

THE LUTHERAN **AMBASSADOR**

APRIL 2005

A group of students, mostly men, are walking on a wide, light-colored paved sidewalk. They are dressed in casual attire, including blue and maroon sweatshirts and light-colored pants. In the background, there is a large, multi-story building with a tan facade and several windows. The scene is outdoors, and the lighting suggests it might be late afternoon or early morning.

the **CALL**

**Bible school and seminary students
answer the need for harvest workers**

“**T**he Bible, without the Holy Spirit, is like a sundial by moonlight,” said poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Have you ever felt like you’re reading your Bible by moonlight? The verses you read seem irrelevant, dry, or too profound to grasp? I know I have. Without the Holy Spirit, that would sadly be our perpetual condition.

It is impossible to understand and respond to spiritual truths of God’s Word with our mortal mind. In the flesh, my mind won’t focus, my will is resistant, and my heart is hard. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can He know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Corinthians 2:14).

That’s why, after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the disciples were told to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. “He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

If we have been grafted, by faith, into Christ, we have a Teacher to shine the floodlight of spiritual understanding on what we read. “When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13).

What a promise. Just think what it means! God has sent the Holy Spirit to unlock the precious intricacies of His Word and to empower us to respond with love. Yet how many times in the past has my Scripture reading or time spent hearing it taught been less than transforming because I failed to ask the Holy Spirit to open my heart? I am reproved by James 4:2, “Ye have not because ye ask

not.”

Scripture itself, especially the Psalms, abounds with examples of faithful believers who asked God to open their hearts to receive and obey His Word. I wrote many of these prayers out on a little paper I keep bookmarked in my Bible, like Psalm 119:18, 133; Job 34:32; Luke 1:38; Matthew 20:32-33. I encourage you to look for similar verses. Seeing these passages prompts me to gaze upward before I look downward at my Bible pages.

O. Hallesby wrote, “It is easy for you to think that it is you who are to strive in one way or another to draw spiritual nourishment from that which you read ... Remember that He must perform a miracle every time you read the Bible if it is to become bread unto your soul.” This miracle should be our daily petition, not just for ourselves, but on behalf of our pastor, our Bible school and seminary students. Anytime we open our Bible we are equally dependent on the Holy Spirit.

Our prayers don’t have to be fancy, just asked in faith. “Dear Lord, I’m desperate for You to open Your Word. Strengthen me to apply whatever you show me. Give me a hunger and thirst for righteousness. Send your Holy Spirit to open my eyes.”

How graciously the Spirit opens the Word and guides us in spiritual truths when we first come to Him. We can always anticipate that God hears and answers our prayer.

— Christie Ballmann
Word of Truth Free Lutheran
Glen Rose, Texas

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THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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We equip people here to be stronger in the faith, but we're also called to send them out into the world.

— Robert Lewis

The gospel life isn't something we learn about and then put together with instructions from the manufacturer; it's something we become as God does his work of creation and salvation in us and as we accustom ourselves to a life of belief and obedience and prayer.

— Eugene H. Peterson
“Leap Over a Wall”

Two years after the Seminary was started, the Bible school came into being. It had been talked about at every annual conference, and now what had seemed to be an impossibility became a reality.

— Pastor Trygve Dahle
“A Pioneer Church Family”
(The autobiography of Pastor Dahle, a key figure in the early days of the AFLC. The book was published in 2004 by Mercy and Truth Publishers.)

We started with 13 students the first year. There was much enthusiasm for the Bible school and the people rallied to support it. God had answered our prayers; we now had a Bible school.

— Pastor Trygve Dahle
“A Pioneer Church Family”



JESUS

CROSS

BIBLE

— By Pastor James L. Johnson

A few years back at an international Bible school conference I was attending, I visited with three teachers from Bible schools in Germany, Norway and Finland. We sat around a lunch table and enjoyed a friendly conversation. Out of curiosity, I asked these leaders what the major emphases of their schools were.

The German brother held his hand at forehead level and started stating priorities in order, dropping his hand six inches with each description.

“First the Bible, then Luther, then Pietism,” said the German pastor.

The Norwegian dean shook his head, raising and dropping his hand with each description. “The Bible, then Pietism, then Luther,” he said.

The Finnish teacher corrected them both. “No, the Bible, revival, then *mission!*” he said. At the word “mission,” the Finn, a warm teacher named Tapani, squeezed his hand into a fist, and finalized the conversation with a huge smile.

I smiled, too. I don’t think my Finnish friend meant to eliminate Martin Luther from the top three. I knew his heart. But his point was clear. Bible schools are not about theology alone, but about mission, discipleship,

reaching souls for the Lord.

I have long since thought about that conversation. As dean of a Bible school for our 250-some congregations, I have wondered how I would have stated the main emphases of our school. Lutheran, no doubt. Mission, too. We founded our school on spreading the Word. And personal growth: we care about discipleship, revival, and evangelism, too. At the very core of the AFLBS purpose statement stands Matthew 28:19: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

But how would I describe our emphasis at AFLBS, given just three words?

The first one I would choose has five letters. It’s a person: the one around whom our school is built. Colossians 1:17 says He “is before all things,” head of the body, the church, the one who should come “to have first place in everything” (1:18). From our Bible school’s inception in 1966, purpose number one has been, and I quote, “to bring students and establish them in the assurance of personal salvation in Christ.” If I were to hold my right hand at forehead level, I would go to that five-letter word.



Jesus.

The second word I would use also has five letters. The term stands at a level with the one named above. It's present in every class, every chapel, every assignment. Without it, there would be no AFLBS at all. It's the bedrock. It's the reason the initial attendees of the early annual conferences insisted we join together to do the non-logical. Start a Bible school in a fellowship of 50 congregations, little money, only a purpose and a prayer? Yes! In their memory, I hold my right hand to my forehead, 40 years later, and say the word out loud, though I know you are saying it now. You say it because it's your heartbeat, your "lamp" and your "light" as Psalm 119 says. Not just five letters, but 66 – and more.

The Bible.

With a nod of appreciation to Dr. Martin Luther, we in the AFLC confess what the reformer always insisted. Teach the Word. Lift it high. We elevate the Word because God elevated it first. It's like David said in Psalm 138:2, "You have exalted above all things your name and your word." Luther said the same. For we know that Luther's movement was, most essentially, a back-to-the-Bible movement, wasn't it? That's where your Bible school still takes its college-age students. Back to those five letters. Just as it says in the school's purpose statement, number three: "To prepare students to embrace the truth as found in the Bible." Revival starts there. Mission begins there. So we equip students with the life-giving Word.

But we also use a third description. It, too, has five letters. It's what the Bible foretold and where the Savior died.

The cross.

Paul said in I Corinthians 2:2 that he "determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." That's your Bible school's basic message. The crucial cross. It draws our attention. The cross is where the passion of the Christ was aimed. A hill in Jerusalem, a long, dusty road, a Savior bleeding: that's our curriculum. There on the cross Jesus spoke the final word. There at Golgotha He canceled the "certificate of death consisting of decrees against us," as Colossians 2:14 says. And no one took the life of Jesus away on that execution post. He freely gave it up "on His own initiative," says John 10. There, at that crucial intersection of history, then, came a series of other five-letter descriptions that

also form the central emphases of our Bible school.

Nails. Tears.
Blood. Death.
Saved.

Thanks for caring about a school whose main priorities are these. These college-age students are worth the investment. For their sake we cling to Jesus Christ, to the Bible, and to the cross of Calvary.

Johnson is dean of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, Plymouth, Minn.

"God is also using
this time to
prepare us for the
things **He** would
have us accomplish
after we leave
this campus."



FISHER¹

OF MEN

— BY JACOB WATERWORTH

After a recent Tuesday night prayer meeting, one of the Street Level missionaries asked me about doing an outreach around my home area. I grew up in a small Minnesota town just ten miles from the Canadian border. So my first thought was, “Sure, if you bring some people with you so we have someone to evangelize to.”

You see, the occasional lone pedestrian in my town would be awfully fearful of any group of strangers. Everyone else either works in the factory, hunts or goes fishing. The owners of the factories probably wouldn’t have approved of shutting down the assembly lines in order for us to talk about Jesus. And evangelizing to people with rifles didn’t sound too appealing. So, we were left with one choice — fishermen.

Then there was one more thing to think about: it was winter. And that meant fishermen congregating in villages of little houses across large Lake of the Woods. Why not go door-to-door evangelizing? And since we were going to all this effort, why not give out what every ice fisherman craves after a few hours on the lake — hot food. We joked around about this possibility for quite some time before I realized I was the only one joking.

It didn’t take long for plans to come together. A group of seven came from the Association Free Lutheran Bible School (including Dean of Women Brenda Stilley) and two from Street Level Ministries (an outreach to the everyday people on the streets of Minneapolis – www.streetlevel.org).

We drove to my home on a Friday after school, a six-hour trip north of the Twin Cities, arriving quite late. The next morning we woke up early to go to Warroad Community Church — my home church — and met with Pastor Gus Booth and members of the congregation who were going to assist us in this work.

After arriving on the lake, we made camp in the center of the village, setting up our ice-fishing house with a table to hold four crock-pots of chili cooking inside and two gasoline generators outside. We then went off in groups of twos and threes. Each group was equipped with a cooler full of Styrofoam bowls of chili, a container of cheese, a container of sour cream, a package of brownies, some Bibles, “Steps to Peace with God” tracts, and “The Nicodemus Revelation” booklets.

There was a wide array of responses, and the general one was of surprise. We experienced everything from being sworn at, to people sending letters of thanks and encouragement to the church the following week.

Andrea Nerby, a senior at AFLBS, was on a team with Nita Lund, a member of Warroad Community

Church. Nita sent Nerby into her husband’s fish house to see if she could talk with his friends. After awhile, she had to drag Nerby out. Later that night, however, the friends brought up the message Nerby was talking about. That’s huge. When someone feels so strongly about something that they go out of their way to tell others, that means they remember.

My sister had a conversation with a young man whose mom was into witchcraft, and she could see in his piercing blue eyes that he was empty and searching for something. He wasn’t very open to talking, but gladly accepted some literature.

Kelly Welch, also an AFLBS senior, and I approached a lone fish house. We found a 15-year-old boy who wanted to spend some time alone. His dad was a couple of houses down. He told us he used to attend church as a young child, but then his parents got a divorce. He had been living with his father and stopped going to church. He recently moved back in with his mom and started going to church again. He

believed in God, enough so that he had faith in his prayers being heard, but there was no way he could consistently and faithfully hear God speak back to him. In other words, he didn’t have a Bible.

God supplied our ministry so that we could not only meet this need, but we also could give him a copy of the “Nicodemus Revelation” and a Seeds CD (a band from “Jesus People”). After we tried our best to answer a couple

of questions, we asked him if there was anything else we could do. He answered, “No, I just have to start reading (the Bible) now.”

Diane Kinney is the missionary who first prompted this outreach by asking me about doing something back home. She will tell you that she was surprised to see where the outreach had the most impact. We had been praying for miracles on the lake. However, the biggest impact was in the church itself. It appeared to light an evangelical fire in the hearts of many of the people. In fact, approximately half of the regular attendees were involved in some way or another in this ministry. Please pray that this fire doesn’t go out and that the local factory (Marvin Windows) would be greatly influenced by this church.

Waterworth, a senior at AFLBS, is a member of Warroad Community Church, Warroad, Minn. He is involved in Street Level, an urban ministry program, and weekly witness to people in downtown Minneapolis.

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PRAY FOR WORKERS

A group of AFLBS students
meet on their knees every day

— BY ANNA LARSON

This year at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School (AFLBS) has been exciting for many of us on campus. We have seen a work of the Holy Spirit happen here, like the new prayer groups that have formed on campus. One of these groups consists of about eight students who meet diligently after classes at noon in the campus chapel.

The group started out small, but by the grace of God has grown. We meet together and bring our requests before the Lord. We pray for the campus, that God would continue to send revival. We pray for the nation, that God would give wisdom for our leaders, and that He would sweep through it with a powerful revival. We also pray for each other, that God would accomplish His work in our lives and that we would be faithful to Him.

We understand that God has put us here on this campus for a time to learn and dig into his Word, but we also have a job to share Him outside of this campus. God is also using this time to prepare us for the things He would have us accomplish after we leave this campus. So many times we can overlook that.

It is easy to get caught up in our routines and forget to take the time to talk with Him in quietness. Each of us has found this to be true in our lives, and it is a blessing to take the time after class to do just that.

There have been many who have circulated through the school and have perhaps felt the call to world missions, but decided to tend to other things or just got caught up in the world's agenda. Our prayer group has labored at the throne of God over this. It is vital for our body to be sending out missionaries into the harvest fields. Whether it is one from our group who is called, one of our fellow students, a graduate, or someone who has yet to attend,

we pray that God would keep each student faithful.

After seeing the Holy Spirit work on campus this year in a new way, we have often wondered what the results will be. We have had the opportunity to reach out in our community by going door-to-door around Christmas and inviting our neighbors to our annual concert. We were able to share the gospel with them and let them know that we're here for them. God is also putting a special calling on the lives of the student body. Many of them are sensing a call to full-time ministry — some on the mission field, and some here in the states. Praise God for this! We pray that those hearts that are open to this will remain open and that they will be tender to the Spirit's calling.

We pray, too, for the hearts that are not open to this. We pray for them to become sensitive to the call that is put on them.

It is so important for prayer to be the foundation for our lives as Christians. It is necessary that we as students be upholding and encouraging each other in this way. God has a plan for each of us in His body, a plan that is important. Satan also has a plan to steer us in the wrong direction. We must be

aware of this, fight against it with prayer, and take action in following the Father closely in our daily lives. Will you join us in prayer?

Larson, an AFLBS senior, is from Morris, Ill., where she is a member of Bethlehem Lutheran, Morris.

**"God is also using
this time to
prepare us for the
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after we leave
this campus."**



CALL TO SEMINARY

— BY JOE FALDET

**AS A RESULT OF RECENT REVIVALS,
A GROWING NUMBER OF BIBLE SCHOOL GRADUATES
ARE CONSIDERING ENROLLMENT AT SEMINARY
IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS**

My mother likes to remind me that when I was young I wanted to be a pumpkin farmer, raise golden retrievers and live on a lake. I don't really remember why I wanted to be a pumpkin farmer, but that was my dream. It seems that as a person gets older, dreams change. I don't know how many times my dreams and hopes for the future have changed, but I do know that my final goal in life is not to be a pumpkin farmer, raise golden retrievers and live on a lake, no matter how appealing that still sounds.

When I was in high school my ambitions significantly changed. I went from trying to decide between being a doctor and an engineer to wanting to be a pastor. It wasn't a sudden change. God didn't appear to me in a dream, nor did He write it on the clouds. No, He used much less bold means, but they drove the point home all the more.

The most marked time was when I was at the FLY convention. I don't remember who the pastor was, but there was a call to the stage for anyone who felt God leading them to full-time ministry, and I felt the call to go up. I spoke with a pastor that night, and he told me something I hope I never forget. He gave me three options, saying, "You can be a lady's man, a man's man or God's man." This really struck me, and I started questioning what I was living for.

Shortly after this, I found out that a lady in my church, whose son is a pastor, had been praying that God would lay it on my heart to go to seminary. Later, my pastor came to my house and spoke to me about what it is like being a pastor. And there were many other things that God put in my life that continued to lead me in that direction. Not one of these things on their own drove me to consider the ministry, but they all worked together to show the will of God.

God didn't choose to write it in the clouds, nor did He give me a vision. But through the steady leading of His hand He brought me to the

place that I am right now, enrolled at Northwestern College hoping to graduate in May, and, if the Lord wills, going to the Free Lutheran Seminary in Plymouth next fall.

There is an influx of young men who are looking to enter seminary. Dan Antal, who was recently accepted into AFLTS, and I were going through our senior yearbook (AFLBS) noting all the guys who had spoken to either of us about considering seminary. We counted 15, including ourselves.

Why so many young men when they have their whole lives ahead of them? There is one reason that I can think of, though there are prob-

The Lord hears our prayers, and this might be the time that He is choosing to raise up workers.

ably more. During my junior and senior years at AFLBS, a group of guys would meet every Tuesday morning and pray for the campus, the administration and the world. One of the prayers that was always prayed was that the Lord of the harvest would send out workers into the harvest field. I have spoken to many others around the AFLC who have been praying the same prayer for years. The Lord hears our prayers,

and this might be the time that He is choosing to raise up workers.

It is written in Romans 10:15: "And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'" The call came upon my heart through the working of many people, each encouraging me in their own manner to seek the Lord's work. So now I encourage you who are reading this to pray as Jesus commands in Matthew 9:37-38 and take to heart Romans 10:15. Ask the Lord to send out workers and also encourage those whom the Lord places on your heart, for truly "the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few."

Faldet is a 2003 graduate of AFLBS, where he served on a puppet ministry team. He is a member of Mt. Carmel Lutheran, McIntosh, Minn.



room with a **VIEW**

stored in a conference room in the upper level. Periodicals were displayed in a separate reference room that served triple duty as a nursery center and seminary break room.

Moving the campus library into the new Heritage Hall has had a dramatic effect. The seminary has gained much needed space. The old library area serves well as a new enlarged classroom.

A survey of Bible School juniors reveals their appreciation for the spacious, quiet atmosphere:

"I'm thankful for the new library because it gives me a quiet place to study away from the distractions of my dorm room."

"... a perfect view to watch the sunset while you study ..."

"It's so comfortable and inviting. Many students use it for a 'hangout' while others use it for personal study time ..."

"The couches."

"... an awesome view of the lake" [Medicine Lake]

"One of the best things about the new library is the staff that is ... ready to help when needed." Another adds, "It is obvious that they care deeply about our lives and our education."

"... there are so many great books to help me learn and grow and defend my faith."

Dr. Monseth reflects: "When I remember the little room in the basement where our campus library began in 1964 with a few donated books, and then reflect on the growth of its resources to literally 'pack out' the shelves in the three-room arrangement in the chapel building that necessarily sufficed for so many years until the beautiful and spacious library we have today in Heritage Hall, I simply thank God. He has done so much more than we could ask or think!"

Of course, as our guests you're always welcome to stop by the campus to check out the new library, browse the expanded Book Nook store, visit with our new librarian, Larry Walker ... and enjoy the view! We appreciate all who helped to make this library transition a reality. Truly the Lord is using this facility in the equipping of Christian workers who do "not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

— By Pastor Jerry Moan, AFLTS/AFLBS instructor

Even on a foggy day, MTI student Radek Labaj, from the Czech Republic, finds a comfy place to study with plenty of light in the Francis W. Monseth Library in Heritage Hall.

Being a book lover (some would say "addict"), I am doubly blessed: Blessed to have my own personal collection of books — old and new — and blessed to have ready access to the treasury of resources available right here at the campus library of our AFLC schools.

The library has come a long way from its humble beginnings back in the 1960s. AFLTS Dean Dr. Francis Monseth, who was part of the first graduating class of AFLTS, shares fond memories of hours spent as a seminary student, gluing checkout card jackets and labeling donated volumes by hand.

Today the technology has changed a bit. Gone are the cumbersome card catalogs. Searching for resources is a breeze via computer. All of the 20,000 plus volumes are in process of being bar-coded for the sake of ease and efficiency at the checkout counter.

Students of our Bible school and seminary are quick to point out, however, that the library is so much more than a place to check out books. One of our seminary students comments: "I use the library regularly to study when I need to get some uninterrupted time. The added space and study tables are a huge blessing. It is also nice to have computers and printers right there available for us."

Another seminarian adds, "The blessing of having enough space to combine all of our great Lutheran resources in one place has been tremendous."

All of this would have been impossible had it not been for the transition that took place just more than a year ago. For many years the main library was located in the lower level of the chapel building. Archives were

seminary graduates

ojars freimanis, M.Div.

My name is Ojars Freimanis and my wife's name is Vineta. This spring we will celebrate 22 years together. We have two children: Raitis is 18 and he will graduate from Heritage Christian Academy; Krista, 8, will finish second grade.

I was born and I grew up during the Soviet era in Latvia, which was just a part of Soviet Union. Late in the 1980s something happened there. People started to look at this world differently. Through our churches and pastors, truth had come into Latvia. By this time I was married and we had a child. We wanted to baptize him. But to do this I had to go through confirmation classes. That's when I first met with God. But I saw Him only from a distance. I did believe that there was God, but we were on two different positions. He was somewhere out of my heart, I was here in this world. I felt OK about this: no problems, no accountability before Him.

After several months we wanted our son to attend Sunday school. This was one of the first Sunday schools after Iron Curtain fell, and it was with a Baptist congregation. There was a class for parents as well. I attended it sometimes with my wife. Then another Sunday school was opened at a Lutheran church where my wife was confirmed, my son baptized, and I baptized and confirmed. They were looking for a Sunday school teacher. Vineta applied and served there. She was also involved in different activities at other churches.

I accepted my wife's activities but I did not want to do something in this field myself. Month after month passed by. I listened to the Lord but I did not want to give Him an answer. Now I know that the seeds of baptism and confirmation started to flourish.

During a parish council meeting our pastor asked me whether I would like to receive some theological training and serve the Lord as an evangelist. To Vineta and my great surprise, I said yes. I gave my answer not to the pastor, not to my wife nor myself, but to the Lord.

I joined the training course and was consecrated as an evangelist. I also joined the Latvian Navy

and was commissioned as a chaplain of Naval Forces Training Center in Liepaja. The Lord has called me and there was not a single way to escape from His mercy and His plan for me. I am certainly sure that this is my calling, and the purpose for my life is to serve Him.

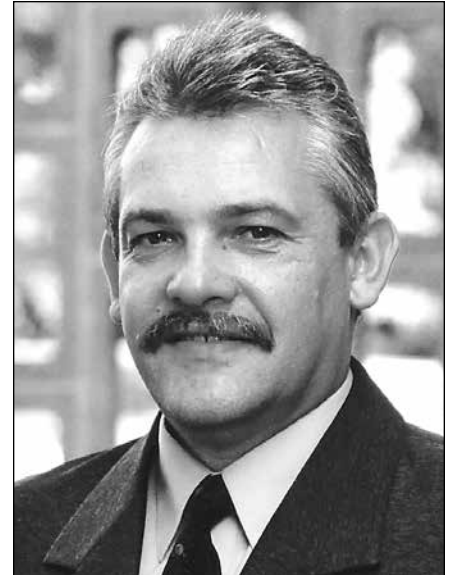
God has blessed my family and me by letting us be here studying at AFLTS. I would characterize these two past years by using three words: challenge, growth, fellowship.

Challenge. The greatest challenge for my wife and me was to leave our ministries. She worked as a principal's assistant in a Christian school; I served as a full-time pastor in a countryside church. Another challenge for me was to move from leadership work (as a chaplain since 1997) to janitorial work. But this has been a very good experience of learning humility.

Growth. The greatest has been a growth in the knowledge of the Word and in my relationship with the Lord. Another is the growth in my relationship with Vineta. During our last two years in Latvia we were separated during the business week, and that did not have a good influence on our family life. Now our relationship is healed and we are closer to each other as in the beginning of our marriage.

Fellowship. It is just great to be in a Christian brotherhood where there are no boundaries between countries, languages, denominations and social standings. Christ died for all of us, and He lives for all of us. It is just great to have Christian brothers and sisters and friends here in our AFLC family.

After my son's and my graduations, we will return to Latvia. Vineta's school expects her back and my church and chaplaincy wait for me. We are excited about what God has in store for us.



seminary graduates



dennis norby, M.Div.

The Lord blessed me by placing me in a home where I was brought up going to church and Sunday school. I was born Oct. 11, 1978, to Dennis and Diane Norby. I grew up in Ottawa, Ill., where I went to church at Faith Lutheran. As I look back, I don't know that there was a time when I did not know and cling to the truth that Jesus had died for me. As I grew up,

through junior high and high school, I tried to live a bit of a double life. After high school, I went to Illinois Valley Community College for a year. During that year, the Lord really shut some doors on me. Thankfully, he opened other doors. After the year at IVCC, I headed to AFLBS,

where the Lord blessed me with two years of spiritual growth that surpassed any period of growth that I had had in the past. After Bible school, I went to Northwestern College, St. Paul, Minn., where more and more I felt God leading me to the pastoral ministry. A verse that I ran across at AFLBS that stuck with me and God has used to direct me in this way was Psalm 66:16, which says, "Come and listen, all you who fear God. Let me tell you what He has done for me."

The Lord has really used these months in which I have been on internship as a humbling time. As each day goes by, I seem to recognize more and more the guidance I need from the Lord to do the day-to-day activities of ministry. In addition, I have continually seen how many times the Lord has answered prayer and continues to provide for all my needs so abundantly. As my wife, Samantha, and I look forward to what God has in store for us, we eagerly await His plan. We are expecting our first child in March.



cal willard, M.Div.

My call to seminary came in July 2000 at a crossroads in my life. I had just completed my 25th year of service in the Navy. My wife, Jane, our two sons, Samuel and Thomas, and I had recently moved to a new duty assignment near Arlington, Wash.

Saved as a youth, I had grown close to the Lord during my early Navy years. I relied on Him to guide me

through tough situations. Married in 1983, Jane and I determined to be active in the church and raise our sons to know Christ personally. We moved eight times

in almost 18 years of marriage. At new duty stations, finding a church home was always our priority.

After nine months in Arlington, Jane died quite suddenly from a rare form of leukemia. With two sons to raise, I studied Scripture and prayed to God for guidance once more for my very changed and darkened life. Staying close to my sons was my priority, so I resigned my commission and resolved to start a small business. I remember praying one day, "Lord, I don't know what your will is for me, but I've got to do something, so unless You tell me otherwise, I'll start this small business."

Ten days later, Pastor Rick Long and AFLC Home Missions Director Paul Nash apprised me of our Lord's great need for men in ministry. I struggled mightily with that call, but after three days of prayer and reflection, and with my sons' support, I told the Lord I would come and work for Him. He has given me peace.

seminary graduates

scott guhl, M.Div.

As I look back over the years of knowing Jesus Christ as my Lord, I remember with childlike gratitude meeting Jesus as my Savior at the age of 12. The story of redemption in my life hinges upon the grace of God working through the biblical training I received from my parents (Lyle and Vonnice Guhl), our home church (Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn.), and also through my elementary years at Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy.

With discernment in their hearts and possibly some frustration because of some budding pre-adolescent behaviors, my parents came to me one night and clearly presented the gospel message to me at my bedside. That night the Lord opened my eyes and allowed me to acknowledge Him as Lord. I knew Jesus Christ as my personal friend, one who was always with me, never forsaking me. That was such a breath of fresh air, preparing me as I entered the turbulent years of adolescence, which can be filled with uncertainty and loneliness.

Amidst my internship at Vision of Glory, I am appreciating anew the blessing that exists as I take the hand of our forever Friend. Sixth graders are not alone for sure, as there can be periods of uncertainty and loneliness throughout all seasons of life. Trials, frustrations, and disappointments happen, and God in His wisdom allows us to encounter them. This year of internship has taught me clearly that character *is* produced through perseverance, and not the other way around. Walking with Jesus, looking to Him

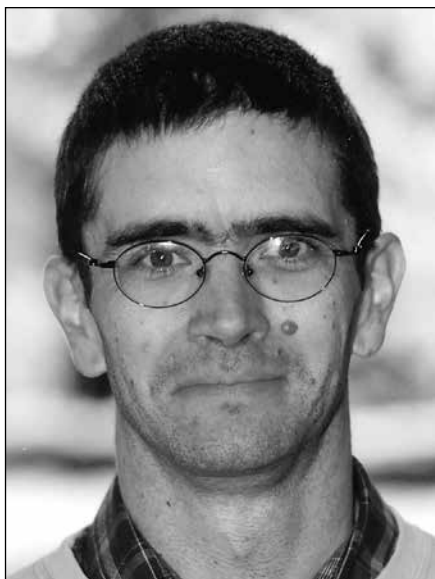
throughout the day, and trusting Him to be my strength is allowing me to face the situations I once believed were peculiar to a lonely and uncertain sixth grader. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever, is my redeeming Friend, who is with me amidst circumstances and relationships that if faced alone would send me running away with my tail between my legs. Fortunately, the years of seminary and internship training have each been a time of renewal by God's Word and Spirit.

Is it surprising that my wife and children cannot shield me from loneliness and uncertainty? Jesus alone is the true source of life, hope, and peace. He builds me up, enabling me to persevere in these days, most important and rewarding of my life. Being married to Krissy is one of the greatest privileges I could ever be given. I felt that the day we were married, and I feel that today. Raising our boys (Joshua 12, Zachariah 4, Benjamin 2, and baby on the way), provides more joy and excitement in my soul than climbing the highest mountain ever could. Yet, there is a need within this adventure to constantly acknowledge my need for life support. Therefore, I acknowledge my daily need to run to my Savior and my Lord in order that I might continue according to His grace.



Born: Dec. 6, 1974.
Education: University of Minnesota, Morris, June 1997.

seminary graduates



dale lankford, G.Th.

Having minimal church involvement growing up, I nevertheless found my heart inclined toward God in junior high school where I felt a sense of moral accountability and developed a modest prayer life. But I didn't understand who Jesus is and just what role He has in my life.

As I look back, I can see that God had begun working in my heart then and that He had placed people in my life who testified of His love for me.

But it wasn't until after I was married to Wanda that I really began to explore further what place God and the Church would have in our lives. We both had a desire to have God in our home as we began to think about our family. We attended a Christmas concert one evening where the pastor followed up with a clear call to accept Christ as Savior. At that moment it was clear that Jesus was the way to the Father, and I asked Him to come into my life. We found a church home at Our Redeemer Lutheran in Kirkland, Wash. It was there that we grew in our knowledge of God, enjoyed the fellowship of His people,

and began to serve Him in active ministry in the church and community.

Years later, I began to sense a call to serve the Lord in pastoral ministry. God had changed my priorities from getting ahead in secular work and making a name for myself in the industry, to caring for people, ministering to them with the love of Christ, and teaching the Word of God.

As I studied the Word at Trinity Lutheran College, God confirmed my call and caused a tremendous amount of growth in me. And after graduating from there, my family moved to Minneapolis to attend the Free Lutheran Seminary. I was blessed by faculty who desires to teach the Word of God in its purity and truth. I was blessed by the fellowship of the other students, and seeing the quality and integrity of the men God is preparing for ministry encouraged me. God continues to work in me as I serve my internship in Portland and Buxton, N.D., at Valley Free and Ny Stavanger Lutheran churches. Thanks be to God for His mercy and grace, and His faithfulness to me and to my family.

Parents: Glyndon and Claudette Lankford, Mount Vernon, Wash.

Born: May 30, 1963, Cheyenne, Wyo.

Home Congregation: Our Redeemer Lutheran, Kirkland, Wash.

College: BA in Biblical Studies, Trinity Lutheran College/LBI, Seattle, 2001.

Wife: Wanda

Children: Caitlin 15, Chelsea 13, Elyse 8, Phillip 6, Jared 6 months

Other M.Div. graduates

Other graduates from AFLTS this spring with Master's of Divinity are:

Pastor Wade Mobley, who serves Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Pastor James L. Johnson, Plymouth, Minn., who currently

serves as dean of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School.

Pastor Kevin Olson, who is currently on a nine-month sabbatical from his position as director of Youth Ministries to teach seminary classes in Tanzania. He will return in May.

seminary graduates

craig scavo

I was born on Nov. 17, 1961 in Denver, Colo., and grew up in the Denver area and in the mountains west of Denver. We moved east of Denver, out in the country, from middle school through high school. I met my wife, Sherri Van Scooten, at middle school and we became sweethearts. We would sit together on the school bus. Sherri moved out of state when we were to start high school, and we lost contact.

When I turned 17, I enlisted in the U.S. Navy. After about two years of service time, just before coming home on leave, my sister called and told me that Sherri had moved back into town. I called on her while I was home, and we started writing. I asked her to marry me about a year later, and we are celebrating 21 wonderful years together.

Sherri and I have two children: Anthony, 19, was born in Yokosuka, Japan. He has now joined the Army reserve and has recently finished MP training. He is praying to see where God will direct him for his future. Jessica, or Jessi, is 17. She is a junior in high school and is uncertain about what the future holds for her.

I spent 21 years in the Navy, being stationed all around the world, most of it aboard ships and away from home. I received a bachelor's of science degree from Southern Illinois University, through their military extension program, while on active duty with the intention of teaching high school. When I retired from naval service in June 2000, we

were attending Atonement Free Lutheran, in Arlington, Wash.

During the last four or five years in the service, I felt God's call to prepare for the ministry and attend seminary. I resisted the call, and kept asking God if He was really talking to me. In December 2000 I contacted the AFLC seminary about the application process. By March I had been accepted as a student for the fall semester.

We packed up our stuff and moved to Minnesota in June. As the Navy says, "Let the journey begin." We had three wonderful years at seminary. God blessed me with the ability to only have to work a minimal amount of hours and devote most of my time to my studies. I learned a lot about the ministry, but more importantly, I learned numerous insights into God's Word from some very dedicated and godly instructors.

I am currently finishing a very successful (for me) internship at Immanuel Lutheran, Springfield, Mo. This experience has been wonderful, and has taught me a lot about the ministry. It has also solidified my calling, and I can't wait to see where God is going to lead us next!



CPS graduates

Graduating from AFLTS this spring with a Certificate of Pastoral Studies (CPS) are:

Lay Pastor Wayne Olson, who currently serves Bethel Lutheran in Faith, S.D. Olson completed his stud-

ies through the Summer Institute of Theology.

Lay Pastor Dale Finstrom, who has taken a year's sabbatical from his call at Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn., to study

this year at AFLTS.

Lay Pastor Gary Simons, Fargo, N.D., currently serves Grong Lutheran, Hawley, Minn., completed his CPS through the Summer Institute of Theology.

June 14

The 2005 National Convention

Valley City State University, Valley City, N.D.

Who
is

God

II Samuel 22:32

but the

Lord

Name: _____

Spouse: _____

Address: _____

City / state / zip: _____

Congregation: _____

Address: _____

City / state / zip: _____

FEES	\$
Luncheon — \$7	
Banquet — \$10	
Registration — \$7	
TOTAL	
Number of children attending:	#
~Nursery kids	
~VBS kids	

Make checks payable to **Mary Ann Berntson, WMF**
and send to 4416 113th Ave. SE, Valley City, ND 58072

Registrations received after June 1
must add a \$3 late fee.

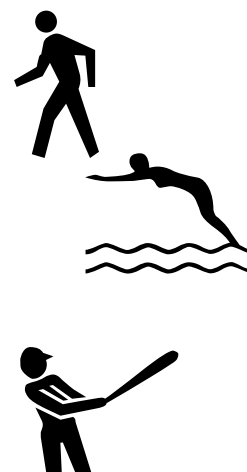
Please mark the registration form above
if you have children attending either VBS
or are in need of child care.

Conference

Hey youth!

The congregations at Valley City want to invite you to attend our 2005 Annual Conference. We will be having morning sessions of praise, prepared Bible studies, personal devotions and prayer.

The afternoons will include opportunities for activities such as hiking, swimming, softball, water fights and much more. Please bring: Bible, notebook, softball glove, swimsuit (\$3 entrance fee for pool) and an attitude of joy. Come join in the fun!



unchanging

Isaiah 40:8

TRUTH

The 2005 AFLC [ANNUAL CONFERENCE]

JUNE 14-17

Valley City State University, Valley City, N.D.

Hosts: Grace Free Lutheran and Zion Free Lutheran, Valley City, N.D.

Note: Please fill out forms separately and mail to respective registrars

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Name: _____

Spouse: _____

Address: _____

Phone (D): _____ **(E):** _____

City / state / zip: _____

Congregation: _____

Are you: pastor / visiting pastor / lay member / lay visitor

Spouse: pastor / visiting pastor / lay member / lay visitor

Registration: \$30 single, \$40 couple

**Make checks for registration only payable to AFLC and
send to 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.**

Registrations received after June 1 must add a \$5 late fee.

Please see housing information on page 21.

A downloadable copy of this form is available at www.aflc.org

Name: _____

Spouse: _____

Address: _____

City / state: _____

Zip: _____

	MEAL	#
Wednesday	Schools breakfast \$6	
	Conference breakfast \$6	
	Chaplain's lunch \$7	
	Builders fellowship lunch \$7	
	Conference lunch \$7	
	Schools Corp. dinner \$8	
Thursday	Conference dinner \$8	
	Missions Corp. breakfast \$6	
	Conference breakfast \$6	
	ARC Corp. lunch \$7	
	Conference lunch \$7	
	Pastors banquet \$12	
Friday	Conference dinner \$8	
	Conference breakfast \$6	
	Foundation lunch \$7	
	Conference lunch \$7	
	Youth banquet \$8	
Total cost:		

Please write check for **meals only**
to Grace Free Lutheran.

**Mail to Grace Free Lutheran
P.O. Box 37
Valley City, ND 58072**

[Deaths]

Pastor Wallace Jackson, retired interim pastor, dies at 82

Pastor Wallace Jackson, 82, of Roseau, Minn., died Feb. 25, 2005, in Roseau.

Born Dec. 28, 1922, in Red Wing, Minn., he was the son of Ferdinand and Suzanna (Edkvedt) Jackson. He married Janet Johnson Dec. 20, 1941, in Wanamingo.

They worked as missionaries in Mexico and on the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation in North Dakota. He entered the parish ministry, serving congregations in Iowa and New Jersey. He was ordained in 1964. He served the AFLC congregations of Ebenezer, Mayville, N.D. (1968-74); Calvary Free Lutheran, Eben Junction, Mich. (1974-78); and Calvary Free Lutheran, Wallace, S.D. (1978-85). He retired in 1985 and began interim work, serving at Tioga, N.D.; Zoar Free Lutheran, Hatton, N.D.; Trinity Free Lutheran, Minnewaukan, and Christ Free Lutheran, Devil's Lake, N.D.; Slim Buttes Lutheran, Reva, S.D.; St. Paul's Lutheran, Cloquet, Minn.; and Norland Free Lutheran, Salol, Minn., and

Free Lutheran Church of Roseau, Minn. He also began a trailer court ministry with retirees in Apache Junction, Ariz.

Surviving are his wife; three sons, Vaughn (Bev) Jackson, Waukesha, Wis., Jim (Elaine) Jackson, Bremerton, Wash.; one daughter, Susan (Dale) Keller, Fergus Falls, Minn.; one sister, Violet Swanson, Wanamingo, Minn.; 16 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren.

The service was March 3 at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Wanamingo, with Pastor Martin Horn and Pastor James Jackson (Wallace's grandson) officiating. Burial was in Emmanuel Lutheran Cemetery, Wanamingo.



Wallace Jackson

AFLBS to host alumni tournament

April 14-15, at Northwestern College

AFLBS is excited to host another alumni basketball tournament. Although there is plenty of basketball during the weekend, there is even more great times of fellowship and getting to see your old Bible school classmates. This year the tournament will be held April 15-16 at the Erickson Center on the campus of Northwestern College in Roseville, Minn. Team registration will be 6:30-7 p.m. Friday, followed by the opening round men's games. Games will resume Saturday morning at 9 a.m. with the women's games to be played Saturday afternoon. Be sure to stop by campus Friday and Saturday to see Heritage Hall, which will be open both days until 10 p.m.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact the AFLBS office at (763) 544-9501 or email us at aflbs@aflc.org. Proceeds from the tournament will go to help support the AFLBS men's and women's basketball teams. You can download the PDF brochure at our web site at www.aflbs.org.

AFLTS assigns interns

Three seniors get assignments, one student awaits decision for next year

Internship assignments have been made for three AFLTS seniors:

Tomasz Chmiel will serve the two-point Wisconsin parish of Our Savior's Lutheran, Mason, and Drummond Free Lutheran, Drummond, under the guidance of Pastor Frank Cherney, Duluth, Minn.

Nate Jore will serve at Bethel Free Lutheran, Minot, N.D., under the guidance of Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck for six months, and then he will serve a six-month assignment in Brazil under the guidance of Pastor Connely Dyrud.

John Brennan will serve at St. Peter Lutheran, Melvin, Ill., a new AFLC congregation, under the guidance of interim Pastor Jan Horne.



Chmiel



Jore

See the May issue of the *Lutheran Ambassador* for the final internship assignment.



Brennan

Schools seek help to pay off \$1.2 M debt

I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth I will proclaim thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1)

What a blessing it is to use Heritage Hall to proclaim the faithfulness of the Lord to all generations. As the Word of God is taught to this generation, it is awesome to realize the effect it will have on generations to come! Thank you for your gifts in providing this new building for our schools.

Please prayerfully consider how you might help with the debt retirement for this building. With \$1.28 million in debt, the monthly payments for Heritage Hall are set at \$9,750 based on a 20-year amortization at a 6.76%

interest rate. Perhaps you would like to help retire this debt by participating in an annual fund drive? Call the Vision office at (763) 412-2004 for more information.

We are excited to share with you that because of several recent gifts designated specifically for the seminary, we are able to proceed with the construction of another seminary housing unit. Lord willing, construction will begin this spring and the building will be completed for occupancy this fall. Please pray for the members of the Board of Trustees and those involved in making decisions for the future of our schools.

Annual Conference housing information

Americinn: 280 Winter Show Road; indoor hot tub and pool, continental breakfast. (701) 845-5551 or 1-800-634-3444. Ask for AFLC Annual Conference rooms.

Wagon Wheel Inn: 455 Winter Show Road; indoor pool, continental breakfast. (701) 845-5333 or 1 (800) 319-5333. RV hookups available. Ask for AFLC Annual Conference rooms.

Super Eight Motel: 822 11th St. SW; Continental breakfast. (701) 845-1140.

Another Time Guest Cottage: 116 5th Ave.. SW (701) 845-3171.

Victorian Charm Guest Inn: 535 Central Ave.. N (701) 845-0887. Private baths with some rooms.

Carousel Lodge Exit 292 near Valley Bed and Breakfast. (701) 845-0887.

Valley Bed and Breakfast: 3611 117th Ave.. SE- Exit 292. (701) 845-5893.

Sheyenne Riverbend Farm Guest Inn: 3716 117th Ave.. SE, Box 456. (701) 845-1377 or (701) 845-2547. Email: RiverbendFarmND@aol.com. Web site: www.riverbendfarm.com.

VCSU Campus Dorms: Sheryl at Grace Free Lutheran (701) 845-2753, or at home (701) 845-1806.

Flickertail Inn: Exit 290 on Interstate 94. (701) 845-5278

Prairie Inn: 140 Third Ave.. SE (701) 845-1560

Surrounding communities:

BesteMor Inn: 113 Second Ave., Kathryn (701) 490-0801

Tower Motel, Tower City (701) 749-2694

Sibley Motel, Sibley (701) 733-2369

Tower City Inn Bed and Breakfast, Tower City (701) 749-2660

Dakota Inn, Jamestown 1(800)726-7924

Gladstone Select Hotel, Jamestown (701) 252-0700

Days Inn, Jamestown (701) 251-9085

Holiday Inn Express, Jamestown 1(800)465-4329

JR's North Forty Bed and Breakfast, Sanborn (701) 646-6260

Camping/RV stations

East Ashtabula Crossing: 37 sites, playground, swim area, picnic area, showers, flush toilets, boat ramp and alcohol free. Call 1-800-444-6777.

West Ashtabula Crossing: 40 sites, electric hook-ups, boat ramp, and picnic area. No reservations. (701) 845-2970.

Bayshore Resort: Cabins, camping, and RV sites. (701) 845-1066.

Municipal Tourist Park: On business loop I-94. No reservations required. All hook-ups. Showers and water available. (701) 845-3294.

People/places

Pastor Anthony Striffler has accepted a call from St. James Evangelical Lutheran, Garden City, Kan. Striffler, from Denver, Colo., has served the congregation on an interim basis.

Members of **Bethel Free Lutheran Church**, Culbertson, Mont., voted at their January annual meeting to rename the congregation **Bethel Community Church**. The congregation is currently without a pastor.

The Commission on Evangelism will host a one-day event prior to the Annual Conference in Valley City for pastors and their wives. **"Rekindling the Fire,"** an event set for Monday, June 13, will feature special speaker Dr. Steve Gould, who will encourage and challenge pastors in their ministries. Evening meal and childcare will be provided. Registration is required. Contact Pastor Jim Rasmussen at (763) 545-5631 for more information.

Elementary and secondary school teacher's positions will be open at **Heritage Christian Academy**, Maple Grove, Minn. for the 2005-06 school year. Applications can be found at www.heritageweb.org and can be e-mailed to benderlein@heritage-mail.org.

Pastor Alex Lissow has resigned as pastor of Abiding Word Lutheran, Deshler, Neb. His future plans are uncertain.

Cal Shaver has resigned from his ministry at Bethany Lutheran, Broadhead, Wis. The church will dedicate its new building on May 15.

WMF memorials for February include: Arlitt Swenson, Grace Fagervik, Amelia Christenson, Donald Kinneberg, Dorothy Elg, and Erica Sanderson.

[World Missions]

They made a *difference* in my *life*



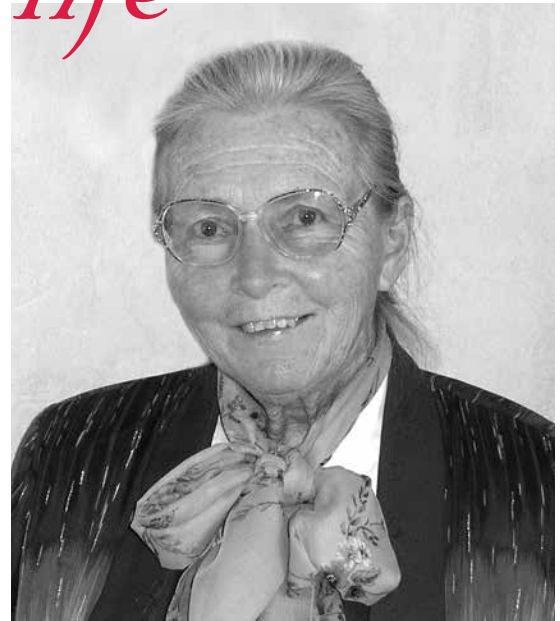
Del Palmer

Palmer, AFLC World Missions director, spent two weeks in February touring mission work in Mexico. While there, he met Lois. This is her story.

The English service was over. Not that many people were there. If you take the missionaries, their families, and us out of it, there would only be a handful left.

Lois was one of them. We were introduced before the service, and she stated that she had been a missionary. Actually, she had run a soup kitchen in Jerez to reach people for Christ. Lois didn't attend church after that. But one day she heard about the Lutheran church in town and decided to check it out.

Following the service Lois talked to me downstairs, outside of the range of missionaries Dan Giles' or Todd Shierkolk's hearing. She said, "These men are making a difference in our town, they've made a difference in my life. They are the cream of the crop. Either one of them could go back to the states and pastor a large church. But they've come to us, and we are grateful. I was wandering without any direction, not



even attending church, and they've been a great influence in my life."

That's the way it is with mission work. Mission work is working with souls, discipling one person at a time — individuals who make up the church, Christ's body.

February memorials

AFLBS: Ivan Klein, Winnie Jones
AFLTS: Albert Richter, Cora Antal, Pastor Fred Carlson, Helen Hove, Marcus Almlie

Evangelism: Arlitte Swenson

FLAPS: Mark Neilson

Home Missions: Amelia Christenson, Grace Fagervik, Orris Gauslow, Phyllis Swenson

Parish Education: Mark Neilson

Vision: Dorothy Strommer, Art Haakenson, Margaret Odegard, Mark Abrahamson

World Missions: Naomi Eide, Lydia Flickinger, Anna Manger, Wesley Ballmann, Verna Wollin, Philip Boen, Helen Hove

Youth Ministries: Alvin Skarderud
... in honor of

World Missions: Ken and Wanita Sletton

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (2 months) – January 1 - February 28, 2005

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN FEBRUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund*	\$387,377	\$35,761	\$70,642	18
Youth Ministries . . .	56,062	3,196	6,726	12
Parish Education . . .	81,988	4,958	14,408	18
Seminary	156,804	10,079	26,169	17
Bible School	269,308	17,583	37,358	14
Home Missions.	277,870	13,522	34,368	12
World Missions.	262,377	15,488	37,704	14
Personal Support . . .	368,688	28,010	66,298	18
TOTALS	\$1,860,474	\$115,076	\$259,306	14
TOTALS 2004	\$1,739,460	\$121,828	\$263,310	15
Goal 17%				

The Evangelism Department received \$6,475 in February.

* Includes Evangelism totals

Please contact individual departments for more information on projects.

Teach them to *swim*

[Editorial]

My dad and some uncles of mine were commercial fishermen, so I was around boats a lot when I was a kid. One day I stepped to get on the boat, but I didn't quite step far enough. It was just in the mooring basin and I was able to start climbing up on the dock by the time my uncle got



Craig Johnson

there. He had been at the other end of the boat and heard a splash.

When we got home and told the rest of the family what happened my sister was rather upset. I was 8 at the time and my sister was grown and married. She said I shouldn't be around the boat anymore, it was too dangerous. My dad laughed at that idea. He said, "That's why we had him take swimming lessons."

My sister thought the way to deal with the potential danger was to keep me far away from the water. My dad thought it was better to train me on what to do around and in the water. I'm thankful my dad's approach prevailed.

It is tempting to want to keep young people far away from all physical and spiritual danger. We want to protect them. We don't want them taking foolish and unnecessary risks. But we do want them to live lives full of joy and not ruled by fear.

In John 17:15-18 Jesus prayed for His disciples: "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of

the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world."

He doesn't pray that His disciples will "stay away from the water." Instead, He has trained them "to swim" and prays for them as He sends them out.

In the United States it's easy and tempting for Christians to remain in our safe, little subculture. We have Christian stores, radio, TV, books, magazines. Some communities have Christian yellow pages so a person can only patronize Christian businesses. We have Christian schools and colleges. We can fill up our calendars with all kinds of Christian activities and spend our time only with fellow believers. We can live in such a way so that we have little real interaction with the non-Christian world.

If all the Christians stayed in our safe evangelical world, how would those students who've never been in a church in their life ever hear about Jesus? How would the person at the coffee shop who doesn't know what Easter is about find out? How would the auto mechanic wrestling with guilt find help if all the Christians went to Christian mechanics?

Certainly it is a tragedy when Christians get too close to the world and are corrupted by its influence. It is also a tragedy when a person doesn't know the love of Christ, because no Christian wanted to get close enough to them to tell them.

Jesus trained His disciples and prepared them to be sent into the world. That's the purpose of our AFLC schools and congregations. We're not just keeping people safe from the world, but we're training

If all the Christians stayed in our safe evangelical world, how would those students who've never been in a church in their life ever hear about Jesus?

them to go into the world with the good news of Jesus. We do it with confidence in the power of Christ. "Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

We want students to not be afraid of meeting non-Christians. Instead, we hope they initiate relationships with the goal of pointing people to Jesus. We want students to look forward to interacting with those who don't know the Lord and showing them the difference Jesus makes.

When we follow Christ's command to go into the world with the good news, it can be dangerous. That's why training is necessary.

My dad had confidence that with good instruction I'd be able to swim. We can have even greater confidence in the Spirit and Word of God. Even though the waters of the world can get rough, a person with faith in Christ can stay afloat and overcome through the power and grace of God.

[ARC]

Playing with

By Eric Westlake, ARC Director

fire

“Finally, be strong
in the Lord and in
his mighty power.
Put on the full
armor of God
so that you
can take your
stand against the
devil’s schemes.”

— Ephesians 6:10-11

Would you give a young child a knife to play with? No? Well how about some matches? Of course not! Those things are dangerous and we don’t want kids to get hurt.

The funny thing is, sometimes we Christians play around with things that are very dangerous, too, things that could really hurt us. And many times we don’t even realize it.

My wife and I went to a movie the other day, one we probably should not have gone to see. The movie wasn’t great in itself, but what really got to me were the previews before the show started. One after another, gruesome images flashed across the screen as we sat through three previews for horror movies. I felt like I was watching advertisement for Satan himself.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 6 that we’re in a struggle with Satan and his evil forces. Sometimes it’s easy to forget about the spiritual realm. We’re so caught up in the here-and-now, with what we can see and touch, that we forget that we have a real enemy of our souls who is constantly at work to bring us down.

I wouldn’t lend support to Al-Qaeda, a sworn enemy of the United States. Why would I lend support to

the enemy of my soul? I shouldn’t. But when I make poor choices regarding the movies and television shows I watch, books I read, and music I listen to, that’s exactly what I am doing. I need to make sure I’m not helping the devil along with his schemes and playing with things that are spiritually dangerous.

Thankfully we have a great God who is stronger than Satan and who helps us in our struggle. He’s given us the armor of God, but the armor has to be “put on” in order to be effective.

We wear the armor when we recognize what God has promised us in His word: truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, and the Word itself. Satan will try to attack the believer in any of these key areas. We’ve got to be prepared and keep our armor on!

Paul closes this passage on spiritual warfare by reminding the believers to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints” (vs. 18). What a wonderful thing to know that in the middle of the battle, we can cry out to God on our behalf and on the behalf of others, knowing that He will hear us and answer according to His will.