

THE LUTHERAN 

APRIL 2008

AMBASSADOR

"And you will
be my witnesses
in Jerusalem, and
in all Judea and
Samaria, and
to the ends
of the earth."
~ Acts 1:8

Mission



Your
home
and
beyond

Good



works

BY JOAN CULLER

In *The Purpose Driven Life*, author Rick Warren poses a very important question: "What on earth am I here for?" Most of us readily acknowledge that pastors, missionaries, evangelists and the like have a God-given calling. But what about the rest of us? Aren't we called by God also?

I believe that we are. In the book of Ephesians we read that "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." The good works we were made by God to do could be considered our personal vocation or calling.

Vocation is a topic that has been much written about and discussed in Christian circles. Before the Reformation only those in religious orders were seen as having a vocation. Martin Luther and other Reformers extended the concept to secular occupations and activities, as well. Luther insisted that the farmer, the cobbler, the milkmaid or the parent had a religious calling as significant as that of any priest or nun.

Vocation has been defined in many ways. Luther said that in your vocation you must "lend yourself as a means and a mask to God." Frederick Buechner, Christian chaplain and author, describes it as "the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." Thomas Kelly, a Quaker, writes it is "God's burdened heart particularizing His burdens in us." And Erik Rees, a minister at Saddleback Church, calls it "your serving sweet spot." One thing about vocation is very clear: its purpose is service to

others. It has everything to do with Christ's command to love our neighbor and little to do with worldly accomplishment or success.

Although you cannot choose your vocation (it seems to choose you), there are clues for recognizing it. You will most likely find it in your own backyard. Look for your vocation in your career or job, your family, among your

acquaintances or fellow church members. You will have an aptitude for it. Others will often commend you for it. It will arouse your passions. It will energize you. It may be challenging, but never onerous, for Jesus says, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30). In accomplishing it you will feel God's pleasure, a sense of fulfillment that means you are being true to what God made you to be. Knowing your vocation helps you to distinguish between the things you can and should do and those that are best left to others.

Your vocation may evolve over time even if it involves the same set of skills and gifts. For example, I see my vocation as encouraging others to grow in their faith. When my children were young, I wrote and directed our churches' vacation Bible school programs; later I led small groups and retreats; and now I find myself writing for the *Lutheran Ambassador*! One author says your vocation "keeps making more of you." Discover and follow your vocation. It will lead you into a continuing adventure with God!

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

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A world of nice people, content in their own niceness, looking no further, turned away from God, would be just as desperately in need of salvation as a miserable world — and might even be more difficult to save.

— C.S. Lewis

Some wish to live within the sound of a chapel bell; I wish to run a rescue mission within a yard of hell.

— C.T. Studd

[If you found a cure for cancer, wouldn't it be inconceivable to hide it from the rest of mankind? How much more inconceivable to keep silent the cure from the eternal wages of death.]

— Dave Davidson

The Church must send or the church will end.


— Mendell Taylor

MAPPING

The world on your wall

✻ By Christie Ballmann

It's my dad's fault world maps are one my favorite mission resources. From childhood, the large world atlas hanging in our dining room has instigated countless hours of fascinating conversation about world events, God's mission, and our participation in what He is doing. Looking over the map was a natural part of our evening family time. If you were a dinner guest, dad could somehow always get you smiling and tracing your finger over rivers, mountains, and boundaries with the rest of us. Without a doubt, mapping has strongly influenced my heart and involvement in missions, and it has done the same for all six of my siblings and many of the visitors who have passed through our home. Here are four ways I've seen a world map inspire a missionary heart.



Maps peg abstract world news to something concrete

Tracing my finger across a map helps me remember the context of the mission at hand — with all the economic, political, geographical, and relational implications — and makes these otherwise distant events actionable.

Why does news of deadly weather, political unrest, boundary disputes, etc., matter to me here in America? It is because each of these, in some manner, affects the Kingdom of God on this earth. We've been given the commands to "weep with those who weep" and "rejoice with those who rejoice," to "remember those in bonds," and "bear one another's burdens."

The Church needs intercession to respond to each event with wisdom, boldness, and love. The assassination of a government leader in Pakistan has mission implications for the Christian church; so does flooding in a Chinese mine (think of the grieving families), and a malaria pandemic in Africa. Christians in war-torn Kenya need our prayers. So does the new Cuban leader. The aim isn't just praying *for* missions, but praying in participation *with* the missionary movement and how God is at work drawing people to Himself. In so doing, we expand our frame of reference and are challenged to become world Christians.

Maps make a natural conversation bridge for discussing the Great Commission

Christians are called to be home-front mission mobilizers. We are part of a network bringing relevance to this worldwide work and should communicate it in such a way that compels people to make a choice toward involvement. Maps, then, become a springboard for sharing about missions, prayer requests, and action points with those who come into our homes. They allow us to pass on this information in a way that is memorable, non-threatening, and practical, particularly because it's visual and kinesthetic.

In order for maps to work as a conversation starter, however, they have to be accessible in the conversation centers of your home, such as a living room and dining room. They also need to be big enough to read and examine. My family has found that up-to-date world globes and attractive coffee table atlases are great resources, too, allowing flexibility for passing around. There are some beautiful, yet inexpensive maps online at places like National Geographic.

Children love map games

A map is an ever-ready game board, not because it's anything spectacular in itself, but because as your own enthusiasm for God's eternal purpose spills over, children can't

resist getting in on the action. Short and fast stints in front of the map stir natural curiosity.

"Who can find Brazil first?" "Who knows the names of our missionaries in Brazil?" "Who can find China? This country has many who still don't know Jesus." "Who can find the country of Sudan? Is it in Africa? How far away is it from our home? Let's look up what time of day it is there."

Mapping can gently awaken a missionary heart in your child, even at a young age.

A visible map reminds us to pray continually for laborers

Hanging a map in a visible location reminds us to pray *continually* for the Lord of the harvest to send out *more* laborers (Matthew 9:37-38). They serve as visual reminders that the task of spreading the gospel is far from finished. They keep the world in front of our eyes, country by country, city by city.

For example, look at the 10/40 Window, that vast expanse of population between the 10th and 40th parallel that contains the majority of the world's still-unreached people groups. It encompasses the most heavily populated countries in the world, including China, India and the Middle East. It contains more than 70 percent of the world's people, but only 8 percent of missionary efforts.

But life is busy. While I know about the 10/40, dentist appointments, car repairs, bill paying, house cleaning and repairs all beckon me to relegate it to the bottom of my prayer list, unless I make a deliberate effort to not do so. So when I look at my world map each morning, hanging just above my bed with all those names of unreached countries, the Holy Spirit gives me a reality check. The task ahead is still so big, life is so short, and God's glory is so magnificent, that I must not compromise, give up, or lose heart as a mobilizer before finishing the assignment.

What type of laborers can we pray for, as our eyes scan the map, country by country? Perhaps that God would ...

- * prompt men and women to Ukraine with a pure heart who can be vessels for His service,
- * send to Mongolia those with a burden for discipleship and hospitality,
- * inspire to Iraq men and women with discernment and perseverance.

God our Father hears the intercession for more laborers and delights to answer for His glory. Read and study what God is doing among the nations! Trace it on a map. Talk about it with your spouse, children, and friends. Pray over it. Anticipate that mapping will allow God to do some amazing things in your heart.

Ballmann is a member of Word of Truth Lutheran, Glen Rose, Texas.

PRAYING our children into missions

✻ By Pastor Craig Wentzel

World Mission Vision

The 2007 AFLC Annual Conference asked the World Missions Department to establish and communicate a long-range plan for the future of World Missions. Members of our committee have prayerfully sought God's direction in this area and have set six priorities as visions and goals for the future. They include: a revival of prayer for missions, preparing missionaries from childhood, reaching unreached people groups, pastoral training, developing self- (God-) reliant missions works and compassion for the poor around the world.

The following three articles in this mission edition and two more in the missions columns of May and June will describe these goals. The vision and goals will also be presented at this year's Annual Conference.

In the last few months members of the World Missions Committee have seen that prayer and the preparation of our children are necessary priorities for our mission work in the AFLC. We have a good picture of this necessity in the story of Hannah in I Samuel 1-3.

Hannah is best known for two things: her prayers and her son, Samuel. In fact, if not for the effect she had on others through these two things, we wouldn't know her at all. Faced with a difficult family situation, she prayed, and the Lord answered her prayer by giving her a son who had a great impact on the world, even your small part of it.



The impact of Hannah's prayers

Prayer had an impact on Hannah. Ole Hallesby compared prayer to a person in a boat throwing an anchor to the shore (God) and then pulling on the rope. Is the person pulling the shore closer to the boat or is he pulling the boat closer to the shore? I believe the Lord wanted Hannah to pray so that He could draw her to Himself. He wanted to give her a son, but He had great plans for that son, and she had to prepare him rightly to be useful to God. As Hannah prayed and offered her future child back to the Lord for His service, God eased the burden He had given her for the life of a child. "Her face was no longer sad" (I Samuel 1:18). Then God answered her: "The LORD remembered her. And ... she gave birth to a son" (vs. 19-20).

Hannah's prayers had an impact on the priest Eli. Her prayers were a testimony and an encouragement to him as he observed her earnestness and God's answer. Eli became entrusted with that answer: Samuel.

Hannah's prayers had an impact on Samuel. Every time someone called his name, he was reminded that God hears. He was the answer to his mother's prayers. Hannah told him why she gave him up to the Lord: he belonged to the Lord because of her promise to give him back as His servant. Because of her great example, he also became a man of prayer. Psalm 99:6 tells us: "Samuel was among those who called on His name: They called upon the LORD, and He answered them."

How do Hannah's prayers impact us? Like Hannah, we need to be dissatisfied with the way things are (our comfort zone) and take on God's burden for new life in others. Recently I realized that I had misplaced some very important records. For two weeks I looked everywhere. I became desperate to find that which was lost. I prayed earnestly,

knowing that the Lord knew where they were. When I had no more hope, the Lord brought them to light. The joy and relief I experienced when they were found gave me a taste of what the Lord feels when a lost, eternal soul is found. Will we let the Lord draw us near to Him in prayer so that we can feel His burden for the lost and become urgent in finding them?

The impact of Hannah's child

Samuel had a great impact on Hannah. As God's answer to her prayers, he showed her God's love and power in her life in the most personal way. What she did with Samuel opened the door for the Lord to give her more children (I Samuel 2:20-21).

Samuel had an impact on Eli, God's disobedient servant. Samuel became God's mouthpiece to him, warning him of God's judgment and giving him an opportunity to repent.

Samuel had an impact on the world, leading God's people to victory and setting up the Israelite's first two kings. Psalm 99 puts him on an equal par with Moses, the giver of God's law, and Aaron, the father of the priests for God's people. Samuel was a great prophet and the only king-maker for Israel.

How can our children have an impact on the world like Samuel did? Give them godly and sacrificial examples, a concern for pleasing God, and — most of all — surrender them to the Lord to do with as He pleases, as Hannah did. Are you willing to let the Lord have your children as missionaries?

Wentzel, who serves Living Word Lutheran, Edmore, N.D., and Zoar Free Lutheran, Hampden, N.D., is a member of the World Missions Committee.



TRAIN

The
next
generation

“Go and make disciples of all
nations ... teaching them to observe
all that I have commanded you.”

~ Matthew 28:19-20

✱ By Pastor Nathan Jore

Can you picture Jesus sitting on a hillside teaching his 12 disciples? Can you picture a Ugandan pastor teaching the Word of God to a small group gathered under a mango tree? Teaching is at the core of the Great Commission and is the primary reason my family has come to Uganda. Paul instructed Timothy to take what he had been taught and to entrust it to reliable men who were qualified to teach others (II Timothy 2:2). The goal of AFLC World Missions in Uganda is to equip reliable men who will train others to follow Jesus.

NG



Pastor Kevin Olson, former director of AFLC Youth Ministries, has begun a program called the Ambassador Institute designed to provide training in overseas settings. He came to see the work here in Uganda for two weeks in January, with the goal of helping us to begin the training of church leaders. While he was here, he had the opportunity to discuss the different aspects of training with the local pastors, and to interact with two groups of potential students in the village. He and I also discussed at length the different training needs that exist and the different possibilities for meeting those needs. A three-phase system was suggested. Phase one would be geared toward training lay leaders, and phases two and three would be more advanced training for pastoral ministry.

We are currently planning the first phase of the training program. The main challenges in ensuring a successful beginning are to have godly teachers who are trained and prepared to teach and have all the logistics worked out (location, meals, transportation, materials, etc.). Our goal is to provide training that is affordable, self-sustainable, reproducible and effective. If we succeed in these endeavors, the training will be able to grow and expand quickly, resulting in the training of many people at the grass-roots level.

We are making an intentional effort to keep the first phase from being dependent on outside funding. If it can be

locally sustained, then it can grow and expand rapidly as teachers are called and more students desire to be trained.

At this point, it looks like phase one will take place in village locations that are accessible by bicycle to the students who will attend, thus eliminating the cost of transportation for the students. If the training were to be held in the city, it would drastically reduce the number of students who could afford to attend. The training will take place on Saturdays, thus allowing students and working adults to participate. We are looking at a two-year program that will be divided into three terms per year. The plans I have mentioned here are still tentative, as we are considering the best options.

The most crucial aspect of training is finding the right curriculum that will be taught. We have been considering different methods and styles of teaching with Pastor Kevin Olson, as well as looking at existing materials that others are using. Our main concern is that the training will connect with the students in their cultural context and answer the questions that they have. We are planning to have training in the local language, even though most of the students are quite familiar with English as it is Uganda's national language. This will bring the training closer to home and will not exclude those who are not confident in English. The main teachers will be the local pastors with whom I have been meeting and planning for the past year.

Thank you for your prayers for this new training program that we are hoping to begin yet this year. May God bless the spreading of His Word, that it may produce faith in those who hear.

Pastor Nathan Jore and his wife, Rhoda, and two sons are AFLC missionaries in Jinja, Uganda.



WINDOW

The
world
is
waiting

✱ By Pastor Richard Gunderson

We are thankful to God for the many mission opportunities that have come to us as a fellowship of congregations these past years. They have been like the Macedonian Call that Paul experienced in a vision saying, “Come over and help us.” We are thankful to God for those who have responded and have gone out from among us. We are thankful to God for the prayer and financial support of those who have gone. But what about the unreached peoples of the world? Psalm 96:3 says, “Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the nations.”

In mission parlance we talk about the 10/40 Window. That term comes to us from the 1989 Lausanne II Conference, during which Luis Bush, CEO of Partners International, called attention to the region between 10 and 40 degrees north latitude in which much of the unevangelized world lives. This was not a new emphasis. Dr. Ralph Winter, a well-known missiologist and general director of Frontier Mission Fellowship, addressed this region of the world and its need for evangelism at the 1974 Lausanne Congress, calling it “the hidden frontiers.” R. Alton James, professor of theology and missionary to the Philippines, writes, “This geographical area includes much of the Muslim world, India, China, and most of Southeast Asia. This region has been called World A, which includes much of the unevangelized world.”

It has been more than 30 years from the time Dr. Winter issued a call to reach the unreached. The sad truth is that they continue to be unreached. The AFLC needs to in prayer look through the 10/40 Window to see how God could use us in that part of the world to reach the lost with the message of life in Christ.

But who will go? And where? We can also ask, to whom? Or how? Why we should go is clear in Scripture, when Jesus commanded, “And you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Patrick Johnstone, in a *Missions Frontiers* article (March-April 2007), lists 15 identifiable affinity blocs (see right) or people groups throughout the world. Time and space do not permit me to give even his brief description of them, but it does give you a focus point for prayer. It is time for you to go to God’s window of prayer for these nations.

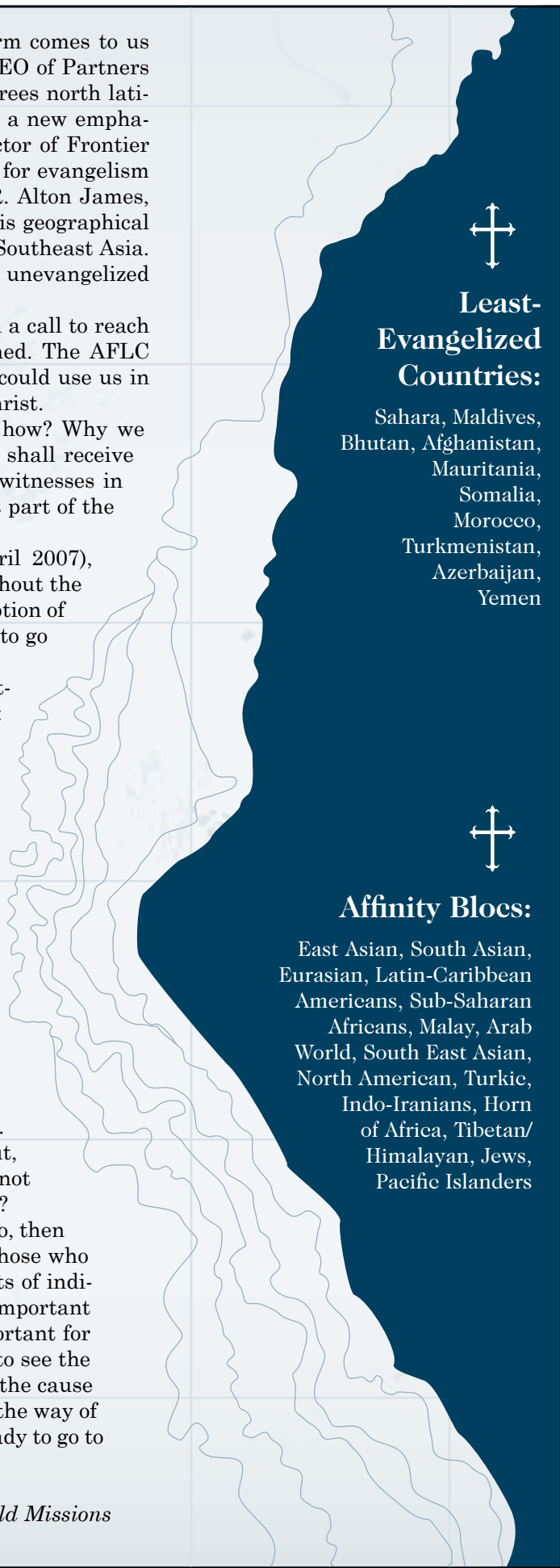
The answer of “where?” and “to whom?” was clearly communicated in a recent *Mission Marker* graphic feature titled, “God Space 08: Surveying All He Loves.” The editors listed the 10 least-evangelized countries (see right). I would suggest that we begin by asking God if He would lead us to one or more of these people groups.

Personally, it has been my prayer to reach the people of Turkey (see Turkmenistan, at right), where the Apostle Paul traveled and planted churches. In a 2007 special issue of *The Voice of the Martyrs*, Turkey is described as 99.64 percent Muslim and only 0.32 percent Christian. While there is a “constitutional guarantee of religious freedom,” according to research printed in a country summary, those rights have not been fully upheld.

I take as a possible open door the following statement from that summary: “As Turkey continues to pursue European Union (EU) membership, there appears to be an increasing openness on the part of authorities to recognize Turkey as a multicultural, multi-religious country.” It was to the church in Philadelphia, located in today’s Turkey, that the angel spoke saying, “I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name” (Revelation 3:8). Is that the open door for us today?

Once we have identified God’s direction, and to whom we are to go, then we must go. We also need to be in prayer that God would raise up those who would be willing to go. I believe God is already placing on the hearts of individuals a burden for the lost in one or more of those countries. It is important for them to be preparing and equipping themselves to go. It is important for us as congregations to catch the vision. It is time to lift up our eyes to see the regions beyond. Join in prayer for those in the 10/40 Window; plead the cause for those who have not had the opportunity to hear about Jesus and the way of salvation in Him. Let us under the direction of the Holy Spirit get ready to go to that God-appointed people group.

Gunderson, assistant to the president of the AFLC, serves on the World Missions Committee.



Least-Evangelized Countries:

Sahara, Maldives, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Mauritania, Somalia, Morocco, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Yemen

Affinity Blocs:

East Asian, South Asian, Eurasian, Latin-Caribbean Americans, Sub-Saharan Africans, Malay, Arab World, South East Asian, North American, Turkic, Indo-Iranians, Horn of Africa, Tibetan/Himalayan, Jews, Pacific Islanders



HOME

In
your
own
backyard

✻ By Pastor Rick Long

Have you heard the question before — or maybe been the one to ask it: “What is Home Missions?” The word *missions* is connected in many of our minds with the spread of the gospel message to foreign nations. To connect the word *missions* to the word *home* perhaps just doesn’t compute.

Missions: places where someone is sent

It is probably good for us to be reminded of the meaning of the word *missions* itself. It is derived from a good Latin word meaning “send,” similar to the word *apostle* in the New Testament. Therefore, missionaries are those who are sent by other believers to go to a specified destination on their behalf to minister to others in the name of Jesus — both proclaiming the gospel message and demonstrating Christ-like love.

Home: the United States

The word *home* in Home Missions refers to the home country where we live — for us, the United States. There is a need to send workers into the spiritual harvest not only in foreign nations around the world but also to send laborers into the harvest that is so plentiful in our own home country. In speaking to His disciples in Acts 1:8, Jesus said, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses unto Me, in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.” Clearly, it is Jesus’ intent that in taking the gospel to those who have need of Jesus we not overlook those who live in our own city, state, or nation. So the title Home Missions refers to the work we are doing right here near home, in the United States, to establish new congregations for the sake of reaching lost souls in new areas.

Home missionaries

Because the work of establishing a new congregation even here in parts of the U.S. is often cross-cultural and certainly is ground-level work, we have begun to see even more clearly the need to recognize our pastors who lead these efforts as true missionaries — home missionaries as contrasted with our world missionaries. These men and their families are also in need of our prayer support and encouragement. How good it would be for specific congregations to adopt a Home Missions congregation and its pastor for focused prayer, encouragement, and even financial support.

Home Missions ... and the congregation

Home Missions congregations are, by definition, congregations that have been accepted by our AFLC Home Missions Committee into home mission status. Though the committee members do not have all the answers to every question that

may arise in establishing new congregations, a healthy process for beginning work in a new area has been developed over the course of years. The committee helps a congregation proceed in an orderly way, is available for giving counsel to the congregation, and often supplies a financial subsidy toward the pastor’s salary in the start-up years.

Home Missions ... and prayer

The key factor in establishing a Home Missions congregation is a commitment to prayer. If there is one factor that has been seen to be consistent over the course of years it is this: Where Home Missions congregations have prospered, there has been a consistent commitment to weekly times of prayer together on the part of the congregation; by contrast, where congregations have floundered, there has been a noticeable absence of prayer. Home Missions Committee members have determined that a base of prayer is so essential to the life and health of a group of people who aspire to begin a new congregation that there is strong encouragement (even insistence) that a consistent prayer meeting be in place before the work is adopted as an approved Home Missions congregation.

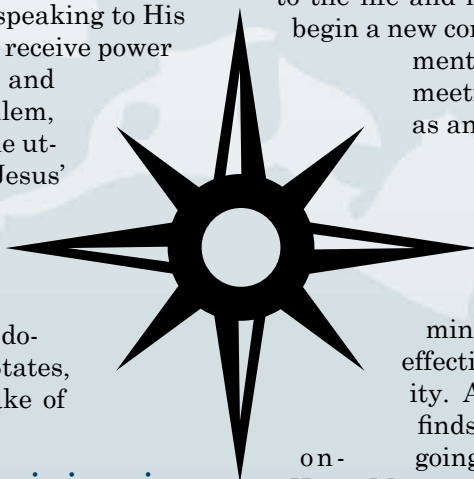
Home Missions vs. established congregations

Of course, our prayer is that each new congregation prosper in its ministry — seeing growth in numbers through effective evangelism as well as financial stability. After several years, such a congregation finds that it is no longer in need of either the ongoing counsel or financial assistance of the Home Missions Committee. It can then request to be removed from Home Missions status to acknowledge having become an established congregation.

Is the work of Home Missions a worthwhile endeavor? It is more than that. It is the commission that Jesus has given us to go into “all the world” to preach the gospel to all people. That commission includes those in foreign lands as well as in our own nation.

God help us as individuals, as congregations, and as the AFLC to work together — both here at home and abroad — to share Jesus effectively and to build congregations healthily.

Long, who serves Atonement Free Lutheran, Arlington, Wash., is chairman of the AFLC Home Missions Committee.



LABOR of love

✻ By Gerri Leach

The planning and shopping were complete. The homemade bars were made, the equipment had been gathered and the sign-up sheets reflected many individuals ready to help. We'd seen the scenes of the destruction left behind by the tornado that tore through Northwood, N.D., on Aug. 26, 2007, and the Lord laid it upon our hearts to reach out to that community. It was time for the labor of love to be put into action.

Twenty-three individuals gathered at Maranatha Free Lutheran Church, Glyndon, Minn., on Nov. 20 to begin the final pre-preparation for the Thanksgiving eve meal. When I arrived the smell of ground beef browning for the chili and the sound of laughter as a load of potatoes was pulled from the dishwasher filled the air. Soon the counter in the center of the kitchen was stacked high with sparkling clean spuds. Crowded around were eager hands equipped with aluminum foil for wrapping.

We paused to ask the Lord's blessing on our efforts and asked that He would draw the weary souls in Northwood to come the next evening and allow us to serve them before they gathered for a community service of Thanksgiving.

As we approached Northwood on that blustery and cold Wednesday morning I felt a heaviness, wondering what we would see. At the edge of town there was a bare slab of concrete on which a skeleton of a new building was beginning to take shape. Across the cropped top of the trees we saw the steeple of Ebenezer Lutheran Church. We passed houses with blue tarps covering sections of roof, homes with boarded-over windows, and several buildings in shambles.

We'd been told that Northwood Evangelical Church was one of the few buildings in town that hadn't sustained much damage. It was the only place large enough to hold the guests that were expected for dinner that evening. When we pulled up to the church and found our way in, I was quite startled to see a construction zone. The carpet was missing and there

was a chill in the air. Downstairs in the kitchen and fellowship hall there were repairmen replacing windows. The people who welcomed us didn't seem to even notice the activity. My sense was that repairs had become so much a part of their lives the last few months that they were just thankful for skilled hands to do the work.

Shortly after 5 p.m. our first guests arrived and a wonderful evening began. We were blessed to have the opportunity to come alongside the people of Northwood and for a short period of time make life a bit easier for them. The most frequent comments we heard were, "Thank you." "It is so nice to be served." "It has been a long time." The phrases were simple, however, the look in the eye, the tone of the voice and the warm handshakes conveyed so much more. These were a thankful people.

As 7 p.m. approached, the sanctuary filled to overflowing as the community of Northwood came together to reflect and give thanks. There was singing, Scripture was read and testimony was given of how our Heavenly Father had guided this community through a very difficult and trying time.

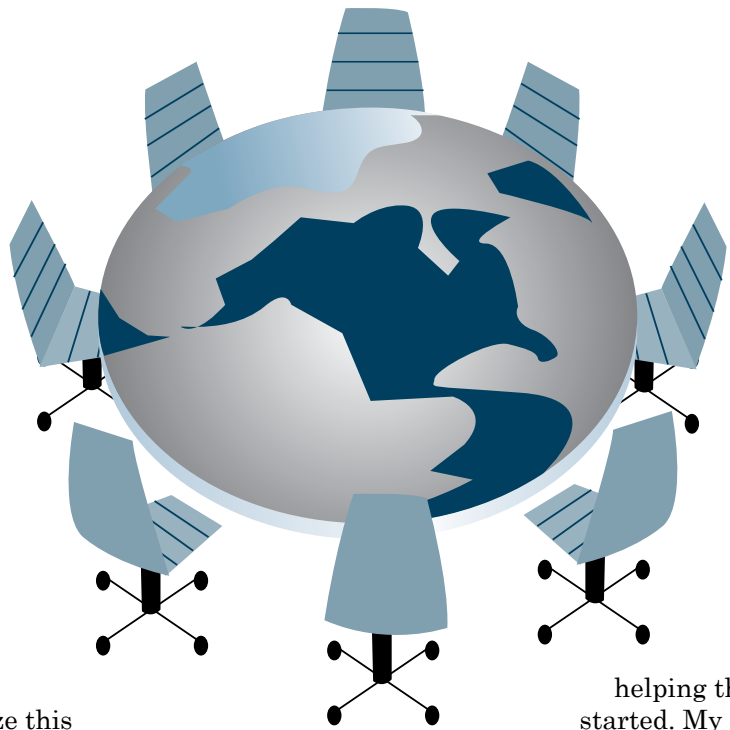
Toward the end of the service all of those in attendance were invited to write their thanks to God on a piece of paper that had been included in the program. We were then asked to bring those papers of thanks to the front and place them in a basket. Sitting at the back of the sanctuary it was very moving to see people of all ages file to the front to present their thanks to God.

Before we left, we paused to visit briefly with Pastor Tim Johnson as he shared what several had asked him: "Why did they come and do this for us?" Pastor Johnson smiled and said it was his pleasure to tell them, "Because of the love of Jesus." It opened a whole conversation to share about our Lord and Savior. What could be better than that?

Leach is a member of Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon. Ebenezer Lutheran is an AFLC Home Missions church.

BOARD WORK

BY ELDWYN VANBRUGGEN



As I sat on a plane headed for the Home Missions board meeting, I began to realize this would be my last of such trips. My term on the board will end at the Annual Conference in June, bringing an end to a very positive experience in my life.

A verse that has been of great encouragement to me is I Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

I had many great ideas about my retirement, but being a part of the Home Missions Committee and a new Home Missions congregation in Mesa, Ariz., has changed much of that. I think of Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the plans that I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future."

About the same time as I came on the board, a new Bible study group was starting in Mesa, and I was asked to lead that group. God has seen fit to bless that group, which later became a Home Missions congregation, Calvary Free Lutheran.

The most successful new church starts that I have observed are those that have a strong ongoing prayer emphasis and a sincere desire for the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Such is the case with the members of Calvary Free Lutheran. I Peter 2:2 says, "Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word that by it you may grow in respect to salvation."

It is so important to have a solid, biblically based constitution and dedicated Christian leadership. Some of our most encouraging new Home Missions congregations are those which have had sister or mother congregations

helping them get started. My prayer is that more congregations would sense that calling.

In my years on the board, Builders Fellowship went from supplying church loans to being able to give gifts and grants or subsidies to new churches. It is such a blessing to give without expecting to get repaid. God has blessed many congregations because of these gifts!

Acts 20:35 says: "In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than receive.'"

I was a part of the board when Lavon Bohling took an early retirement in his career as a pilot and came to be with us as our associate director. We are so grateful for him and his wife, Fern. He has filled many gaps, working with Builder's Fellowship and our FLAPS organization – being its chief pilot, coordinating work projects and much more. What a blessing laymen can be if they will surrender their time and lives to God's service.

Speaking of work projects, have you ever considered being a part of a Builder's Fellowship group going out to help a Home Missions church or a building or remodeling project? Those who have volunteered have come home sincerely blessed, and the congregations have been helped by what they have done.

I would be remiss if I did not say thanks to our director, Pastor Paul Nash, and the rest of our board members for what they are doing. This has been a wonderful experience.

VanBruggen is a member of Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz. He serves on the Home Missions Committee.

Eternal impact

Learning to give in God's time

BY RHODA JORE

Lord, what are we doing here? Are we doing more harm than good?" I must confess that lately I have asked myself these questions as we have faced some difficult issues that seem to have been caused by our presence here in Uganda.

We have disappointed many that we work with here, I know, by not being the fund-suppliers that they had hoped we would be. Many believe that we have no right to deny them from harvesting from the money tree growing in our yard. There is an incredible tension that comes with being "rich" in a destitute country. How are we to be generous but at the same time not create an unhealthy dependency upon us? How do we teach the people that God is their Provider, not the rich white missionary? How do we encourage them to work hard and to use the resources that God has given them — limited though they may be — while they watch us float through life without a struggle or without sweat on our brow? Please pray that we will have great wisdom and discernment in knowing how to give in a way that will have an eternal impact, rather than a temporary one.

As we are entering this next phase of ministry by implementing a training program here in Uganda, we feel its birth pains intensely. The work, effort and preparation are difficult, but the joy, excitement and anticipation are great. God has created a deep hunger for Him and His Word in many of the villages where the ELCU pastors are ministering. Young men are eager to get their hands on the Bible, to be taught and to be sent to minister to their people. They are ready and waiting. Please pray for us and for the ELCU pastors as we set goals and a vision for this program that



will begin, Lord willing, within the year.

One of the greatest blessings we receive as we minister here is the support from people back home. We have never felt alone in this work. We have received countless e-mails and letters from individuals who have let us know that they are consistently praying for us and that they are behind us. I cannot communicate how great an encouragement that is to us. The WMF ladies, especially, have amazed and blessed us with their generosity in sending care packages and with their flood of uplifting e-mails and letters. Many of our missionary friends here often comment on the number of boxes we receive. "Who is sending you all this stuff?" And when we explain the ministry of the WMF, they say, "I sure wish our church body had a ministry like that. How wonderful to have such incredible support!" Thank you, WMF ladies, for all that you have done to bless us as we are so far from home. Thank you for encouraging us with your prayers, love and support. You are Barnabas to us!

Jore serves as an AFLC missionary in Jinja, Uganda, along with her husband, Nate, and two sons, Elijah and Judah.

India: A nation of young people

AFLC India ministers to children in need through St. Paul's Lutheran School

BY PASTOR CRAIG JOHNSON

It was an early evening in India. We were walking along a road on the edge of town. I didn't see many people around. But then 15 college students appeared, seemingly out of nowhere. They were friendly, full of questions and wanting me to take their picture.

That is how it often is in India. Every time you turn around, even if it is on a quiet road on the edge of town, you'll find a group of people. And often, many of those in the group will be young.

According to the World Bank, India has some 200 million young people. "This is the largest number of young people ever to transition into adulthood, both in South Asia and in the world as a whole."

In an effort to reach some of those young people, AFLC India operates St. Paul's Lutheran School in the city of Chirala, in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Approximately 350 students attend, with classes being held through 10th grade. Teaching English is a main emphasis of the school. The majority of people speak Telegu in that part of India, but opportunities expand greatly for a student who learns English.

Some 20 students live on campus in the children's home. Their stories vary. Some cannot live at home because of difficulties or do not have a home. Some have lost a parent to AIDS, so the surviving parent works and lives on campus. Some come from a village that does not have a school. They attend St. Paul's and live there in order to get the chance for an education.

Their stories can be touching and sometimes tragic, but their smiles and laughter can be infectious. They speak a whole different language. They live on the other side of the world. But they're still just kids who like to play.

They like to play cricket. I played it with them and tried to figure out what was going on, but it remains a mysterious sport to me.

We picked sides and played a game with a Frisbee, where each side tried to advance it down the field. We didn't get the field boundaries or all the rules exactly clarified before the game started, so each game ended in a little bit of controversy. It didn't seem that different than being on a playground in the States.

The culture and climate is different but they're still kids. Hide-and-seek and peek-a-boo are fun games to little kids there just like they are to kids in the States.

Almost as much as playing, the kids liked getting



Boys at St. Paul's Lutheran School in Chirala, India.

their picture taken. I heard, "One more picture," numerous times during my two weeks there. Looking at the results in the viewfinder was a ton of fun for them.

The desire to get their picture taken could be a longing to get noticed in a world where they're so often just part of the crowd. It would be easy to feel somewhat insignificant when you're one little kid in the midst of the masses.

They might be just a few in a population of more than 200 million. Many of them are part of what is considered the lowest caste of society. It may seem at times like they face more challenges than opportunities. But God knows their names. Their pictures are always before His eyes. They matter a great deal to Him.

When Jesus was asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child and had him stand among them." He said to "change and become like little children." He made clear the importance of little children by declaring, "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me" (Matthew 18:1-4, NIV).

When we pray for and serve the kids of India, we're serving Jesus. The Lord loves them and longs to have them forever in His family.

The world might not be taking those kids' pictures. They might not be the influential ones of society. But that's not what matters. God notices them and He cares. He has good plans for them and wants them to trust in the promise: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1).

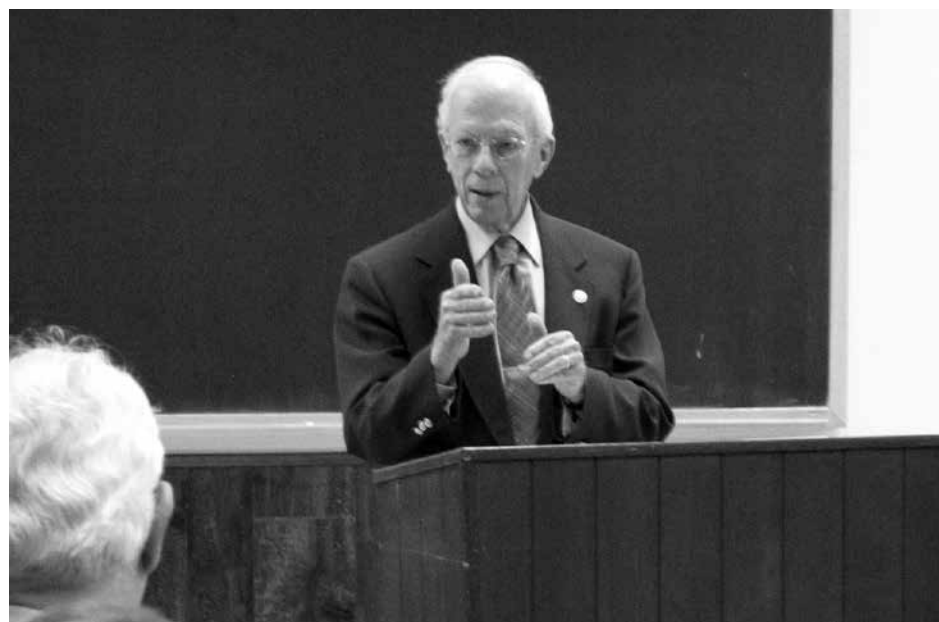
World Missions accepts missionaries

Members of the AFLC World Missions Board have accepted two new missionary families and placed them on loan to other organizations.

Tom and Lidia Lumppio are members of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn. They are both graduates of the Ministry Training Institute at the AFLBS. Tom and Lidia and their family have been serving with World Mission Prayer League in Mexico. They are home in the United States at this time on a short furlough before returning to Mexico.

Steve and Glenda Kvale are missionaries on loan to Wycliffe Bible Translators. They will be stationed in Florida, where Steve will work as a computer specialist. The Kvales are members of Christ the King Free Lutheran, Pipestone, Minn. Glenda is a 1987 graduate of AFLBS.

Information on these missionaries and more can be found on the AFLC Web site (www.aflc.org), World Missions link.



Dr. Carl Vaagenes presented a paper on Sverdrup and Missions: From Augsburg to Madagascar, during the Georg Sverdrup discussion forum Feb. 8 at the AFLC campus. Also presenting papers were Dr. Francis Monseth and Pastor Robert Lee.

Lutheran Bible Translators offers free missions workshop

Three-day event offered to those interested in pursuing ministry in world missions

A free, three-day workshop designed to answer questions people have about becoming a missionary will be held May 29-31 at Lutheran Bible Translators headquarters, 303 N. Lake St., Aurora, Ill.

There is no cost for the workshop. Housing and meals are provided. Participating individuals only need to arrange transportation to and from Chicago. This is the 14th year LBT will host the workshop.

"We're interested in identifying, encouraging, advising and, if appropriate, developing individuals and couples to participate in God's mission," Peter Slayton, Mobilization Coordinator said. "It is common, after listening to attendees, for our LBT staff to refer potential missionaries, whose hearts are leading them in another direction, to other organizations they fit with better."

Some of the topics covered in-depth at the workshop

include: Bible translation in the 21st century, principles of cross cultural engagement, expectations regarding living standards, and educational options for families.

Interested individuals must register online (www.oppo.lbt.org). Click on "IDIOM" and go to the registration form.

Questions should be directed to Peter Slayton at PSlayton@lbt.org or call him at 800-532-4253 ext. 23. Spaces are limited and reservations are made based on the degree of interest in becoming a missionary (very strong, some interest, just curious) and order of application.

Lutheran Bible Translators' mission is to help bring people to faith in Jesus Christ by making the Word of God available to those who do not yet have it in the language of their hearts.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, rural Hawarden, Saskatchewan, Canada, voted unanimously to affiliate with the AFLC-Canada, after withdrawing from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC). Organized in 1909 under the old Lutheran Free Church, the congregation is currently served by interim Pastor Gene Sundby.

Dr. John Eidsmoe will lead special meetings April 11-13 at Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran Church, Ishpeming, Mich. Eidsmoe, an AFLC pastor and professor of constitutional law at Faulkner University, Montgomery, Ala., will be speaking on the Apostle's Creed. For more information, call the church at (906) 485-5714.

Jordan Langness has accepted a position as a youth worker at Prince of Peace Lutheran, Beulah, N.D. Langness, a 2005 graduate of AFLBS, is from Ishpeming, Mich.

Members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee recently accepted resolutions of affiliation from three congregations.

Lakeview Lutheran, Egeland, N.D., and **Trinity-Bergen Lutheran**, Starkweather, N.D., are served by Pastor Rob Beuchler. The congregations recently voted to leave the ELCA.

Faith Lutheran, Blackduck, Minn., is currently served by Pastor Tom Reagan. Having left the AALC, the congregation was most recently independent.

Wisløff devotional traces Jesus' steps to the cross

Recently published, the devotional book is now available from Ambassador Publications

Pietan Publications has recently published a devotional gem in the tradition of wholesome Lutheran pietism. Translated from Norwegian to Finnish and then from Finnish to English, *With Him to Golgotha* will be of great blessing to a new generation of readers on this side of the Atlantic. The author, Fredrik Wisløff, served as a pastor and professor (Augsburg Seminary) on American soil before returning to his beloved homeland where he taught and led a Bible school of the Norwegian Inner Mission Society for several years. In retirement he continued to write mainly devotional books, many of them translated into English.

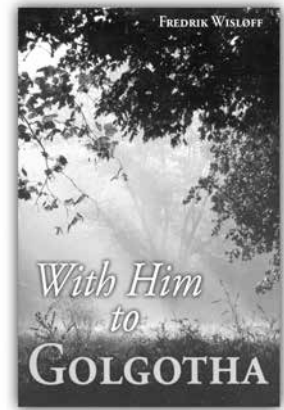
In *With Him to Golgotha*, Wisløff traces the steps of our suffering Savior from Gethsemane to Golgotha. The author has meditated prayerfully and deeply upon the many related texts he treats, both Old and New Testaments, and clearly emphasizes the reason for the suffering of Christ unto death on the cross: the sin of all mankind. "O precious Substitute Sufferer," exclaims the author as he contemplates the extent of God's love in Christ to provide so great a salvation. The author's love and devotion to Christ for His atonement on the cross is evident in each of the 42 devotionals.

The horrific suffering of Christ from the garden to the cross must not elicit mere pity on the part of the observer, Wisløff emphasizes. Rather, it should produce weeping over one's sin, which made the prolonged agony

of Christ unto death so necessary, a weeping unto repentance. However, the author hastens to remind his readers at every turn that the demands of the law that the justice and holiness of God be satisfied have been fully met, graciously and gloriously, through Christ and His atonement. Because of that finished work, the precious gospel promises avail for all who repent and believe.

Wisløff writes these devotionals as one who is in personal fellowship with the Christ of the cross and as one whose deepest desire is to magnify Him. With the Apostle Paul, he would say, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). In life and in death, indeed, for all eternity, the author would glory in the cross. His last words in this marvelous little book capture his sentiments: "The Lamb and the cross will be before my eyes throughout all eternity."

By Dr. Francis Monseth, dean of the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary. To order a copy of this devotional, contact Ambassador Publications at (763) 545-5631, or e-mail parished@aflc.org.



With Him to Golgotha

By Fredrik Wisløff

Cost: \$9, plus shipping

Corrections

Two committee meetings were inadvertently left off the Annual Conference registration form in the March issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*.

The Builder's Fellowship luncheon is scheduled for Wednesday, June 11.

The PIMO luncheon is scheduled for Thursday, June 12.

Both luncheons, hosted at the conference site, will be available for \$8.50. A corrected copy of the registration form is available at aflc.org.

Book of missionary stories coming soon

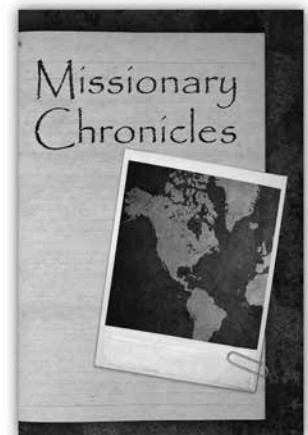
Reduced price offered on early orders through Parish Education

Pre-publication orders are now being accepted for the new *Missionary Chronicles* book to be published by Ambassador Publications in June.

Missionary Chronicles is a collection of approximately 40 short stories with discussion questions and is intended for use in family devotions and Sunday school. The purpose of this nonfiction book is to create an awareness of mission work around the world, to remind people to pray for missionaries, and to encourage people to consider God's personal call to missions.

Pre-publication orders received by June 1 will be available at the introductory price of \$8 per book, plus shipping and handling. After June 1, the price of the book will be \$10. Orders will be shipped after June 15.

AFLC World Missions will be offering a gift copy of the book to Annual Conference attendees in June. Thanks to the national WMF for their financial support of this important mission project.



Missionary Chronicles

Cost: \$8, plus shipping, if ordered before June 1. Otherwise, \$10.

JEREMY VANCE

My relationship with the Lord began at the age of 6. I came to trust in Jesus Christ as my Savior after going forward at an altar call during special services for children. From the beginning as a child, I had a desire to tell others about Jesus, and so would talk to children from the neighborhood or at local playgrounds. After graduating from high school, I went to AFLBS. I went through a real period of growing during my time there. Through a series of difficulties, God brought me close to Himself, and I came to know of the faithfulness of God during trials. I



believe God also placed a call for full-time Christian ministry on my heart, but He did not give me any specifics at that time. Unfortunately, I did not seek His heart regarding this and went into a time of spiritual decline during my time at Northwestern College, St. Paul.

I went after other interests that hurt me spiritually, yet God continued to be faithful. A verse that God kept

bringing to my heart was Jeremiah 29:13, "You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart." He kept knocking at my heart's door during this time, and finally He brought me to the point of putting these other interests behind me to pursue His will. I went into the MTI program to see if God desired me to become a missionary.

I have had a long-standing interest in missions since going on an AFLC FLY team to Brazil back in high school. Within a few months God was moving me to pray about going to seminary. After MTI, I knew that God was not calling me to overseas missions, but He was leading me to pursue being a pastor. Yet my time in Brazil helped confirm my heart for the poor and needy.

It has not always been easy trying to follow God's will. Satan has reared his head a great deal more through my seminary time and internship. I do not imagine it will get any easier, but I know that God is greater than anything the devil can throw at me. I will continue to trust in Him as I seek to do what He has called and given me power to do.

ERIC RASMUSSEN

I was born into a Christian home on Jan. 12, 1976. My parents, Jim and Jane, live in Maple Grove, Minn. Dad is serving as the director of Evangelism for the AFLC. I received God's grace as an infant through baptism, and



I have never known a time when Jesus Christ has not been my personal Savior.

I wish I could tell all of you that my relationship with my Savior has been a close one all of these years, but that is not the case. Despite my shortcomings, God has blessed me with several constants in my life: loving and godly parents, great churches and pastors, and

most of all, His faithfulness.

I attended AFLBS after high school and went on to Northwestern College in St. Paul, Minn. I really enjoyed my education at these two Christian schools, but I felt that I didn't know what direction God was leading me. I worked both at Northwestern and AFLBS, doing different kinds of work. But I knew that God wasn't calling me to a full-

time career in any of those fields. I started realizing that I had been fighting off God's calling in my life, a call to go to seminary.

My wife, Rachel, and my daughter, Anna (6 years old), have had to make many sacrifices in these last few years for me to go to seminary, but we believe that this is where God wants us. We are trusting in Him for future plans beyond our year of internship in Williston, N.D.

The most important lessons I have learned during seminary have been spiritual ones. An adoption problem, a false accusation, delays in our internship assignments, and a tough class schedule made my last months at seminary feel pretty miserable. During these tough times, my wife brought to my attention Psalm 62. "My soul waits in silence for God *only*; From Him is my salvation. He *only* is my rock and my salvation" (my emphasis). That little word "only" really gave me comfort. The *only* place I was going to find release, the *only* one in my life that was strong enough to be my foundation when everything was going wrong, the *only* one is God my heavenly Father.

MARC RAKOW

My fourth birthday was spent transitioning to Nicollet, Minn., where my parents, Donn and Wanda, settled in 1978. I spent my years there until leaving to attend college at the University of Minnesota, Morris.

My sophomore year at college became the time when I understood in a personal way that Jesus died for my sins

on the cross. This truth had escaped me all my life, as God always seemed to be far off. However, through the ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, Jesus showed me how much He desired for me to follow after Him.

It was upon graduation that the Lord led me to serve with Campus Crusade in Riga, Latvia. These travels lead me to cross paths with a Minnesota girl named Monica



Temke; we were married within a year of meeting. We joined staff with CCC and served on a team in Sioux Falls, S.D.

We found a church home our first day in Sioux Falls. Pastor Mike Brandt met with us and after finding a tremendous welcome from Abiding Savior that first Sunday, we had found a family of believers that years later made it possible to

follow God's call to seminary.

During seminary there has been one constant that continued to be impressed upon me; a deeper understand-

ANDREW COYLE

I count it a real blessing to be from a Christian home, where the grace of God given to me in baptism was nurtured as I grew in faith. I was born to Mike and Vonne Coyle Nov. 9, 1980, in Tyler, Minn. I grew up in the small town of Nicollet, Minn., and my home church is Word of Life Free Lutheran in Mankato, Minn. Following high school, I attended AFLBS and graduated in 2001. The following year I enrolled in the Ministry Training Institute and completed my internship in Petrozavodsk, Russia. It was during this time that I believe God called me into the ministry.

I was blessed to marry Monica Olsen on Aug. 16, 2003. I graduated from Northwestern College, St. Paul, Minn., in 2004 with a BA in Intercultural Studies, and was accepted to study at AFLTS beginning the fall of 2004. Our first child, Moriah Grace Coyle, was born March 12, 2006,



RON BRUBAKKEN

I was born Dec. 3, 1949, to Henry and Esther Brubakken, both of whom have gone home to the Lord. I grew up in Hoople, N.D., and after graduating from high school and attending a year of college, I enlisted in the U.S. Navy.

In 1969 I married Barbara Fedje, and for the next five years we were stationed in California, Virginia and Wisconsin. In 1976 we returned to Hoople, where I worked on the farm until becoming a rural mail carrier in 1978. We had both grown up in the American Lutheran Church and sensed a leading from the Lord, but struggled with the changes

happening in our church.

In 1989 Barb and I, along with our children Tim, Jeff and Diane, moved to Portland, N.D., where I was appointed postmaster. It was at this time we were invited to attend Valley Free Lutheran Church in Portland. During our years there we came to realize the AFLC's positions on

ing of law and gospel. The reality that we are completely destitute and directionless apart from God is a fact that can never be shaken. However, the deep riches of God's grace have met and exceedingly covered our depravity. Amazingly, we stand clothed and comforted in Christ.

It has been a great experience as an intern at Bethel Free Lutheran in Minot, N.D. My wife, Monica, along with our children, Lydia (4), Julia (3), and Boaz (1), are thankful for the blessed fellowship we have enjoyed in the AFLC.

and we look with anticipation to the birth of our second child this August. Monica and I were placed at St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church in Salinas, Calif., for our internship. It has been a great experience and much has been learned. I look forward to the completion of my seminary studies this May.

My time studying at seminary has been very formative in my development as a person as well as in preparing for the ministry. Through my studies, the Lord continues to impress upon my heart the need for complete dependence upon Him in all facets of life, especially ministry. One verse that has been meaningful for me through this time has been II Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." My wife and I are excited about the Lord's next step for us, knowing that He will give us all we need to accomplish what He calls us to do.

Scripture and doctrine were what we had been seeking. In 1994 we moved to Grafton, N.D., where I served as postmaster and later moved back to Hoople to care for Barb's parents. In 1998 I felt led to resume my education at the University of Minnesota, Crookston, where I received a bachelor's degree in information networking management in 2001. We attended Bethel Free Lutheran Church in Grafton, and when the opportunity came to speak in area churches, God led me to accept.

It was through these opportunities that God's plan for me was revealed. I simply responded to God that I was willing if He wanted to use me. His reply has been working in my heart, ever since. I have been richly blessed these last four years in seminary to have been given the opportunity to study under the excellent faculty that we have. It is a true delight to see the personal belief and testimony that comes forth in their teaching. They are a great example in walking out the servant attitude we are to have in serving Christ.

February memorials

AFLBS

Frieda Lee
Harold Johnson
Ingeborg Berge
Ella Nelson (3)
Margaret Foleide
Agnes Hanson
Hazel Berg
Roy Feiring
Edna Lee
Theodora Nappen
Alice Moran
Lois Enander
Bonnie Brown
Jack Parks
Carl Melland
Rachel Frostad
Agnes Haakenson
Eva Kleven
Diane Iverson
Rance Fretland
Tracy Prohaska
Perry Lokken
Cody Anderson

AFLTS

Orville Anderson
Gloria Nelson

FLAPS

Lester Mickelson

General Fund

Mrs. Semonious

Home Missions

Orville Anderson

Parish Education

Morley Thompson

World Missions

Orville Anderson

... in honor of

AFLBS

Dorothy Presteng

Home Missions

Ken Nash

Spicer, MN, church makes plans for 125th anniversary

The members of Green Lake Lutheran Church, Spicer, Minn., invite you to celebrate with them the congregation's 125th anniversary on Aug. 17. For further information, please contact Tracy Clark at tracaclark@hotmail.com or call (320) 354-5366.

Caretaker position available

Bethany Bible Camp managers look toward offering camping all year

Are you looking to live by a beautiful lake with a great view, tremendous fishing, a sandy beach and wonderful wildlife? Then come and join the staff at Bethany Bible Camp near Bemidji, Minn. We are in need of a part-time caretaker and are looking to hire preferably by May 1.

Bethany Bible Camp is owned by the AFLC North Central District churches. Currently a summer camping facility, it may expand to year-around camping. Benefits for the caretaker include housing on-site, paid electricity, and a beautiful facility to personally enjoy.

For more information on the position, contact Pastor Alan Arneson at (218) 435-1590 or email calvary@gvtel.com.

National Day of Prayer breakfast planned

A breakfast to mark the 57th Annual National Day of Prayer in the west metro of the Twin Cities is scheduled for 6 to 8 a.m. May 1 at the Medina Entertainment Center Ballroom, Medina, Minn. The keynote speaker is Paul Ridgeway, Wayzata businessman and event planner. The program will include praise and worship music, patriotic pageantry, and prayer. A continental breakfast will be provided. Tickets are \$16 (\$20 after April 21).

Reservations can be made by sending attendees' names along with a check payable to Vision of Glory – NDOP, 13200 Hwy 55, Plymouth, MN 55441. For more information, call Dar Sjostrom (763-473-3730) or Helen Oslund (763-544-4559 or mhgdoslund@comcast.net).

ARC events this spring/summer

The Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis., will host several AFLC events this year under the theme: "God's Plan of Salvation," (Ephesians 2:4-5).

The **Men's Retreat** will be April 18-19 with Pastor Jim Ritter leading under the theme, "Every Man Needs a Life." The cost is \$65 with the option of staying Sunday night and breakfast for an additional \$20.

Fire Up Youth Camp, a week-long camp for those in grades four through seven, will be held June 22-27. The cost is \$185 per student. Studies will be led by Scott and Jill Lee.

Kids' Camp, a weekend camp for kids in grades one through three, will be held June 27-29. The cost is \$75 per student.

Family Camp will be held July 20-26. The evening speaker is Pastor Michael Brandt. Morning Bible studies will be led by Brian Rieke and Pastor John Eidsmoe. The youth program will be led by Pastor Mark Olson. Vacation Bible school will be provided by an AFLBS summer team. Come for a fun and uplifting week for the whole family! Please note, 2009 dates are July 26-August 1.

For more information on the retreats and camps listed above and other retreats, call (800) 294-2877 or visit the ARC's Web site at www.arc-aflc.org.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- Feb. 29, 2008

FUND	TOTAL (Subsidy)	REC'D IN FEBRUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$360,331	\$20,591	\$65,553	18
Evangelism	113,084	6,523	18,537	16
Youth Ministries	71,249	5,516	16,649	23
Parish Education	116,771	5,720	18,787	16
Seminary	220,252	14,118	37,374	17
Bible School	346,706	19,755	51,252	15
Home Missions	332,985	15,419	39,672	12
World Missions	288,948	36,589	67,582	23
Personal Support	457,495	28,659	87,881	19
TOTALS	\$2,307,821	\$152,889	\$403,288	17
TOTALS 2007	\$2,220,688	\$152,830	\$388,651	18
Goal 17%				
These are the Annual Conference-approved budgets but do not reflect all the financial needs of the departments. Contact the individual departments for further information.				

Thomas in INDIA

This past January, I visited India and spent a few hours in the city of Chennai. Historians believe the apostle Thomas traveled to that same area nearly 2,000 years ago. He died a martyr's death there. The Basilica of the National Shrine of St. Thomas has been built where he was buried, and I had the opportunity to visit there.

After his death, Thomas was buried by the Christians next to a small chapel he had built. I'm certain what he constructed bears no resemblance to the large basilica that sits there today. A lot of things have changed with the passage of time.



Pastor Craig Johnson

As I visited that site I wondered what it must have been like for Thomas when he was there 2,000 years ago. Getting there could not have been a simple journey. Jerusalem is approximately 3,000 miles from Chennai. Thomas prob-

ably did a lot of walking and spent many days on sailing ships. Sitting on planes for a little more than 20 hours from the U.S. doesn't seem so bad in comparison.

Thomas obviously couldn't go on the Internet and check on the current weather conditions in Chennai before he went there. He couldn't send an e-mail to people in India and tell them when he was arriving. He was traveling to a place he probably knew very little about. He most likely went with the expectation it was going to be a one-way trip. But still he went.

Thomas is the disciple who had the most doubts about the truth of Jesus' resurrection. He wanted to put his fingers in the nail marks in Jesus' hand before he was going to believe. Jesus gave him the proof he needed and it led Thomas to declare, "My Lord and my God!" (John 19:24-28).

The disciple who was the last to become convinced became the one who traveled the farthest to share the good news. To go to India in his time meant he had to have been certain of the message he was proclaiming. His questions had been answered. His doubts were gone. He knew Jesus had defeated death and been risen again.

Thomas' burial site is a reminder that mission work in

India has been going on a long time. The AFLC India work is the latest chapter in a long line of the proclamation of the gospel in that part of the world.

Remembering those who have served in missions before us can be humbling. We have no reason for pride, thinking we are the first ones to have the idea of doing missions and the first ones with the dedication to go and send. Followers of Christ have going around the world with the good news of Jesus long before we came on the scene. Many of them made sacrifices for the cause of missions that make what

The disciple who was the last to become convinced became the one who traveled the farthest to share the good news.

we do seem rather small in comparison.

Remembering missionaries of the past can also be encouraging. Their confidence in the truth of the gospel and their willingness to give their lives for it inspires us to do the same. They are part of the "great cloud of witnesses" that surround us and encourage us to "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles" and "run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Hebrews 12:1).

I don't expect Thomas saw a huge number of people come to Christ before he died a martyr's death. He may have been tempted to wonder if the work there would continue on. Christians are only a small percentage of the population of India, but 2,000 years later the work is still going on. Some people are still convinced that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose again from the dead. Some people are still willing to give their lives to tell others the good news. In spite of the trials and the persecution, the evidence of history demonstrates the truth of Christ's promise: "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18).

association retreat center

BY JIM KELLER

Make a DIFFERENCE

Matthew 28:19-20 have been favorite verses of mine for years. Many object lessons based on these verses were presented during my Sunday school classes growing up at Calvary Lutheran in Wallace, S.D. At the time I didn't realize that God would be placing me in a position to talk to and minister to so many people from so many nations, without taking a step outside of this country.

The ARC has the unique opportunity to host groups from all over the world. We hear the Word of God preached in different languages — Spanish, Hmong, Egyptian, Ethiopian, Chinese, or Russian — throughout the year. We also have the opportunity to have many secular groups from schools and other non-church organizations with us for retreats.

At the ARC, we consider ours to be holy ground set apart by God. We pray that the people who come here will grow closer to Him through the quietness and the sharing of His Word. What a wonderful opportunity for a relatively small group of conservative Lutheran people to have as a part of their ministry to the world.

The key word for me in this Scripture is "go." We are not to sit around and wait; we are not to designate someone else; we are not to throw money at ministries. But we are to go out into our world and make a difference for God. We are to teach them to obey. That does not mean

that we necessarily have to be in a classroom setting. We are to teach by example. God wants us to live as Jesus lived. What a great example. Jesus never waited for someone else to do something. He went to the cross for each of us. His love for you and me is that great!

There was a pastor who wore a carnation on his suit every Sunday. Following the service one week, he was asked by a young boy if he could have the flower. When asked why, he said that his parents were divorced, neither one wanted him, so he now lives with his grandma. He wanted to give her the flower as a thank you for loving him.

The pastor started taking the flower off his lapel, but changed his mind and told the young man that he could go to the front of the church and take the big bouquet that was by the altar. The boy was excited. When he left, he was heard to say, "All I wanted was one small flower and I got all these!"

God's love is much like this example. We experience and ask for a small part of it, but when we are ready to receive it we are offered so much more. That's when we realize what a great, wonderful, and awesome God we have who loves and cares for us and wants the very best for us.

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