

THE LUTHERAN 

APRIL 2009

# AMBASSADOR

## *Mission* FIELDS



# My stiff



# neck

BY PASTOR HERB HOFF

I must confess that I have often enjoyed reading those sections of Scripture that talk about the Israelites as being “a stiff-necked people.” I could judgmentally point my finger at their unwilling response as Moses sought to guide them in the pathways that God set before them. All too often they were the unwilling, they were the stiff-necked, they were the hard-hearted.

And it didn’t stop with those of the exodus. Stephen, just before his martyrdom, speaks the truth to those who were standing in judgment over him (Acts 7:51-52, ESV).

You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered.

Yes, I would enjoy those condemning words that spoke the truth about those stiff-necked people.

But my enjoyment was tempered when I read a book by John Fischer: *12 Steps for the Recovering Pharisee (Like Me)*. Fischer takes the 12-step approach to help us “find grace to live unmasked,” which is how he subtitles his book.

Step one: Admit that our single most unmitigated pleasure is to judge other people.

Whoa, that hits too close to home. That simple statement revealed a part of the darkness that hides in my heart. I really do enjoy, even if only secretly and quietly in my mind, judging the

failures of others.

Last month I had surgery to stabilize my neck after a skiing accident caused injury to my spinal cord. Now I have a chunk of titanium on the front of my spine, and six titanium screws fastened into three vertebrae to hold it and me in place.

My new physical reality reveals a spiritual reality that I have done my best to keep hidden. The stiffness of my physical neck has helped me to see a battle that rages in my heart. It’s not just *them* who are a stiff-necked people, it’s me.

I thank God for my neurosurgeon, Dr. Kaczmar. He has helped me to see, through a physical reality, a truth that I struggle and fight with in the secret places in my heart. I am the one who wants it my way. I am the one who too frequently “detests mercy being given to those who, unlike me, haven’t worked for it and don’t deserve it” (step three). This reveals to me the hardness of my heart.

I see again how easy it is for me to “apply teaching and rebuke to anyone but myself” (step five). This reveals my stiff neck.

I am healing from my surgery. But there is sadness that I feel because I know that the physical healing of my titanium-reinforced stiff neck will come about much quicker than the complete softening of my heart, which has been quite comfortable living life with me in charge.

I thank God that He has not given up as He seeks His complete healing and restoration in my life.

*Hoff serves St. Ansgar’s Free Lutheran, Salinas, Calif.*

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God uses men who are weak and feeble enough to  
lean on him.

—Hudson Taylor, missionary to China

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

Is not the commission of our Lord still binding upon  
us? Can we not do more than now we are doing?

—William Carey

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





# Our Bond IN CHRIST



OVER A THREE-WEEK PERIOD this winter I traveled to India and Uganda. There were many times I felt I was in another world. People spoke languages I could not understand, looked different than what I am used to, and lived a lifestyle I am not acquainted with. Words and pictures cannot begin to tell you my experiences, however, I want to share what I can with you and some lessons I learned.

[ BY PASTOR ELDEN NELSON ]



In India I was invited to a widow's house for tea. In this small Indian village home our host, who is afflicted with AIDS and the mother of two children, didn't have chairs enough for our little group. Some of us sat on the edge of the bed. We were served tea and there was very little conversation, mostly smiles and nods. Yet this lady is a sister in Christ. The experience was much like the silent walk I took a few days later with an Indian brother in Christ. We walked without speaking a word, and yet we had fellowship. The widow and the man with whom I had walked in silence each had jet black hair, were brown-skinned and spoke only Telegu. With very few words the Spirit of God joined us in a most unique way as we prayed, and my heart was deeply touched as I realized our common bond in Christ.

I visited India with several men from our AFLC campus, including seminarian Bob Lee and Pastors Del Palmer, Kevin Olson, and Craig Wentzel. Rev. D. Luther Sastry and his wife, Vardhini, were our gracious hosts. It was such a privilege to visit many of the small village churches. Many of our AFLC brothers and sisters live

souls are being saved, and families are being changed in a land where only a very small percentage knows Jesus as their personal Savior. The World Mission Committee is thinking about calling and praying for a missionary family to serve in India.

This is a front-burner need and concern for all of us right now. Oh how our vision, our prayer effort and our giving need to be strengthened.

After two weeks of travel in India, Pastor Del Palmer and I traveled to Africa. In Uganda, we visited with Pastor Nate and Rhoda Jore and family, who are AFLC missionaries. Dr. Lyle Mattson, a member of our World Missions committee, joined us for another interesting week of challenge and opportunity. Here, too, we were encouraged to see how God is at work using individuals like the Jores to bring His Light to the world. Again we were privileged to meet new brothers and sisters in Christ.

Why did we go to such faraway places? Our purpose was to encourage, to teach, to share Jesus, and to bring back reports to the U.S. of what God is doing in India and



in thatched roof houses. Their churches are small and simple, but filled with joyful music. They truly are houses of prayer. At the conclusion of each service, people would come to the front of the church for prayer. On a couple of occasions we were asked to officiate at baptisms. Seven adults and two children were baptized at one service.

For more than 30 years we have been supporting the work in India, a land of more than 6 billion people, most of whom live in darkness. Only God knows how many of these beautiful lives have been touched by Jesus. Prayers spoken by His people in America for the people of India are being answered. The Scriptures are being opened,

Africa. While traveling I realized again how important it is to encourage and connect with our AFLC missionaries wherever the gospel is being shared. A good way to be informed and to be able to pray for specific needs is to check the AFLC World Missions Web site ([www.aflc.org/world-missions](http://www.aflc.org/world-missions)).

May the admonition of Jesus be always before us, "We must do the works of Him who sent me while it is still day. Night comes when no man shall work" (John 9:4).

*Nelson, a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn., is the president of the AFLC.*





# ON CONTRIBUTING TO

HOW MUCH SHOULD a congregation give to missions? What would be considered a fair yearly amount toward spreading the gospel around the world? Georg Sverdrup (1848-1907), founder of the Lutheran Free Church, attempts to answer this often asked question in the following excerpt taken from an article he wrote shortly after the Lutheran Free Church established a mission field in Madagascar. Though the method Sverdrup suggests for arriving at the amount may be unexpected, it is, nevertheless, a challenge that congregations would do well to consider today. The rest of this article, along with its companion piece, “On Awakening a Mission Interest,” will appear later this spring in *The Sverdrup Journal*.

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[ BY GEORG SVERDRUP / TRANSLATION BY JOHAN KOREN ]

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# FOREIGN MISSIONS

**T**he financial affairs of foreign missions have often been a cause for misunderstanding among believers and unbelievers alike.

Many seem to think that foreign missions are so holy and exalted that money and foreign missions must not be mentioned on the same day.

Others take the opposite approach and think that foreign missions are no more than a question of money. So long as you have enough money, you can hire missionaries and the work is done.

Still others would rather have the financial affairs of foreign missions left as unclear and uncertain as possible, ...so that it is left, as it were, in God's hands as to what the amount will be. This has the additional advantage that the miser can give little, and the generous much, without anyone ever noticing.

Yet others would have it that there is something so extra good and meritorious in giving to foreign missions that a small amount contributed to foreign missions has much more value than a much greater sum given to the work here at home.

The upshot of these different attitudes, however, is usually that foreign missions are shoved into a corner or annex of church work and become an extra item about which people concern themselves only on special ceremonial occasions, as a kind of ornament or embellishment to congregational life. ...

It might, therefore, be useful to exam-

ine this issue a little more closely and to ask: How much should we contribute to foreign missions?

... Jesus Himself gave us two tasks in regard to the work of the Kingdom of God: the one is to preserve the Christian faith at home, for our own blessing and that of our children. And the other is to spread the gospel among unbelievers, so that the Kingdom might reach unto all nations. In Matthew 28:18-20, missions actually precede the work of the congregation—for reasons easily understood.

In that understanding, we can say that it more or less follows how we ought to handle our contributions or offerings. For the two tasks that we have received from God must both be, in essence, equally important, equally solemn, equally holy. Perhaps we might also call them equally costly, since we know at least that they are equally precious.

The rule, therefore, becomes that whatever we employ for ecclesiastical purposes here at home, that same amount should also be contributed to the work of God's Kingdom abroad.

Is that too strict a rule? Probably not any stricter than another rule with which we are all familiar: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

But let us look more closely at this. We have been placed in a somewhat unusual position in this country: we are building everything from the ground up, and that costs much money. ... Large sums go to this work. If we are to provide an equal amount to missions, won't that be too much for us?

Perhaps. And yet out there on the foreign mission field, everything also has to be built from the ground up. ...

On the other hand, we still have so far to go, before we are doing just as much for foreign missions as we are doing for the work at home, that in our situation it would probably not be prudent to set ourselves such a high goal at the very outset. ... Would it not be better to put home missions and foreign missions together on the one side, and put all other ecclesiastical expenses, such as salaries for pastors and teachers, support for the building of churches, schools, etc., on the other, and then decide in our hearts that whatever we contribute on the one side, we will also, with God's help, contribute the same amount on the other?

...Well, it certainly would be a start. ... But let us first endeavor to accommodate this thought: we have two equally significant tasks to do as Christians: to preserve the Christian faith at home, and to spread that faith abroad. Is it not then reasonable that we contribute equal amounts to both of these tasks?

The more we consider this matter in the light of the Word of God and allow the Spirit of God to guide us in our thoughts, the clearer it will become to us that there is good purpose in seeking to use our earthly goods according to the will of God, and to be godly stewards of that which the Lord has entrusted to us.

*Koren, a professor and coordinator of library media at Murray State University, Kentucky, is a graduate of AFLTS.*





# Long Range DISCIPLESHIP

**¡ALL ABOARD!** After a time of prayer for safety by the church elders, all 20 youths climbed onto the public bus, and we were off. The cramped seats and smells of diesel—and worse—did little to quell the high spirits as we pulled out of the bus terminal. There are few things I enjoy more than to go on an adventure with Ecuadorean youths from the church.



[ BY JUSTO PILLMAN ]





The purpose of our trip was one of adventure and mission. We were headed to Susudel, a small town in the mountains two and one-half hours from the city of Cuenca, Ecuador.

The trip had been carefully planned with multiple objectives in mind, the main one being to share the gospel, but also to share used clothes and toys with the needy people of the area. The objective for the lives of the youths was to expand their vision for ministry and, more specifically, give them an opportunity for leadership training.

Four months ago I arrived in Ecuador to serve with the youth in the national church and help with homeschooling families. More than being sent from the U.S. to serve in Ecuador, the call from the Lord came directly through the national Lutheran church in Ecuador. The church had called me to come and be a part of their ministry. So I was more than pleased to be invited along to help lead the trip to Susudel.

Probably the greatest blessing of the trip was the involvement of the laypeople from the church. Polivio works for the provincial government as an agricultural consultant. He frequently visits Susudel as part of his work and knows the area, the people, and their needs. With his heart to serve these needy people and many contacts in the area, Polivio headed up and planned the trip. Two other mature men from the church came along as counselors and to teach during Bible sessions.

Polivio also invited along five college students from the church to help as counselors. Each of the young men was paired up before the trip with those responsible for teaching the sessions. This gave time for them to work together with an experienced teacher and prepare the Bible teaching. It was a great mentoring opportunity for these older youths to learn how to prepare and teach from the Scriptures. Three of the college students who came along were young ladies. Each of them shared and directed morning Bible studies with the girls in their cabin/room.

Thanks to the Lord's grace and Polivio's careful planning, the three-day trip went by smoothly and all too fast. The youths pitched in and helped first with the evangelistic service and then with distributing the clothes. After this, we had time to go on a hike up the rugged mountainsides in the area, tour some of the farms (Polivio's idea), and go for a swim in a mountain river. Brrr!

As I reflect back over the trip, one of the biggest things I learned was the importance of long-range discipleship. Two of the

college students who came along to help as counselors are granddaughters of a couple my parents disciplined 25 years ago. What a blessing to see these youths serving the Lord

and continuing in the steps of their parents and grandparents. This same vision for long-range discipleship from 25 years ago is continuing on in the lives of the youths today. The time the older youths spent preparing and teaching the Bible sessions is indispensable preparation for the future.

May the Lord continue to prepare these youths to be the spiritual leadership for the upcoming generations. This long-range discipleship is exactly what Paul was referring to in II Timothy 2:2, "And the things that thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, commit thou the same to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also."

At first glance, this verse seems to refer to two generations of instruction, but on second glance we see at least four. Paul (1) instructed Timothy (2), who was to teach faithful men (3) who would in turn teach others (4) also.

The Lord gives each of us opportunities to teach and share our faith. In the New Testament, Jesus called it discipleship. The first and most important location to disciple is in our very own home, but there are other opportunities, as well. What about teaching Sunday school, mentoring youths in your church, leading a neighborhood Bible study, or a lunch-hour Bible study at work? What opportunities has the Lord given you?

One important point we often forget about regarding discipleship is that it must be done with a long-range vision. Jesus prepared His disciples to spread the gospel throughout the world. Paul disciplined Timothy so he would teach faithful men. You, too, must have the vision that you are teaching and discipling future teachers and pastors. You must be giving them the foundation and tools to teach and pass on their faith to their own children, students and disciples.

It's a exceptional challenge, but important to accomplish for the sake of the next generation of believers and the world as a whole. Praise the Lord that His grace and His Word are all sufficient. They are all we need to accomplish long-range discipleship.

*Pillman is a short-term assistant with AFLC World Missions serving youths at Paz de Dios church in Cuenca, Ecuador. His home church is Christ the King, Wilson, Wis.*



# Desperate MEASURES

AS A PASTOR in a Home Missions church in Southern California, I'm learning that ministry is not exactly a science.

I still have a lot to learn. And the team of leaders the Lord has placed here in Camarillo agrees. "Let's do what works," they say. Instead of trying to meet our own church's needs, our leaders are thinking about the needs of people outside of Christ.

[ BY PASTOR JIM JOHNSON ]





Our veteran church leaders are willing to ask the hard questions about our relationships with people who don't follow Christ. "How can we meet them?" "What do they care about?" "How can we build bridges for the gospel of Jesus?"

So we pray, seek, and listen—and then we go with the flow. Don't get me wrong. It's not compromise. It's not "try something new." In fact, some of the outreach tools we use are old and traditional. We've started a new Foundations service on Sundays at 8:45 a.m., with hymns, creeds, the Lord's Prayer and responsive readings. It appeals to people with long church backgrounds. We're also one of few Protestant churches here, among 25 churches, that holds Lenten services on Wednesdays, between Ash Wednesday and Easter. Lent is a concept that connects mostly with people from a Roman Catholic tradition here. But when we hold them in large homes, with good meeting spaces, people come and enjoy it and bring their friends.

I'm learning that outreach-based ministry keeps you on your knees. You can't teach it in a class. You have to pray, listen, make friends with people and learn what the Lord is prompting us to do. As we make friends and learn to listen to the Lord, God gives us ideas.

We've used date nights, baseball clinics, vacation Bible school and Christmas at the Barn. With date nights, we provided free babysitting on Friday nights, using our youths. We invited families who attended our VBS. They can call it free babysitting. We'll call it children's ministry. Couples appreciate it when we provide security and learning for their children. Single moms like the support and the friendship.

As a new church, renting facilities in a public school has left us in desperate straits. The schools close for the holidays, or for two weeks later in the summer for fall cleanup. Without any place to meet, we thought about canceling our Christmas Eve services, or renting a local theater, a hotel meeting room (Christmas at the Inn) or using the YMCA.

All doors were closed. And so we called, in desperation, a family that owns a 100-year-old barn two miles south of our house. They said yes! And soon one service became two, and two became three, and instead of just holding a simple service for our 70 regulars, we drew 350 people to join us for Christmas at the Barn. Families enjoyed a Christmas Eve service with carols, hay bales, live animals and apple cider at 3, 5, and 10 p.m., inside that beautiful barn. It was fun, and many people responded to our message.

In a similar approach, we've held worship services in

the new city park, preceded by breakfast. In April we held a Good Friday service in an outdoor wedding chapel at the foot of a mountain that looks like Golgotha. We planned for 50, but 125 people came. Some have started attending our regular church services.

We've started a softball league for parents and kids with a large clincher ball. We used college basketball players and an assistant women's coach and offered a basketball clinic in a local park. Twenty children came, and their parents stayed to watch.

In conjunction with the Beijing Olympics, we held a Kid's Olympics for four days a month beforehand. The kids loved it. We followed up the events with a puppet skit, a devotional and an awards ceremony. The parents loved it just as much as the kids.

In November we tried a Thanksgiving-themed outing. We baked four turkeys, gathered 200 pumpkins, asked a family to bring their horses, and held a country get-together at the local farm where we hold the Christmas service—150 people came to that, too. We preached the message of the cross, and several people received Jesus as their Savior.

To be frank, few of these ideas came as the result of our leadership team's creative prowess. Usually it's the result of desperation. We had nowhere else to go, and our people were bugging us to cultivate events that their friends would actually want to attend. And so, I have to admit, that the past three years of church-planting ministry in Southern California have left me realizing how much I have left to learn—and how much time I've wasted in the past just trying to do church in a way that would please members who are already in fellowship with Christ.

I've learned a lot about I Corinthians 9:22. "To the weak, I have become weak," writes Paul to that congregation of new believers in Corinth, "to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." Paul wanted to "share in the blessings" of the gospel (vs. 23), and so he made himself "a slave to everyone" (9:19), "to win as many as possible."

That's what our church is doing here in Camarillo. Where God has placed us, we are learning to win as many as possible—even if it means baseball, barn services and adding a traditional service at 8:45 on Sunday mornings.

*Johnson serves Good Shepherd Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif.*



# El Nombre DE CRISTO

WHAT A BLESSING it has been to be an eyewitness to the Lord's rescue process. Eighteen years ago, when in our retirement years, the Lord assigned us to a poor colonia in Reynosa, Mexico. Back then, we could never have been able to comprehend the development of this area to what it is today.



[ BY ALICE KINNUNEN ]





During the first eight years, my husband, Eldon, and I, with very little help, and while slowly learning to converse in Spanish, provided for the physical needs of the poor living in a garbage dump. The Word of God was also preached by friends in connection with this project. Medical needs were many, too, and aid was given for children to attend school.

In 2000, we started to receive funds for building houses, as well as free semi-trailer use to transport goods from Upper Michigan to storage sheds on the American side of the border. Later, little by little was brought across to our colonia. More people became interested in helping, including a church group during spring break.

This winter we are in the midst of building our 21st and 22nd houses. We've also built a church and have completed several additions and many remodeling jobs. The church group has done other jobs, too. Each home that we build has several rooms, nicely furnished, and comes with indoor plumbing and electricity.

But that is only one side of the story. Most importantly, we have seen miracles of changed lives, many as a result of having their physical needs met first. The most

dramatic change has been the conversion of drunken men into wonderful husbands, fathers and followers of the Lord. Some have even set up house churches to reach out to their neighbors, as well as initiating ministries to children.

Many children have been transformed by help, love and attention through sponsorships. In many cases, their living conditions have improved.

Now the people we reached are telling us about other poor people in different areas that they are concerned about. They travel with me to bring them help *en el nombre de Cristo* (in the name of Christ).

In the midst of these ministries, we have gotten increasingly attached to the people we serve and feel totally at home with them. We have a lot of grandchildren!

We rejoice greatly when we view what our Lord has done. We have witnessed the Lord defending the oppressed, the poor and the needy. He has rescued many and now He is using them to rescue others. Hallelujah.

*Kinnunen and her husband, Eldon, are members of Maranatha Free Lutheran, Chassell, Mich.*



[ ALASKA ]

**WHAT COMES TO MIND** when you think of winter in Alaska? Do you think of long periods of darkness, extreme cold and a time to “hibernate”? You would be right about the darkness to some extent, although here in Naknek, in southwest Alaska, the amount of light and dark is not so much different than in the Upper Midwest. We get about six hours of low sunlight on December 21. You would also be right about the extreme cold. We have had our share of double-digit minus temperatures this winter, but also some Chinook winds that have come up the Aleutian chain and brought us brief periods above freezing. Someone from northern Minnesota would feel right at home in Naknek’s winter weather.

[ BY PASTOR JEFF SWANSON ]





# Season of OPPORTUNITY

The hibernating part is where one would be wrong, especially in regard to ministry and opportunity for spreading God's Word. It is true that most tourists, fishermen, cannery workers and summer work teams are gone. But as Bristol Bay settles in for the long winter, opportunities for the gospel abound and in some ways increase.

Winter means people spend more time inside. Many in Bristol Bay tune in to the only radio station they can receive here on the FM dial. KAKN radio and the Victory Network are now under the ownership of the AFLC and continue with 24-hour-a-day programming, featuring uplifting Christian music and solid biblical preaching along with local news and weather.

The testimonies we hear of how God is using Christian radio in people's lives thrills our souls. One man locally has listened daily for several years and has been especially touched by the testimonies he has heard on the radio drama "Unshackled." He now testifies of how his own life has been changed. He has become a regular at church, a bold witness in the community, and a dear brother in Christ.

Another man tells of the blessing of his television breaking and how listening to the radio at home many hours a day has changed his life and deepened his walk with the Lord. His mind is dwelling on the Word and his spirit is affected by worshipful, Christ-honoring music. We all might learn a lesson from this man's experience and Paul's instruction: "Finally brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

I was encouraged in January when I flew to Dillingham to broadcast basketball games from a tournament there back to Naknek. I met person after person from Dillingham and villages like Manakotak, Aleknagik, Kakhonak and New Stuyahok who expressed appreciation for KAKN's radio ministry. Others encouraged us to increase our outreach with more translators in other villages. The lady I rented a car from said when her rentals are returned the radios are almost always on KAKN. (Dillingham has an AM public radio station.) Praise the Lord for what He is doing through Christian radio here in Bristol Bay. It is a real ministry of God's Word. Winter does not slow down this ministry, it increases it.

Another opportunity that winter brings is freezing the Naknek River. These days we can drive across the river and are not dependent on good flying weather to have church and Bible study in South Naknek. The crossing is seven miles upriver, and is generally pretty rough. But it is good to be able

to go over whenever we want and also to haul needed supplies across to complete work projects on the church there. We did get stuck on the river recently in a high tide overflow, but that's what keeps life interesting. It may not sound like much, but on a recent Sunday seven South Naknek residents came out to a regular Sunday afternoon service—a record! Each one is a precious soul for whom Jesus died, and we rejoiced at the opportunity to share God's Word.

This winter we have enjoyed visits from former Lutheran Mission Society missionaries, Pastor Tom Olson and Linda Mohagen. Many in the community were glad to renew friendships and to be encouraged in the Lord by them. Alan and Miriam Olson from Kalispell, Mont., spent two weeks here in January doing maintenance work at the radio station and on the South Naknek addition (see page 20). What a help and blessing they were. Winter is a great time to make progress on indoor projects on the mission properties. Next year we are planning on a winter vacation Bible school. When it is dark and cold, children need a place to go and be rescued from video games.

The warmer season of the year here is a time for "making hay while the sun shines." The sun shines nearly around the clock from June to August. People put in long hours fishing (both commercial and subsistence) and preparing fish (canning, smoking, freezing). Folks spend long hours picking berries on the tundra and working with their berries. Subsistence lifestyle is still a way of life in rural Alaskan villages. Because of these activities, church attendance suffers and people wander and stray.

Again, winter is a time of opportunity—when people here have more time. At our church in Naknek we hosted a marriage seminar this winter and evangelistic meetings with a native evangelist in March. We pray that by offering opportunities for the Word in the slow time of winter people will come, God will work and lives will be changed.

It has been a joy to see more people coming to hear the Word on Sunday mornings, afternoons, evenings and Wednesdays this winter. Please pray that we will "make the most of every opportunity" (Ephesians 5:16) and that God will continue to draw people and move in hearts. Lead On, O King Eternal!

Winter in Alaska is cold, dark, filled with cabin fever and caribou hunting. But it is also a time of opportunity. May God help us to make the most of it.

*Swanson is Lutheran Mission Society missionary on loan from AFLC Home Missions in Naknek, Alaska.*

# UP IN ALASKA

BY JANE SWANSON



**A**s I sit down to write, it is a beautiful day here in Bristol Bay. The sun is shining, the sky is blue and we are experiencing warmer temps. Spring is coming! My family is now into our second year of ministry here in Alaska. It has been interesting to experience the four seasons in this part of the world.

It was so fun to experience the fishing season last summer. We put up a lot of salmon by smoking, freezing and canning. We also did a little berry picking, including salmonberries, blackberries, cranberries and blueberries. Our family enjoyed the long daylight hours through the summer. There were bears in our garden and yard. Bluff climbing, beachcombing and hot dog roasts at the beach were also part of our family fun.

Money given to the National WMF for Home Missions in 2009 will go toward the renovation of the apartments in Naknek, as well as toward supporting the Barnabas teams, which visit Home Mission churches during the summer. Thank you for your generous giving.

Ministry here is going forward. It is exciting to see more people coming out to services on both sides of the river, in Naknek and South Naknek, and hearing God's Word proclaimed. The radio station (KAKN) is a great blessing to people in the community and beyond.

My family has had the opportunity to minister occasionally in the village of Aleknagik, which is located about 70 miles northwest of us. It is a beautiful location on a lake with mountains surrounding it. What a privilege to go where people are seeking someone to share God's Word in English. And this is the United States! They now have a native English-speaking pastor, so that need has been met. Praise the Lord! We have been invited back for a visit, and we look forward to going back and seeing the dear folks there. The spiritual need is great in the villages. Pray for open doors for the work to advance in those communities.

Would you or your church like to help out directly in the ministry here in Alaska? The three apartments at the radio station are in need of some basic household items. Would you or your church consider hosting a shower for one of these apartments and sending the items to us? What a blessing it would be to get these apartments supplied in this way. Contact the Home Mission office if you are interested, (763) 545-5631. Lists are available for each apartment.

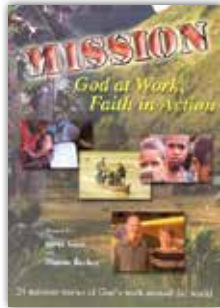
Above all, pray for the work here in Alaska. Pray that Jesus would be lifted up and people drawn to Him. Pray that lives would be changed for eternity. Pray that the value of marriage and family would be realized. Pray for men who will be spiritual leaders in their homes. Pray that more children would come to our children's ministry on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. Pray for our family's health and safety. Pray that God would meet every need of our four older children living in the Lower 48. Pray for our fellow workers here. Thank you for praying.

God is good. Let us press on together serving Jesus.

*Swanson, along with her husband, Pastor Jeff Swanson, live in Naknek, Alaska, where they are Lutheran Mission Society missionaries on loan from AFLC Home Missions.*

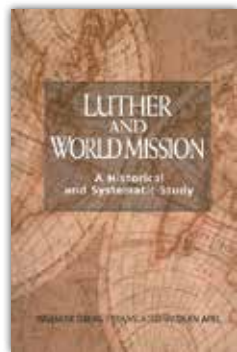
# resources

AFLC Parish Education has a lending library of videos and visualized mission stories. Contact Parish Education at (763) 545-5631 or [parished@aflc.org](mailto:parished@aflc.org) for more information.



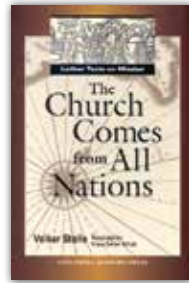
## Mission: God at Work, Faith in Action

Includes 24 segments of mission stories around the world hosted by Steve Saint, son of missionary Nate Saint who was killed in Ecuador in 1956. Feature stories about cannibals transformed by God's love, living water for African villagers, street children in Brazil, and more, bring a new awareness of mission work worldwide. DVD, 225 minutes. \$26.95



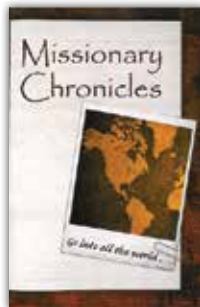
## Luther and World Mission

This classical study by Norwegian scholar Ingemar Öberg adds new insights and information, mining a wide variety of sources within Luther's writings with great care and acumen. Especially through his focused analysis of Luther's writings on the Jews and Turks, the author demonstrates Luther's clear and passionate commitment to gospel proclamation and world mission. \$46



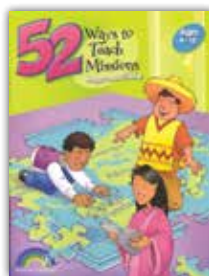
## The Church Comes from All Nations

A collection of key excerpts from the writings of Martin Luther on Christian missions, drawing from the reformer's lectures, sermons, treatises, hymns, and devotional writings, with commentary by Volker Stolle on Luther's understanding of mission in the world. \$16.95



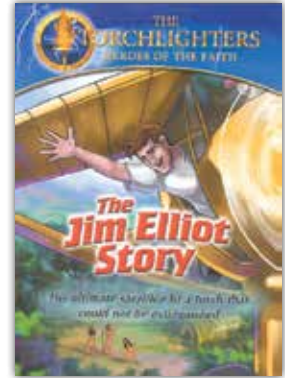
## Missionary Chronicles

Follow the lives of Christian missionaries around the world through 43 short stories. Includes discussion questions, maps, mission hymns, and creative ideas for teaching missions to children. A helpful resource for family devotions, opening chapel time, and Sunday school classrooms. \$10



## 52 Ways to Teach Missions

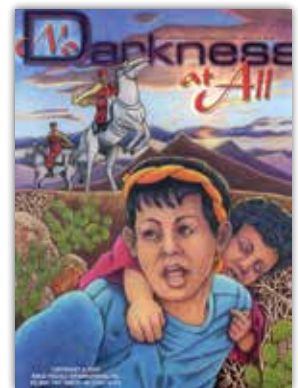
Crafts, games, outreach ideas, and more help teach children and adults to be missionaries in their own neighborhoods plus get them involved personally with missionaries serving in other countries. \$9.50



## Torchlighters: The Jim Elliot Story

Brings to life the story of missionary martyr Jim Elliot, showing his faith in action as he answers God's call to do the seemingly impossible. DVD, ages 8-12, 30 minutes, includes English and Spanish, downloadable leader guide, and student activity pages. \$17.95

Also available in this series: Gladys Aylward, John Bunyan, Eric Liddell, William Tyndale, Richard Wurmbrand.



## No Darkness at All

Hamid and his blind, Muslim sister live in spiritual darkness in Morocco, North Africa. Through the loving ministry of a missionary nurse, their darkness is dispelled when they come to know Jesus the Savior. Vivid full-color visual story with 5 chapters. \$14.95

Available by special order: DVD \$11.95; Visual Story and DVD \$19.95.

Many other visual stories are also available; call for a complete list.



**Joel Baker**

**B**orn July 6, 1951, to Samuel and Zelda Baker, I grew up in a Jewish home and always had an acknowledgement of God as



I went to the Synagogue and was bar mitzvahed. I began searching for a more personal relationship with Him in college. I met my wife, Susan (Cowell), during that time. She had a wonderful, personal

relationship with Jesus and a burden for Jewish people. She challenged me to search the Scripture, particularly prophecies of the Messiah. Through God's grace and doing, I came to accept Yeshua, Jesus, as my Lord and Savior, was baptized, and became a member of a Lutheran congregation with my new wife. Susan and I were married in 1975. The Lord has been present and His Spirit working in my life more and more since then.

I have a bachelor's degree in child psychology from the University of Minnesota, and a master's degree in special education from the University of St. Thomas. I have worked as a special education teacher in the Twin Cities for 15 years; as an elementary education teacher, assistant principal and director of student services at Heritage Christian Academy (Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy) and Living Word Academy for a total of 14 years; and as a staff evangelist for Good News for Israel.

My internship has been spent at Bethany Free Lutheran, Abercrombie, N.D., from June through October 2008, and at Emmaus Lutheran Church, Bloomington, Minn., (my home congregation) beginning in February.

My wife and I have three children, Emily, Anna and Benjamin. I am learning how to trust the Lord, walking step by step, with only enough light for the next step. He is faithful and trustworthy.

**Joe Faldet**

**I** was born Aug. 18, 1982, to David and Diane Faldet. Shortly after that I was baptized at Trinity Free Lutheran Church of McIntosh, Minn., my home congregation. The Lord blessed me through Trinity. It was there that I attended Sunday school and vacation Bible school. It was there that I heard the Word of God preached.



As I look back upon my early years I am amazed at the faithfulness of God in teaching me His ways. Yet even having grown up in such a spiritually rich environment I still struggled with assurance of my salvation through high school and on into my time at AFLBS. It was at AFLBS that the Lord gave me assurance. While I was reading *A Faithful Guide to Peace with God* by C.O. Rosenius, the Lord showed me that I was trying to earn grace. As I struggled with what that meant a month went by. It was during the Missions Conference that Ephesians 2:8-9 came into my mind and there the Lord showed me that my salvation was completed at the cross and there was nothing to add.

After graduating from AFLBS I went to North Hennepin Community College (Brooklyn Park, Minn.) and from there on to Northwestern College (St. Paul, Minn.), graduating with a bachelor's degree in biblical studies. After graduating from Northwestern I went to the Free Lutheran Seminary. While in seminary I was impressed with a sense of the responsibility of the call God placed upon my life. During my internship at Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., the Lord impressed upon me the privilege of the call that He placed upon me.

While in seminary I met Kirsten Carlson, who became my wife on Oct. 18, 2008.

**Seth Forness**

**I** was born on Jan. 15, 1980, to Joel and Rebecca Forness. They raised me in the Christian faith and taught me that being a Christian is more than just a label, but rather a way of life in which the Bible is our only guide and Jesus our best example and Savior. My family moved several times until 1988 when we settled near



Abercrombie, N.D., my parent's hometown, where we joined Bethany Free Lutheran.

After graduating from high school I attended AFLBS to gain grounding in my faith. I then went on to North Hennepin Community College in Brooklyn Park, Minn., to pursue a pre-chiropractic program. While at NHCC the Lord got a hold of my heart through being involved with Campus Crusade for Christ and placed a call on my life to go to seminary. I then transferred to the University of Minnesota, where I graduated with a history major in 2005.

At this time I began to attend Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn., where I am currently a member. During my three years of class work at AFLBS I came to a greater understanding of the Scriptures. I came to realize how the entire Bible points to Jesus Christ and every portion of it, even the seemingly unimportant lineages, are applicable to our lives.

My internship has been in Williston, N.D., serving both Emmanuel Free Lutheran and Beaver Creek Free Lutheran under the leadership of Pastor Jon Wellumson. My experience there has been wonderful as I began to learn about many of the responsibilities, troubles, and joys that a pastor faces. Now, as a single man, I am on the brink of taking my first call to a congregation. I wait with patient anticipation as the Lord leads me to where He knows I will be of the most use to His plan.

**Patrick Lohse**

**B**orn March 26, 1982, I am the son of Michael and Cynthia Lohse of Coon Rapids, Minn. I graduated from the University of Minnesota in 2005. My home congregation is Hope Lutheran in North Minneapolis.

I was fortunate to grow up in a family where the Word of God was taught and

attending church and Sunday school was encouraged. Unfortunately, I tried running from the Lord. This lasted for several years until He got a hold of me while I was studying in Finland. For the first time I felt the weight of my sin. Thankfully, God did not just open my eyes to show me my sin, but pointed me to the cross where He dealt

## Stephen Larson

God called me through His Word early on in life. Shortly after I was born on Feb. 28, 1982, I was baptized. Some of the most important vessels God continued to use as He molded me over time were my baptism; my parents, Dale and Jeanette Larson; and my church, Resurrection Free Lutheran Church of Beltrami Minn.



Though far removed (four hours if I don't speed) from them now, I still look at that time and those experiences with them as most important and foundational for the life I now live by faith in the One who gave Himself up for me, the Lord Jesus Christ.

After high school I attended the Association Free Lutheran Bible School. Many Bible school graduates often say that those two years were the most formational years of their life. I would have agreed with them four years ago. However, I now credit my seminary experience—and my pastoral internship at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Deephaven, Minn., in particular—as the most formational time in my life. Through my seminary experience God has instructed, disciplined, and formed me in ways I never could have expected or imagined.

It was at seminary where God also gave me one of the greatest gifts any man could receive, a wife! I met Frieda Bravold while we served together on staff at Park River Bible Camp, Park River, N.D., in the summers between completing my undergraduate studies at South Dakota State University. She continues to be the joy of my life and a great source of strength for me. Together we look forward to serving God and whatever He has in store for us. It is truly a privilege to serve Him.

with it. Jesus suffered, died, and rose again for me! I love how Paul puts it in Romans 5:8, "But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Jesus died for me for the simple fact that I was a sinner with not even a shred of righteousness inside of me.

The Lord has blessed my wife, Jennifer

## Eric Swenson

I grew up on a farm near Jewell, Iowa. My parents, Doris and the late Roger Swenson, brought me to be baptized as an infant, where I first received the gift of faith. While growing up, my faith was nurtured by attending church and Sunday school each Sunday at St. Paul's Lutheran Church.



However, it was not until my freshman year of high school when I attended a FLY Convention that I began to understand what a living and active personal relationship with Jesus was all about. It was there I gave Jesus lordship of my life. I wanted to live for Him instead of for myself as I had been previously doing.

After high school I went to Iowa Lakes Community College for my associate's degree. It was there I started to see God leading me in the direction of seminary. After those two years, I enrolled at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, graduating in 2002. In 2004, I completed my bachelor's degree in ministry at Northwestern College, St. Paul, Minn.

My call to ministry comes from my relationship with Jesus. My goal in life is to come to know Jesus even more and to help others come to know Jesus more, too. This call has brought me to seminary. Seminary impressed upon me the importance of God's Word and handling Scripture accurately. My seminary internship has been at Bethel Free Lutheran in Minot, N.D., under the direction of Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck. My year as an intern pastor has further solidified my calling into pastoral ministry.

My wife, Kristi (Forness), and I were married June 25, 2005. This past August we were thrilled to welcome our first child, Vivian. We look forward with anticipation to the birth of our second child this coming August. Together, Kristi and I have a passion for the Lord, people and ministry.

(Golden), and I with an excellent internship at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Morris, Ill. My supervisor, Pastor David Skordahl and his wife, Cheryl, have been an inspiration to both of us. The members of Bethlehem have been very warm and loving. This past year the Lord has taught me to not only love to proclaim His Word, but also to

## Sam Wellumson

Finals week 1981 at AFLTS found a student unprepared for a Church History final; I was born Dec. 17, the day before, and saved my father from that impending doom.



My parents, Pastor Jon and Lynn Wellumson, baptized me and, by God's grace, raised me to live in faith my whole life. I was blessed to grow up in a

pastor's family at Emmanuel Free Lutheran in Williston, N.D., where people would ask me, "Are you going to be a pastor like your dad?" I would resolutely answer, "No."

At AFLBS, the call of God in my heart to enter the ministry began to bud like Aaron's staff (Numbers 17). I finished my undergraduate studies in 2004 at Northwestern College in St. Paul, Minn., earning a bachelor's degree in English writing. I worked as a medical insurance biller for one year after graduating. During that time, I prayed that if God did *not* want me to begin seminary, He would give me a peace about being in the workforce. He answered that prayer by placing a burgeoning desire in my heart to prepare for the ministry.

During that year of work, I married Sarah (Vegdahl), a longtime friend from AFLBS. At the close of our second year in seminary, our son, Elijah, was born.

We moved to Salinas, Calif., last summer and began our internship at St. Ansgar's Lutheran, under the direction of Pastor Herb Hoff. God has been showing us a plethora of joys that come with serving a congregation. In early February we welcomed our daughter, Annalise.

Our family has been truly blessed during our time here in Salinas with many new brothers and sisters in Christ. Those in the body of Christ always have an immediate familiarity. We sit in eager anticipation to see how our Lord will lead us from here (Isaiah 52:12).

love the people I proclaim it to. In addition to these blessings, the Lord has blessed Jenny and I with a child. We eagerly await the September arrival of this little blessing.

God has been extremely faithful to Jenny and me. We wait upon Him for His direction after internship. Soli Deo Gloria!



# Tools for work

BY ALAN OLSON

**M**y wife, Miriam, and I live in Kalispell, Mont., where I owned a commercial roofing business for about 25 years. We recently sold the business, and are now doing primarily small construction jobs. My wife and I have also participated in several short-term mission construction projects.

In October 2008, Pastor Paul Nash (director of Home Missions) called and dropped a hint asking if “we knew anyone” who would go up to Naknek, Alaska, and work on some painting and fix-up projects on the KAKN Radio station. If only you could have read my mind: “Paul, are you crazy? Alaska in the winter? How about a project in sunny Mesa, Arizona?”

Nevertheless, Miriam and I began praying. There was another job offer that I was considering at the time. But one night, sitting in my recliner and talking with the Lord about what we should do, He impressed me strongly: “Go to Alaska!” January ended up being the best month to use our air miles, so we contacted Pastor Jeff Swanson to see if the dates would work for them in Naknek. Everything looked clear, so our planning began in earnest. I was going to Alaska in the winter.

This would not be my first time in Naknek. Back in 2000 I travelled there with a group from Kalispell, Mont., and Lake Stevens, Wash. Our team built an airplane hangar for the church in Naknek, put together by Pastor Mike Crowell, founder of the Mission Aviation Training Academy. The church was praying for good weather for our building operation (it was the rainy season). When we got off the plane at King Salmon the rain had slowed to a slight shower, and by evening had completely stopped. For the next 10 days we had beautiful weather. What a direct answer to prayer.

Now I was revisiting Naknek, this time with Miriam, and we once again saw God at work in this beautiful place. We enjoyed the opportunity to renew an old friendship with Pastor Jeff and Jane Swanson (they had served the sister church of Stillwater Church in Kalispell). We also got to know Pastor Brian Davidson, who is doing a fantastic job updating the KAKN radio station.

Most of our time in Alaska was spent finishing carpet and trim at the South Naknek Church. At the radio station we also painted, took apart the studio windows, cleaned and reattached the trim around them, pulled new cables for updating the communication system, and other maintenance on the building. There is now a bright, clean look in the studio with all that old dirt cleaned up.

The Naknek congregation was delightful to get to know, and we felt right at home amidst their Scandinavian-influenced hospitality. They treated us to a true Alaskan potluck, with numerous native dishes. We experienced the many fun ways to prepare salmon and for dessert we enjoyed Eskimo ice cream.

Often we think of mission work as happening in foreign countries, but we have a field right here in the United States. There are many opportunities for maintenance or construction projects, Bible studies, children’s ministries, and outreach to small villages. KAKN is still in need of a couple to run the radio station starting in the fall 2009. Miriam and I experienced such a blessing using our construction gifts to further the Lord’s work. What gifts or talents has the Lord given you? If the Lord is calling you to a mission trip, I challenge you to consider Alaska.

*Olson is a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Kalispell, Mont.*



# Amos Dyrud, missionary to Madagascar, was dean of AFLTS

Memories of Dad from my childhood include handing him tools while he was in the grease pit working under the Jeep. Vehicle maintenance was not an insignificant part of the life of a missionary. Traveling those roads in a Jeep was not the most luxurious, but it sure beat traveling in an oxcart. On one of those *tournee* trips, the oxen were startled by some movement in the moonlight and the oxcart tipped over. Seeing Dad climb out of the back of the oxcart with a huge bandage around his head was not a pretty sight, although it was a comical one. A chin laceration closed with some gross-looking skin staples by the local village midwife was the only injury, fortunately. I looked forward to his returns from those multiple-day, multiple-village teaching and preaching trips and would often run down the road to meet him ...



Even more special was accompanying Dad on a few of those trips—seeing his face suddenly turn beet red and tears stream down his cheeks after tasting a little *sokay* or hot sauce while eating in a small village restaurant (I'm sure it killed every germ), helping him change oil and transmission fluid after fording the Sakamare river near Benenitra, hearing him teach and preach under huge Tamarind trees, and witnessing the burning of a heathen witch doctor's charms, symbolic of the transformation to a life in Christ.

I remember Dad as large and physically strong, as when he carried Mom piggyback-style fording the wide Teheza river near Bezaha on trips home from boarding

school. It seemed that the stone-cement causeway was always washed out in the rainy season. In more recent months, when he became very frail and his energy was almost non-existent, carving toothpicks for reuse was a most amusing activity of his. ...

I was always amazed at his own memory, as he could accurately tell you the specific year that he worked on a particular stretch of road, whether in rural Minnesota, the Alaskan Highway, or airstrips in the Caribbean Islands during WWII.

While Dad could be a stern disciplinarian, and for that I'm grateful, he was loving, tender, and compassionate. He was a humble man and yet was very firm in his convictions, especially when it involved belief in the inerrancy of the Word of God and in striving to live the Christian life. Relying totally on God and stressing family, personal devotions, and prayer time is advice I will always remember. I've always felt that our parents' marriage has been a wonderful example for us children and grandchildren to strive for. The title of their biography, *Each for the Other, All for Christ*, sums up their married life so well.

Contentment was an attribute of Dad's that has consistently impressed me through the years. I know the basis for that contentment was the sense of assurance that he was following God's will for his life, whether on the mission field in Madagascar or here teaching at the AFLC Bible school and seminary.

As much pride as Dad had in his [family], what would give him the most peace and joy was to hear of their spiritual walk with Jesus Christ and their seeking of God's will for their lives. The same could be said, of course, for his concern for every individual's spiritual situation. ...

I feel very grateful for his daily prayers for my family and me and for all the prayers for my patients and my co-workers over the years. For a long time I thought that after Dad's home-going we would lose a real prayer warrior, but perhaps his prayer is even more effective where he is now.

"Honor your father and your mother," we're told in the Bible, and we have endeavored to do that. It has been a privilege and honor to be able to care for Dad and Mom these last eight months of home hospice. He was always so thankful and grateful for all his care; for the medical care from physicians and nurses over the years, and, more recently, the around-the-clock care from family and other caregivers. He was so encouraged by visits of Pastor [Peter Franz] and extended family and friends. Visits from the great-grandchildren would elicit the widest smiles and the brightest sparkles in his eyes.

Despite the confusion that set in during the last few weeks, his focus was always on the Lord and where he was going. He enjoyed being read to from the Bible and favorite devotional books, as well as participating in singing and prayer time. He repeatedly expressed his love and appreciation for Mom and his family and "Christ above all."

Dad, with our love and admiration, we will dearly miss you and anticipate a glorious reunion someday. We rejoice that you are now home in glory and have heard the words of your Lord and Master, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of my presence" (Matthew 25:21).

*Dr. Peter Dyrud, Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn., is Pastor Amos and Ovidie's oldest son. He grew up on the mission field in Madagascar.*

Pastor Amos Dyrud, 93, of Crystal, Minn., died Feb. 15, 2009. Born June 6, 1915, in Newfolden, Minn., he was the son of Petter and Marie (Hanson) Dyrud. He married Ovidie Evenson on June 15, 1948.

He served in the US Navy Seabees during WWII on St. Lucia and St. Thomas. He then worked as a heavy equipment operator during the construction of the Alaskan Highway. In 1943, he entered full-time Christian ministry. He graduated from Augsburg College and Augsburg Theological Seminary, Minneapolis, in

1949, when he was ordained. He studied at the L' Alliance Francaise, Paris. He served on the mission field in Madagascar from 1950 to 1969. He was called as a faculty member at AFLTS and AFLBS from 1969 to 1981, serving as dean of AFLTS from 1971 to 1981. He served as interim pastor at Medicine Lake Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn., from 1972-1974. After retiring, he taught at the seminary for several more years. He was a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn.

Surviving are his wife; two sons,

Peter (Judy) Dyrud, and Samuel (Mary Jo) Dyrud; two daughters, Naomi (Paul) Hanson, and Rebecca Dyrud; 12 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.

The funeral service was March 1 at the AFLC Schools chapel, Plymouth, Minn., with Pastor Peter Franz officiating. Burial was at Fort Snelling National Cemetery, Minneapolis, Minn.

The family requests all memorials be given to the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary.

**Correction**  
In the March issue of the Lutheran Ambassador, the incorrect date was published for the ordination of **Pastor Nathan Minnich** at Salem Lutheran, Elizabethville, Pa. He was ordained on March 22 by Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC president.

**Pastor David Nelson** has accepted a call to serve Redeemer Free Lutheran, Ontonagon, Mich. He had previously served Ebenezer Free Lutheran, Humboldt, Tenn.

**Pastor Jeremy Vance** was ordained on March 8 at Living Word Lutheran, Eagan, Minn., with Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC president, officiating. Vance, who graduated from AFLTS in 2008, has accepted a call to serve Bethany Free Lutheran of Bluegrass, Sebeka, Minn., and Zion Free Lutheran, Wadena, Minn.

**Pastor Tim Hinrichs** has announced that he and his wife, Renata, are leaving their work in Poland with East European Missions Network in June to return to the United States. He is open for a call to a congregation.

Six seniors at the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary were given their internship year assignments.

**Brett Boe** will serve Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, N.D., under the supervision of Pastor Tim Carlson.

**Jeremy Crowell** will serve the first half of his internship in Naknek, Alaska, under the supervision of Pastor Jeff Swanson. The second half of his internship assignment is yet to be determined,

**Micah Hjermstad** will serve Ruthfred Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa., under the supervision of Pastor James Molstre.

**Michael Johnson** will serve Emmanuel Free Lutheran and Beaver Creek Free Lutheran, Williston, N.D., under the supervision of Pastor Jon Wellumson.

**Bob Lee** will serve St. Ansgar's Lutheran, Salinas, Calif., under the guidance of Pastor Herb Hoff.

**Tom Olson** will serve Prince of Peace Lutheran, Beulah, N.D., under the supervision of Pastor Kris Nyman.

## Upcoming retreats at ARC

### Men's Retreat

April 24-25, Cost: \$65. Speaker is Brian Ricke, a student at AFLTS. Stay Saturday night and have breakfast on Sunday morning for an additional \$20.

### Future events

- 'Fire Up' Youth Camp June 21-26, led by Jared Langness.
- Kids' Camp June 26-28, led by the Association Free Lutheran Bible School's ARC summer team.
- Family Camp July 26-Aug. 1

A \$25 deposit is required with registration for ARC retreats. Register at least 10 days prior to the retreat to avoid a late fee of \$20. For more information, visit the ARC's Web site at [www.arc\\_aflc.org](http://www.arc_aflc.org), or call (800) 294-2877.

# What are short-term assistants?

An explanation by our AFLC World Missions director

People often ask, "What is a short-term missions assistant (STA)?" STAs are people who feel a special burden for a particular aspect of foreign mission work. They come to the AFLC World Missions Committee and receive committee members' blessing to volunteer on the mission field. We have STAs working in Mexico, Uganda, Ecuador and Tanzania. STAs have worked on other mission fields, as well.

Members of the World Missions Committee realize the value of STAs. They sacrificially work long days and often carry a heavy load both in terms of work and spiritual responsibility. Because STAs work on a volunteer basis, they do not receive a salary or benefits. They are supported by offerings given for their living expenses. These offerings can be given through AFLC World Missions.

We urge you to pray diligently for our STAs and support them financially as they serve the Lord on the front lines in spreading the gospel.

Our current STAs are: Daniel and Marcela Giles and Ingrid Giles, who serve in Jerez, Mexico; Ben Jore and Jesse Long, who serve on Mbulu, Tanzania; Kalika Peske, who serves in Jinja, Uganda; and Justo Pillman, who serves in Cuenca, Ecuador.

*Pastor Del Palmer, the director of AFLC World Missions, is a member of Faith Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn.*

## AFLC February memorials

### AFLBS

Eunice Brown, Gene Field,  
Alfred Haugen, Pastor Amos Dyrud,  
Doris Bicker, Ivar Skurdal

### AFLTS

Allen Solie, Daniel Renstrom,  
Karen Michalski, Ivar Skurdal

### Home Missions

Jerome Carroll, Melvina Johnson,  
Robert Hendrickson, Carolyn Heinz

### World Missions

Ruby Brekke, Ivar Skurdal,  
Pastor Amos Dyrud, Alf Haugen

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- Feb. 28, 2009				
FUND	TOTAL (subsidy)	REC'D IN FEBRUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$434,087	\$22,879	\$50,504	12
Evangelism	112,642	6,494	12,590	11
Youth Ministries	78,909	5,2004	10,367	13
Parish Education	135,207	9,486	17,495	13
Seminary	244,110	13,887	32,144	13
Bible School	398,910	19,905	45,824	11
Home Missions	375,908	17,692	44,749	12
World Missions	327,017	18,147	37,126	11
Personal Support	435,500	32,445	65,835	15
TOTALS	\$2,542,290	\$146,134	\$316,635	12
TOTALS 2008	\$2,307,821	\$149,889	\$388,288	17
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.				



# Gone home

Pastor Amos Dyrud, who recently passed away, had retired from the position of dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary and was teaching part time when I attended there. His interest in students and his commitment to prayer, however, remained full time.

The topic of my Master of Divinity thesis was in the area of missions. Pastor Dyrud, being a former missionary to Madagascar, became my advisor for the thesis. I was blessed.



Pastor Craig Johnson

Amos no longer had an office on campus, so when I needed to meet with him I would go over to his house. I would share about what I was work-

ing on and ask questions. He had good suggestions and was positive and always encouraging. After talking about the paper for a little while he would say, "I think Ovidie has some treats for us." His sweet wife would then bring out a tray of goodies. We would enjoy the treats, have some good conversation and spend some time in prayer.

There were times when I would try to come up with reasons why I needed to meet with Amos. I maybe didn't need help with the thesis as much as I liked going over to see the Dyruds. I didn't have to have a special reason for going over to see them. They would have been glad to see me and share with me some of those good treats, even if all I needed was a little bit of encouragement and prayer.

When my thesis was finished I met with the seminary faculty to discuss it. After some questions and discussion, Pastor Dyrud said, "I think the paper is fine and should be approved." Nobody else had any more questions. I left the room thinking, "It is sure good to have a friend like Pastor Dyrud."

It was good to have a friend like Amos. He was a friend who was full of encouragement. Not long after I began serving as editor of the *Ambassador* I received a note of appreciation from the Dyruds. The note also contained a promise that they were praying for me. I knew they were ones who would be faithful in keeping that promise.

In some ways, with Amos' passing I'm tempted to feel a little weaker since one of my prayer supporters is no longer here. I need not feel that way, however. I believe God continues to answer those prayers, even if the one who prayed them is no longer walking this earth.

At a youth training event I attended while on seminary internship, Pastor Dyrud shared his testimony. He told of a special and powerful work God did in northern Minnesota when Amos was a young man. As he spoke of the moving of God's Spirit, he was moved to tears. He spoke of events that had happened 50 years before, but the memories of them still stirred his soul. It was a reminder to me that what Pastor Dyrud taught was not simply things he had learned out of a book.

His faith was real. When he prayed he was talking to the God with whom he had a personal relationship. The good news of Jesus that he shared had transformed his life.

When Pastor Dyrud preached the message at an AFLC Schools chapel service during Advent one year, he concluded by stating, "If the Lord does not return beforehand, have a blessed Christmas." The seriousness with which he made the decla-

It was a reminder to me that what Pastor Dyrud taught was not simply things he had learned out of a book. His faith was real. When he prayed he was talking to the God with whom he had a personal relationship.

ration made clear: "He believes Jesus might come before Christmas does."

Amos knew Jesus was going to come one day, and he was ready. He was looking forward to it.

The day has now come when Jesus came for him. We give thanks for the hope that because Jesus came into his life many years ago, Amos was ready when Jesus came now. And we give thanks for the many around the world who are ready because of the good news of Jesus that Amos shared.

*association retreat center*

BY MIKE FISK

# Wisdom for this MOMENT

**O**n Jan. 15, US Airways veteran pilot Chesley 'Sully' Sullenberger landed an airliner with 155 people aboard in the Hudson River after birds took out both engines. After watching an interview with the pilot I was amazed at how calm he was in relating his actions. Sully knew exactly what he needed to do to save those on the plane. When it was obvious he would not make it to a nearby airport, he turned his attention to preparing crew and passengers for a ditch in the frigid waters of the Hudson.

The actions of this one man showed incredible wisdom in a crisis. Experts and eye witnesses alike have commented on Sully's composure while bringing his passengers and crew to safety. When faced with a crisis, perhaps the key to success is wisdom, and Sully exhibited an incredible amount of that in what has become known as the miracle on the Hudson.

Our nation, along with the rest of the world, seems to be in crisis mode. Every day there are new allegations and warnings about the economy. Gas prices came down to a manageable level just as pink slips began showing up in our mailboxes. The divorce rate is sky high while foreclosures add to the increasing stress of the economic picture. Bank failures, corporate bailouts and price increases seem rampant.

When the Apostle Paul penned his letter to the Corinthians he was in a crisis of his own. He'd had a tough visit to Athens and the church in Greece was struggling. The church in Corinth was a congregation full of immorality and apostasy. Yet, in the midst of all this, Paul pens these words "However, as it is written, 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what

God has prepared for those who love him' but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit" (I Corinthians 2:9-10).

How could Paul pen these words when he was faced with such dire circumstances? I think he was able to see beyond the struggle and focus on what God had in store for His people.

Scholars are mixed in their opinions about exactly what Paul was referring to here. Some believe he references a time in the future when all will experience the blessing of being eternally face to face with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Others think Paul may have been referring to events in the near future when God would show Himself in mighty ways.

There is no doubt each of us will experience an Isaiah-type moment when we first see Jesus and are overwhelmed by His majesty and holiness. However, I can't let go of a more immediate meaning to Paul's words. In the context of this passage, Paul is talking about wisdom. Not just any wisdom, but a wisdom that comes from God. This wisdom is far greater than any wisdom the wisest man possesses and will see us through the greatest challenges we face as we rely on His Holy Spirit for guidance.

At the ARC we continue to be amazed at how God uses this holy ground to reach across cultural, social and economic boundaries to draw people to Himself. Even groups that are not faith-based have seen lives changed as a result of God's ministry here. While we are practicing wisdom in how to meet our temporal needs, we are not discouraged. We believe God has great and mighty things for us as we enter our 30th year of ministry.

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