hiepler stand at the front of the new sanctuary.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (2 month) – January 1 - February 29, 2004

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN FEBRUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$288,771	\$22,192.03	\$50,677.98	18
Youth Ministries . . .	54,024	7,137.01	12,919.32	24
Parish Education . . .	82,062	5,827.58	9,349.23	11
Seminary	154,195	8,248.13	33,346.75	22
Bible School	264,089	16,722.05	29,631.43	11
Home Missions	287,115	14,156.87	38,287.14	13
Church Extension . . .	24,576	639.59	1,029.36	4
World Missions	256,326	14,437.84	26,857.04	10
Personal Support . . .	328,311	30,629.38	58,440.87	18
TOTALS	\$1,739,469	\$119,990.48	\$260,539.12	15
TOTALS 2003	\$1,740,325	\$126,139.33	\$264,162.36	15

Goal 17%

The Evangelism Department received \$6,287.75 in February.
The office of director of Development received \$25 in February.

A sense of perspective

[Editorial]

In the side mirrors of cars it often says, “Objects may be closer than they appear.” It would be appropriate for life to often come with a label attached saying, “Things may not be as important as they appear.”

I spent two weeks in India the end of January and first part of February. Time in another part of



Craig Johnson

the world can help a person improve his or her sense of perspective. The importance of some things diminishes when compared to the challenges being faced by people in parts of the world like India.

Here, it could be embarrassing if there isn't enough food at the church potluck for people to go through the line a third time. Someone might mutter if we run out of cookies during coffee time after church. Some people in the world, however, are quite pleased if they get one helping of rice.

A child who screams while being baptized bothers some. Others get upset at the family member who they don't think is dressed up enough when he comes to the baptism. In India, some have been arrested for having baptisms.

Parents in the U.S. often wrestle with which option to take in regards to their child's education: public or private schools, or some of the abundant home school material that is available. In some Indian villages, families wish for one truly viable option.

Sometimes in this country, zoning laws have restricted where a

church can build or the way in which they are allowed to expand their facility. Church members complain about what they consider to be government oppression. In some parts of the world Christian church buildings are burned to the ground by those who oppose the work, and the government does nothing about it.

Sometimes in the U.S., authorities have said religious documents or objects cannot be displayed on public property in a certain way. Cries of persecution have rung out. In some parts of the world the Christians would be happy if they could legally display Christian symbols on private property. In India anti-conversion laws exist in various states. People are tossed in jail or some have been killed for encouraging faith in Jesus. That is persecution.

Going to India has caused me to look a little differently on some of the things we often view as challenges and difficulties. Some folks in India would gladly trade problems with us. They would probably find the things we get upset about strange. They would maybe wonder why we spend so much time discussing and worrying about trivial matters.

I was in churches where sound system inadequacies was not an issue. They were more concerned about the fact you could see the sky through holes in the roof and the building's lack of walls. Some in the world don't worry about how long the pastor's sermon might be on Sunday. They are more concerned with if their pastor will be arrested before Sunday comes.

We often complain and worry about relatively minor things, and fail to give thanks for major bless-

We often complain and worry about relatively minor things.

ings God has given us.

Another thing that has caused me to think about perspective was seeing the movie, “The Passion of the Christ.” After seeing it I was reminded of the verses that say, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:2-3, NIV).

Jesus had a proper perspective. He saw our great need. He had a heart full of love. He saw “the joy set before Him,” and so He endured the cross.

We can endure the minor and the major challenges when we have the right perspective. We fix our eyes on Jesus who loved us so much He went to the cross and gave His life to pay for our sins. Proclaiming the message of the cross is what matters. Living with our focus on Christ and the cross is of the utmost importance. We do as the chorus of the hymn says, “Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.”

[ARC]



Wendy Westlake
Amery Free
Lutheran,
Amery, Wis.

“I believe God is calling His church to step up and be ready for the challenges and opportunities of today.”

Prepared to serve

Something's going on. Does anyone else feel this way? The news is filled with stories about terrorism, national security, ordination of gay ministers and gay marriage. And then we have a movie released, “The Passion of the Christ,” produced by one of Hollywood's biggest stars. It's causing a huge stir and generating all kinds of talk about Jesus. These are very interesting times. Times of opportunity. I believe God is calling His church to step up and be ready for the challenges and opportunities of today.

I'm not the only one who feels this way. Today my pastor, David Johnson, showed up for Sunday morning worship in his sweats. He's starting a sermon series entitled, “Preparing for Battle.” His point? We need to be well prepared and trained for today and the times ahead. Yes, we need to study God's Word diligently. Not just for the sake of learning, but because we have a call to action.

I recently received a call to action. Several months ago a man in our church stood up and announced the need for people to help with the jail ministry at Balsam Lake, Wis. Immediately I felt uncomfortable. All kinds of excuses came to mind. Yet I knew it was something God wanted me to do. I didn't feel any better about it when we went through the orientation required by the jail. Heavy metal doors closed behind us as we moved from one section of the jail to the next. The lighting grew very dim as we reached the central control area. This security measure keeps the prisoners in their brightly lit cells from seeing through the one-way glass. The overall effect added to

the gloominess of the jail. It was intimidating at first, but that feeling didn't last long.

You know what made the difference? I met women who were hungry for the truth of the Word. Women who were desperate for change. Many of these women have experienced broken relationships, problems with their families, drug addiction and physical abuse, and some are facing serious prison time. They know where their old way of life leads, and they want a new one. Some are more skeptical. They have questions and they're not at all sure that we “religious freaks” have the answers. We've had some interesting conversations about some difficult topics.

It's during these times that I'm so grateful for my training at Bible school. The training in the Word there really established a base of Scripture knowledge in my life. I remember Pastor Phil Haugen patiently and thoroughly explaining Paul's letters. I can hear him saying, “This statement is law,” and in another passage, “This statement is gospel.” I had the opportunity to talk to a group of inmates about this very concept: how the law condemns and brings us to our knees, and the beauty of the gospel that cleanses us.

“I've never heard that!” one woman exclaimed. “It's so simple.”

Our schools have the awesome responsibility to train young people for service. The students and faculty need our prayers. As we pray for them, let's remember that we have all received a call to action. We can't slack off in our Scripture reading and study. We're in a battle.