

THE LUTHERAN 

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AMBASSADOR



MISSION
FIELDS



Judging each other

BY CHRISTINA OSTHUS

How can we justify telling others what God wants them to do with their lives, such as what career they should pursue, where they should live, or how they should raise their children? Though I could go into detail about different ways in which Christians judge each other, including matters of Christian freedom (Romans 14:4), I need to focus on the call to missions and ministry. Taking a page from Jason Holt (AFLC Youth Ministry director) at this year's AFLC Youth Workers' Retreat, I'll ask you to raise your right hand and repeat after me: "I am not the Holy Spirit." God does, at times, use a harsh word from another Christian to challenge or teach us, but I don't think that gives us license to play that role.

Some Christians try to issue the call to missions themselves. I may thoroughly understand that I cannot bring someone to salvation, but I also cannot truly call someone into ministry. Only the Holy Spirit can speak to someone's heart in that way. Many of my friends from Bible school, particularly men, felt a good deal of pressure to become pastors or overseas missionaries, whether or not they had been called by God. Some of my classmates went into youth ministry after Bible school, as well—perhaps with no conviction except that youth ministry is what Bible school graduates should do. These expectations, whatever their origin, plant seeds of confusion and guilt that are certainly not from God.

Then there are the naysayers. If those who push their brothers into ministry are playing the Holy Spirit, those who try to discourage their brothers from their calling are playing the devil, as Peter did in Matthew 16:23. This should be a sobering thought. It can be as subtle as saying, "Why would you go overseas when we need you here?" People from all over the world are coming to the Midwest, which means opportunities for reaching the unreached are increasing exponentially. However, if we use this fact to dissuade someone from ministering in Somalia, we are messing with

Another's business.

Another way that I can fall into judging is when I see someone who is in a crisis regarding his or her calling. When we say that God has a unique plan for each of His children, we do not know the half of it.

Over the last few years, two of my girlfriends have had surprising detours in ministry. One of them met the love of her life right before leaving for the mission field. They quickly married, and though they decided to wait for him to finish school, they are now preparing for a ministry together. The other left her boyfriend for the field just as they were becoming serious, saying that she had to obey God's call. They were reunited while she was on medical furlough and he was on a military base in the same country. She is married and living back in the States now, and God has given her new dreams.

If you are guilty of meddling with God's work in someone's life, I pray you will be humble enough to confess it and draw back. My dad showed me this example when I was in college and thinking about teaching overseas. When I told him I thought Iraq would be an amazing place to teach, he told me bluntly that I was not going there. A few weeks later we talked again and he apologized. He told me that if God wanted me to go to Iraq or anywhere else in the world, I would certainly have to go. Encourage your fellow Christians to please God and not man.

Osthus is from Eagle Butte, S.D., and serves on the 2013 Free Lutheran Youth Committee.



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The gospel is only good news if it gets there in time.

—Carl F. H. Henry

Today Christians spend more money on dog food than missions.

—Leonard Ravenhill

[A mighty spiritual revival in the Church is the fundamental need of the hour; it is the only thing that will avail ... When it comes, the problems of missionary recruits and missionary support will be solved.]

—Robert Hall Glover

Every Christian is either a missionary or an impostor.

—C.H. Spurgeon

The spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions. The nearer we get to Him, the more intensely missionary we become.

—Henry Martyn

Missionaries are not made by crossing the sea, but by seeing the cross.

—Otis Keener

OUT OF THE ORDINARY

By Pastor Kevin Olson

I have been a pastor for 20 years, but it feels like I never even understood the Word of God before now," said Pastor Musasizi Wilson. "Other pastors are amazed by my messages and they ask me, 'Where did you learn to preach with such power? Where did you get that training?'"

Wilson, a humble man whom the Lord rescued out of a lifestyle of drugs and witchcraft, is an Ambassador Institute teacher and the chairman of the Ambassador Institute in Uganda. He was one of the pastors at the Teachers Training Seminar that was held in Uganda this past January. The beauty of the mountains, time in God's Word and a focused time away from other ministry demands made for a refreshing retreat near Mount Elgon.

During the retreat, the Ambassador Institute teachers shared testimonies of how the Lord had carried them through this past year. Every one of the Ugandan teachers reported fierce opposition against the training, yet also said that the

Lord had carried them through these trials.

Those trying to stop the training went to each member of Wanume Fred's class in Namagera to persuade them to stop attending. When Fred was confronted by the students his answer was simple and pointed: "I have been in the training for two years and have never heard anything different [from] the Word of God. If, in my class, I teach one lesson that is not the Word of God, then that day we will stop the training."

Fred's own pastor responded, "I will be your student, teach me what you have learned."

The eight Ugandan teachers, along with Pastor Nate Jore, Hans Tanner and Micah Berger,

have taught eight classes with 85 students. Two more classes have begun since then.

"The Ambassador Institute is growing faster than anything," said Wilson.

On this trip, all of the classes came together for an oral presentation day where each class presented a lesson they had studied in the form of drama and music. And each class seemed to build off of the previous class, making sure that their presentation was done as well or better. It was a day of joy, laughter, and unity in God's Word.

Student representative Isabirye Fredrick reported, "We are extremely determined to accomplish the Great Commission as it is stated in Matthew 28:19-20. ... We have widened our spiritual lives by understanding the Scriptures written in the Bible. Previously we used to pretend to read the Bible, but we did not understand anything."

The students began the presentations at 10 a.m. and continued for six hours until 4:30 p.m. without a break. A fellowship supper was appreciated after the long day was complete.

Besides the Teachers

Training Seminar and the oral presentation day, a kids club was started on Friday mornings in Jinja at Tracy Omara's home. The apartment building that Hans and Micah are staying in is also where Tracy lives. On the first Friday of the club, 70 children came and met together as Pam Olson shared the gospel using Child Evangelism Fellowship material. Ten children from Muslim families prayed to receive Jesus. The need for ministry to their families is great. Tracy, Hans, and Micah will have opportunities to continue with those contacts.

The work of the Ambassador Institute in Uganda seems to closely parallel the response of the Pharisees in Acts 4:13: "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus."

Each of our students could easily be labeled "unschooled, ordinary men." In Wilson's case, the pastors were astonished at the power of his preaching. Fred's own pastor asked to be his student. Fredrick has a pas-



sion for the Bible as well as the Great Commission. And Tracy has a flock of children coming to hear God's Word and a chance to share with Muslim families.

It could be said of them as much as it could be said of anyone of us. The presence of Jesus can make the difference that the world is amazed at. What about you? Are people astonished and noticing that you have been with Jesus?

Olson heads up the AFLC's Ambassador Institute.

Hans Tanner, Pastor Nate Jore, Micah Berger and Pastor Kevin Olson met with Ambassador Institute students during a Teachers Training Seminar in Uganda.



N

ovember 1989. It was a cold, foggy morning in Berlin.

"Can I use your hammer?"

"Ya, bitte!"

With that borrowed hammer I broke pieces of cement from the infamous Berlin wall. The fall of that wall, symbolic of the fall of the Soviet Communist Empire, opened the door for tens of millions of people to hear the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We need to be reminded that cruelty and bloodshed were inevitable results of the atheistic Communist system. Their hatred of God and unrelenting efforts to dethrone Him led to cruel acts toward fellow citizens. An estimated 60 million Soviets perished by murder, starvation, forced labor and exposure. One horrific example of this rampage of death occurred near the town of Kuropathy near Minsk, Belarus. Informers were paid 150 rubles (about \$25) for each person they betrayed. Morning, noon and evening, people were rounded up and taken to the forest of death. Up to 16 truck loads of people per day were lined up and shot, their bodies falling into the mass graves. Two hundred and fifty thousand lives perished in just that one location.

Along with Joseph Stalin, a key person in the war was Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, better known as Lenin, leader of the Communist Revolution of 1917. He was born and raised in the city of Ulyanovsk, which was later named after him. With a population of about 700,000, Ulyanovsk lies on the Volga River about 550 miles east of Moscow.

On Dec. 25, 1991, 74 years after the revolution, the desper-

ate prayers of faithful believers were answered and that system collapsed. The fall of that dark and oppressive system constituted an invitation to launch the East European Missions Network (EEMN). With the prayer, encouragement, and support of many members of Emmaus Lutheran in Bloomington, Minn., EEMN was officially organized in October 1992. Its purpose is to come beside believers in those formerly Soviet-ruled nations and help them rebuild the Church on the foundation of a living relationship with Jesus Christ and the truth of His Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The ministry of EEMN continues in several countries. Ironically, one of the cities where we have had considerable ministry is Ulyanovsk. The Lutheran church is one of the largest Protestant churches in the city. (Some say that because his mother was of German origin, Lenin was baptized in that church.) I have been preaching and teaching in that church for about eight years. Even though alcoholism, depression and pain of broken families remains a grim reminder of the past, it is primarily young adults who come to Bible studies, seminars, etc. Miraculously, the young be-

lievers in this city of Lenin have invited me to lead a seminar on the Sanctity of Human Life this spring.

EEMN is making plans for the 16th Friendship English Language/Bible Camp (FELC) in Petrozavodsk, Russia. Under the supervision of Pastor Bill Moberly, director of EEMN, and his wife, Sally, coordinator of the FELC ministry, this year there will be 16 camps in Russia and other East European countries, with 100 short-term teachers. Some have come to Jesus through these camps. Thousands have been introduced to the Bible in an atmosphere of love, affirmation, and joy as they see and hear the message of Jesus. The friendship of American teachers helps them see the lasting friendship of Jesus.

After directing the Bible school in Dziegellow, Poland, for 11 years, Pastor Tim and Renata Hinrichs returned to the U.S. in 2009. They are grateful that of the 263 students who sat under their teaching and discipleship, 126 are involved in some kind of ministry. This fall, Pastor Andy Coyle, who is serving in Odessa, Ukraine, will begin teaching in the Bible school they are helping to organize. They expect to serve students from Ukraine, Russia, and Moldova. EEMN continues to support Tartu Academy of Theology, the only Christian college in Estonia.

For the past 11 years I have had opportunity to teach in the Bible school in Saldus, Latvia. I teach the book of Galatians because of its concise focus on salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ and firm reliance upon the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. At the beginning of the week many students do not understand what it means to

be saved by grace. I am grateful to God for so many who, by the end of the week, are able to confess with assurance that Jesus is their Savior. Every year Pastor Martins and Gunta Irbes (EEMN missionaries) and I organize a Lutherans for Life Sanctity of Life conference in the capital city of Riga. This October we will celebrate the 10th anniversary of these conferences, which have had considerable impact in developing a pro-life mentality among Christian believers in Latvia. Among many other activities, the Irbes directed the prayer ministry for the Franklin Graham crusade in Riga in 2010.

REB

I am grateful for the opportunity to teach Prayer and Christian Living at the Ingrian Lutheran seminary near St. Petersburg. I also continue ministry in Ukraine, Slovakia and Petrozavodsk where I will serve as a short-term associate pastor. We are grateful for Yulia Mikaylova from Petrozavodsk who is studying at our Bible school this year and will serve as a youth director when she returns home in May. Truly our Lord God's eye is on the nations as He opens their borders and their hearts for the great gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Richman is the founding director of East European Missions Network. He is a member of Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn.



BUILDING

By Pastor Don Richman

THE GOOD NEWS

By Pastor Del Palmer



ike cold water to a weary soul
is good news from a distant
land" (Proverbs 25:25).

Unannounced, my wife, Karen, and I stepped off the plane in India. We had traveled with Ambassador Institute head Kevin Olson and his wife, Pam, in January to bring the AFLC-India some of the best news they've had in years.

The Olsons went through the gate ahead of us. Then we stepped out of the airport, surprising AFLC-India President Luther Dasari. On the way to the AFLC-I headquarters, we stopped at a restaurant where I explained the reason for our visit.

Several pastors traveled to India in 2007 to train Indian pastors. It became evident on that trip that the facilities used by the AFLC-I ministries hindered the effective promotion of the gospel. St. Paul's School, a kindergarten through 10th grade school, was meeting in a shed with a thatched roof and no sides. During the monsoon season the rains come in, getting the students, their books and papers wet. Representatives from the AFLC-I asked our pastors to present the World Missions department with a request for an adequate school building. When the request was brought back to the World Missions Committee, they asked some probing questions

but were not ready to approve the building as a special project.

An ongoing dialogue has taken place between members of the World Missions Committee and the AFLC-I. Through these talks the questions and objections of committee members were satisfied. The proposal also grew from a building only used by St. Paul's School to a building that would also adequately house our orphanage, denominational offices, chapel, medical clinic, housing for guests and teachers from the U.S., a Bible school and seminary. The cost of the building grew with its size. Now the request was for \$320,000.

After much prayer and deliberation, in September 2011 World Missions Committee members agreed to place the building on the approved special project list. This did not mean that funds would be sent, rather, that the project could be publicized. Following the meeting I explained the approval to President Dasari. He fully understood that we only were approving promotion of the project. His response was, "We'll pray."

World Missions Committee members agreed to use a \$110,000 legacy from the estate of Iris Myren, Tucson, Ariz., to



match any gifts given in the first two years.

The week before Thanksgiving in 2011, AFLC business manager Cory Buck and Director of Development Tonnes Pollestad came into my office with Home Mission Director Paul Nash. They closed the door and began to explain that a couple, Dorothy and Sheldon Een, from Illinois had died. They were farmers and had no children. The Eens left a legacy of just over half a million dollars to AFLC Missions. World Missions would receive half of the legacy. They prayed, God answered.

At their next meeting, World Missions Committee members approved the use of this legacy for the India building. In doing so, they considered that there may be people throughout the AFLC who would consider it a privilege and blessing to be involved in

the financing of this building. Therefore, they decided to place the legacy in savings for one year, allowing all who desired an opportunity to be involved before fully funding the building. This will fund some of the additional costs such as the tearing down of existing structures.

I was instructed to travel with Kevin Olson and share the good news of the building and the good news of the gospel with the people of India. As always, there were daily opportunities to share God's Word. There was also the opportunity to share the way God had provided for the new building. This new building will be a tool to share the good news of the gospel in many ways and for many years to come.

Palmer, Shakopee, Minn., is the director of AFLC World Missions.



FAITH LESSONS

By Lavon Bohling



What an amazing God we have who has created all things, who gifts His people in a variety of ways, and who equips them with many tools so that His work may be accomplished.

Not many months ago, missionary pastor pilot Jeremy Crowell used a FLAPS airplane to help fly Alaskan native youth to a Bible camp at Port Allsworth, Alaska. Most villages in Alaska, including Port Allsworth, are only reachable by air. A majority of these youths come from abusive home situations, and many do not know the Lord. On this particular return trip, one of Pastor Crowell's passengers was an excited young native girl who had accepted Christ as her Savior at Bible camp. How wonderful it is to see how God works in the hearts and lives of His people, using a variety of tools and gifts to accomplish His purposes.

In its 12 years of existence, the FLAPS ministry has helped carry the gospel message to many people throughout the U.S. in a variety of situations. It is a great privilege and blessing to have been a part of this aviation ministry and to be a small instrument in accomplishing His plan.

Sometimes on longer flights over the years, when the weather was good and there was little or no air traffic in the area, it was a good time to

think. Spiritual applications of flying often came to mind, and recently some of these thoughts have been taking shape on paper.

Faith lessons can be drawn from many of the airplane's instruments and control mechanisms. For example, there is a "master switch" on the instrument panel, separate from the ignition switch, that connects the battery and alternator with all the electrical equipment on the plane, e.g., lights, radios, instruments, starter, etc. When the master switch is turned on, the plane is energized with electrical power. Spiritually, our Lord and Master energizes His followers, as well.

If the pilot chooses, he or she can cut off the electrical power by turning off the master switch. Since the engine gets its spark for ignition from magnetos, it will continue to run, even if the master switch is turned off. We can turn off our Lord and Master in our lives, as well. But even if we turn Him off, He is still there waiting for us to come to Him, just as the battery and alternator are still there ready and available when we turn off the master switch.

God doesn't force us to follow Him. Matthew 23:37 says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it. How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!"

If time and space permitted, numerous other faith lessons could be drawn from a number of other instruments, as well, but let's focus a bit on navigation. We can compare a flight by plane with the spiritual journey on which we are all traveling. There are several ingredients to a journey.

First, we have a destination. Without a destination, we wander aimlessly. When we know our destination, we must know how to get there using maps, plotters, calculators, etc. In a spiritual sense, the Bible is our chart and compass. In the airplane, the magnetic compass points to the magnetic north pole. On our spiritual journey, the Bible points us to Jesus and heaven. If we don't look at our maps and charts as we fly, we can easily get lost; if we don't use our Bibles on our spiritual journey, our faith gets cold, we get off course, and potentially lost. As we travel we establish check points along the way. When flying, they could be towns, roads, rivers, etc. On our spiritual journey, we study the Scriptures to know we're on course and can see God's will for our lives (Romans 12:2).

When on a flying journey, storms, snow, hail, lightning,

ice, and unexpected winds can cause us to get off course if we don't make corrections. There are many things in our spiritual journey that can get us off course, too (Isaiah 30:20-21). Spiritually, we must stay on the straight and narrow, stay on course and hold fast to the faith, keeping our eyes focused on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2).

Finally, we arrive at our destination. At the airport, it's a happy meeting of friends and family at the end of a long flight. So, too, we look forward to a joyous reunion with all the saints in heaven as we land safely and our earthly flight plan is closed out. What a glorious time that will be! Over the years, I've had fun saying that my lifetime take-off to landing ratio is one-to-one, i.e. one take-off for every landing. One day, when Jesus takes me home, I'll have one more take-off than landing.

Thanks to God for all the blessings He showers upon His people day by day. We can thank God, too, for the gift of flight, since without the use of mission airplanes over the years many souls around the world would not yet be reached with the good news of God's saving grace.

Bohling, executive director of FLAPS, has stepped down from his full-time role after 10 years of service with Home Missions. He currently lives in Inman, Kan.





A CHILD LED US

By Pastor Frank Cherney



It was a small miracle for me to welcome a pastor knocking on my door in 1976. Pastor Gary Skramstad came to visit after my wife, Pam, and I attended Victory in Christ Free Lutheran for the first time.

It happened after weeks of prodding from our 5-year-old daughter, Tina. She had been attending church with a family who lived across the street from our house—Gary and Kathy Modean.

Their son, John, had invited Tina to church, and she loved it. Every week she would beg us to take her. I told her that I had gone to church and Sunday school when I was young. I knew it was good for her to go and learn those Christian principles and morals.

She asked me once, as only a 5 year old, can, “If it’s good for me, Dad, why isn’t it good for you?”

“Go away kid, you bother me,” I said, and walked away.

She finally got her way when the church had their Sunday school Christmas program. I remembered how important it was for me to have my parents at the Christmas program when I was Tina’s age living in Polar, Wis. So we went.

It was a small miracle for us to walk into the Community Center at the low-income housing project in St. Paul where the AFLC Home Missions church was meeting. As we came through the door, people were

busy getting ready for worship. They rolled the upright grand piano from a back corner and got chairs out of the closet and set them up. Some were unloading a car full of stuff: offering plates, a cross, candles and Bibles. Concordia Hymnals were brought in and set on the chairs. The people were talking and laughing as they worked.

I thought, “This can’t be church.”

I remembered as a kid that church was where people walked in quietly with mostly somber faces, not looking like they really wanted to be there. I suppose that was because I really didn’t want to be there. After the services people seemed happy it was over—I know I was. I didn’t appreciate church as a kid.

At the age of 25 years, I hadn’t changed my opinion.

But this was different; these people seemed to love Jesus and each other. They worked with purpose and enthusiasm. They

didn’t seem to want church to be over. And they made us feel welcome. I was surprised. Although my wife was a very nice person, I was pretty rough looking with long hair, dark glasses and an attitude. Pam was a good Catholic and went to mass every Sunday until we were married and I wouldn’t go or take her. My parents had made me attend parochial school for several years and made sure I got confirmed. But my heart was unchanged.

One evening while sitting at the bar in our basement, a friend was talking about sending his daughter to parochial school. The school district would bus her clear across town the following year, and he wanted her to attend school near their home. I told him that was not a good idea because at parochial school they would fill her head with nonsense about Christianity and how this obscure desert tribe had a “special relationship and mission from God.” I had the language of a sailor, having been a boiler tender in the Navy. Now I drove a city bus. I, like my dad, drank too much.

Yet the people in this church made us feel welcome. The worship service was simple. I know now that God spoke to us through the message.

So when Pastor Gary knocked on our door, he was welcome. It was at our kitchen table that he explained that I learned the facts about Christianity but had never taken the truth personally. I know now that I knew John 3:16 by

memory but not by heart. The Holy Spirit moved my heart to change when Pastor Gary shared, “For God so loved Frank that He gave His only Son,” and I received Christ. Pam told me that she had received Christ a couple weeks earlier at a neighborhood Bible study that Kathy Modean held in her home.

It was no small miracle to find us attending church regularly and going to Bible study. Jesus truly made some dramatic changes in our lives. I like to say I lost half my vocabulary and had to find different adjectives. Pam and I both really grew in our love for Jesus and Scripture. Our church family became vitally important to us. This new life led to a call into full-time ministry.

Russell Bergstrom, a member at Victory in Christ Free Lutheran, used to say, “I remember that first day you came to church, Frank. You looked like you were ready to take us all on.”

I don’t know if I was ready, but members of this congregation were ready to take us on for Christ. God has truly blessed our family with so much in Christ. We are thankful we can be a part of the work of Home Missions and thank God for our AFLC church family and a persistent little girl.

Cherney, who now serves New Hope Free Lutheran, Jamestown, N.D., graduated from the Free Lutheran Seminary in 1984.

OPEN DOORS OF

By Luke and Kelly Emerson



We are privileged to be called Parish Builders. A few years ago we had just finished the first year of seminary and were excited to get our feet wet in ministry. We contacted Pastor Paul Nash, director of Home Missions, to see if there would be an opportunity for us to help out somewhere. Like Pastor Nash has said to us many times, “You need to first walk through the door.”

It just so happened that a small Bible study group in Hastings, Minn., had been meeting for a while and had started talking about becoming a part of the Home Missions family. Pastor Nash told us he thought he might have a place for us as Parish Builders. He had many conversations with Dr. Francis Monseth (dean of AFLTS) and Pastor Elden Nelson (AFLC president) and received approval from board members to allow this to happen. Before we knew it we were accepted into the Parish Builders training program and ready for whatever God was leading us to.

We attended a week-long informative and challenging training, then started working with The Gathering in Hastings in the summer of 2010.

Parish Building has been valuable to our personal walk with the Lord Jesus Christ and has enabled us to build strong

relationships with others who desire to serve the Lord in church planting. We have been able to assist in canvassing neighborhoods, vacation Bible school in a local park with the assistance of one of the Home Missions Barnabas summer teams, setting up the order of a church service, starting a family Bible study, and organizing adult and children’s Sunday school. Through this experience we have truly learned to lean on Him and wait for His guidance and direction both in being a part of a new church plant and in our lives together.

There are many things that we have learned that will help us in our future ministry, wherever God places us. One is that we need to rely on God for direction, strength and perseverance. Being in the business world for many years, we looked for and sought after results. We wanted to build a church and really set the world on fire. We had

a task-driven thought process that God had to deal with, and He did. For months we hit the streets of Hastings, trying to get results from our efforts. But we were really not going anywhere, at least by our original views. God had to teach us something, and it was a hard lesson. We got to the point that we were frustrated and ready to throw in the towel. Through conversations with many men whom we hold in high regard (Pastor Curt Emerson, Dr. Monseth and Pastor Nash), God helped us refocus. We learned that ministry is not about us or anything that we can do, but it is all about when and what God desires. After this change in attitude and heart, God chose to add three new families to the Hastings group.

The next thing that we needed to learn and fully accept was flexibility. We had to learn to be able to accept change and to not be in complete control of everything. This is still something that is hard to fully accept. We really care and desire for things to be done in a structured fashion. But, again, we have to see that in Home Mission, as in many ministries, things change constantly. We have to be in the Word and in prayer so that God can lead and guide us to what He wants to accomplish.

We have seen how God provides and how He works out the details of His plans. He has provided many visitors, a great

number of children at the vacation Bible school, and outstanding and affordable places for us to worship. He has also united our group together with a heart and desire to point everything that we do to Kingdom work.

We have both grown in the gifts that God has given to each of us, and we have seen a strong family unity for ministry. Our children are very involved, and they are becoming more comfortable in the roles that God has chosen for them. God has allowed our family to be a part of a new church plant. We have gotten a taste of what ministry is all about. God has shown us our shortcomings and is using this time to train and prepare us for whatever He desires. He has shown us our true need for prayer, study and complete reliance in God and not in what we bring to the table.

We are now at the end of our time in the seminary classroom and also as Parish Builders. We will always treasure our time and learning experiences in school and in ministry. “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father” (Colossians 3:17).

The Emersons will finish up three years at the Free Lutheran Seminary in May. Luke will serve his final year of internship at St. John’s Lutheran, Newark, Ohio, under the supervision of Pastor Tom Olson.

MINISTRY



Free and living missions

Pillmans ready to leave for Ecuador following June's annual conference

BY JUSTO PILLMAN

In tackling large topics I like to begin by simplifying things. Maybe it comes from my engineering background. With engineering we often say (though not often practice) “a good design is a simple design.” As we prepare to go overseas to Ecuador, I’ve been contemplating the simple definition that missions is nothing more and nothing less than God planting and growing free and living congregations. Allow me to share how I see this playing out.

We have been called by AFLC World Missions and the Paz de Dios (Peace of God) congregation in Ecuador. In many senses we feel like our ministry in Ecuador will be that of parish worker or assistant to the pastor and leadership of the local church. While not discounting the important work of planting in new areas, I believe God’s design is that, when possible, an individual should work within the context of a local congregation to advance His kingdom on earth. This is why we are so excited to be able to work with the local congregation in Ecuador. For me it is especially rewarding since I spent some of my growing up years attending this very same congregation. It is a huge blessing that a deep level of trust, understanding, and rapport is already in place as we begin our ministry.

Missions is not intended to be a crutch for the national church. The goal is not to have missionaries indefinitely be in leadership, rather that the church have national leadership and be led by the Word and Spirit. The goal is not that the national church be dependent on foreign funds, but that it be self-supporting and only dependent on the Lord for its physical and spiritual needs. The goal is not that the national church only receive missionary help, but that it send forth its own missionaries as well. The AFLC *Fundamental Principles* speak to these goals, stating, “The congregation directs its own affairs, subject to the authority of the Word and the Spirit of God. . .” It’s often easy to forget that these goals are just as true in a foreign country as they are in ours.

To gain more insight, I asked the pastor of the Paz de Dios congregation his perspective as to the place of a missionary in an established, growing congregation. The first thing he mentioned was the need for maturing church leadership through discipleship. In doing this, he said it is important that a missionary have an “in-



depth understanding of sinful idiosyncrasies that have developed in a culture.” He continued by saying it is important that a missionary know how to model a biblical worldview and teach it in areas such as marriage, dating, financial stewardship, child training and evangelism. Lastly, he said that for a church to mature it must experience the purpose for its existence: namely, to catch the missionary vision, to be a sending church, and to be preparing its members to go forth as missionaries.

Discipleship, teaching, and missions. By God’s grace, these are our goals as we partner with the church in Ecuador.

Pillman and his wife, Tricia, were commissioned at the 2011 Annual Conference in Sioux Falls, S.D. They currently live in Woodville, Wis., with their son, Nathanael.



God's unique provision

BY PASTOR PAUL NASH

I never know when a phone call will bring a miracle. Recently Pastor Jeremy Crowell called all the way from Alaska, where he oversees the aviation ministry in Naknek. He explained that he was doing the annual inspection on one of the airplanes and discovered that the starter ring gear needed replacing. Since they're quite expensive new, Jeremy was hoping to find a used one. He suggested I call a local airplane junkyard and see if one was available.

I smiled. Jeremy reminded me so much of his dad, Pastor Mike Crowell, wanting to get the job done, doing the best he could, yet wanting to save money ... a true Free Lutheran. I agreed to join the hunt.

God brought to mind a pilot friend, mechanic and fellow believer living near Reynolds, N.D. I found Randy's number and gave him a call. It's unusual to get ahold of Randy right away; normally we play phone tag. But Randy answered the phone and asked me what he could do for me. I told him about the ring gear, gave him the engine size, the number of teeth on the gear, and the needed pitch.

Randy chuckled. He told me he happened to have one hanging on his wall. I couldn't believe my ears. The first man I called had the exact part we needed, and was willing to mail it right away. When I asked him the price, Randy said there would be no charge, since it was for mission work. He packed it up and had it off to the post office within 10 minutes.

With great excitement I called Jeremy back to tell him the part was already on the way. Jeremy couldn't believe it, either. This wasn't just a matter of coincidence; the Lord was obviously at work.

That evening, I felt compelled to call Randy back. He told me

he was just picking up the phone to call me. He wanted to tell me the rest of the story.

Several weeks earlier, Randy was consulting by phone with a man in Florida who needed help with an electrical component on his airplane. Randy took about 5-10 minutes of his time to walk the man through the issue, helping solve the problem. Without saying anything or asking Randy, the man packaged up a starter ring gear, the exact size and model we needed for the engine in Alaska, and mailed it to Randy with a brief thank you note for his time. Randy didn't know what to do with the part, so he stuck a nail in the wall and hung the ring gear on it.

God delights in using unique circumstances to meet needs. Like the story in Matthew 17:27, where Jesus told Peter to "go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me." The issue at hand was paying taxes, but Jesus used the opportunity to give an incredible object lesson on God's provision.

Our God is still working in unique and exciting ways to build His kingdom. This is what is so neat about working in our headquarters office in Plymouth, Minn. We regularly see how God supplies for His work through men and women like you. All of you can have a part in the kingdom's work, big or small. I hope that you'll be able to see God work in your life as He meets your needs.

Nash is the director of AFLC Home Missions. Visit www.aflchomemissions.org to sign up for "Knee-Mail," Home Mission's weekly prayer e-mail with testimonies, updates and prayer requests from Pastor Nash and the Home Missions office.

REGISTRATION

June 12-15, 2012, at Lincoln High School, 101 Knight Ave. S., Thief River Falls, Minn.

For a downloadable form, and for more information, visit our [Facebook](#) page or go to www.aflc.org and click on "conferences"

First name: _____ Spouse (if attending): _____

Last name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

AFLC Congregation: _____

Other Congregation: _____

Membership (Check one)

You: _____ Rostered AFLC Pastor or serving AFLC church _____ Visiting Pastor _____ Lay Member _____ Lay Visitor

Spouse: _____ Rostered AFLC Pastor or serving AFLC church _____ Visiting Pastor _____ Lay Member _____ Lay Visitor

Children and youth: VBS for children ages 5-12 and activities for youths ages 13-17 are planned (for a fee) for the week. See the AFLC Web site for information and downloadable registration forms (www.aflc.org). Click on "conferences."

Meals and banquets: A general conference meal is only being offered at noon Wednesday through Friday. All other meals are on your own. Board and committee members must register for applicable meals. **Meal registration must be received by May 31.**

| Meal | Cost | # | Total |
|--|-------|---|-------|
| Tuesday lunch (for those serving on committees) | \$10 | | \$ |
| Wednesday Conference lunch (children and adults) | \$10 | | \$ |
| Wednesday Chaplains lunch | \$10 | | \$ |
| Wednesday Builder's Fellowship lunch | \$10 | | \$ |
| Wednesday Schools' Corporation dinner | \$15 | | \$ |
| Thursday Missions Corporation breakfast | \$8 | | \$ |
| Thursday Conference lunch (children and adults) | \$10 | | \$ |
| Thursday ARC Corporation lunch | \$10 | | \$ |
| Thursday Pastors' banquet | \$20 | | \$ |
| Thursday Laymen's banquet (adult) | \$10 | | \$ |
| Thursday Laymen's banquet (child) | \$7 | | |
| Friday FLAPS breakfast | \$6.5 | | \$ |
| Friday Conference lunch (children and adults) | \$10 | | \$ |
| Friday AFLC Foundation lunch | \$10 | | \$ |
| Total meals | | | \$ |
| *Conference registration fee (\$35 single/\$50 couple) | | | \$ |
| Total registration and meals | | | \$ |

*The registration fee is required for all attending the AFLC Conference. **Make checks payable to "AFLC" and mail to: AFLC, c/o Conference Registrations, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.** Registrations must be received by May 31.



Thus far has the Lord helped us

BY MARY ANN WARD

The National Women's Missionary Federation is pleased to announce our annual WMF Day on June 12 in Thief River Falls, Minn. We invite you to join us as we celebrate 50 years of the WMF of the AFLC, study God's Word, fellowship together, attend workshops, and sing praises to Him using the theme, "Thus Far Has the Lord Helped Us," taken from I Samuel 7:12.

We have a wonderful day planned for you and look forward to seeing you there. Faylin Myhre, our Bible study writer for 2012, will lead the morning Bible study. Karen Knudsvig, Sarah Nelson, and Pastor Jeremy and Lacey Crowell will lead the afternoon workshops. The day will conclude with a banquet at 5 p.m., where we will hear from the past WMF national presidents. The WMF breakfast will be held on Wednesday morning and is open to all women. Pastor Nate Jore, missionary to Uganda, will bring the Word to us at the Mission Festival service on Wednesday evening.

Ward is the communications secretary for the WMF.

2012 WMF Convention • June 12 • Sioux Falls, S.D.

Please use this form to register for the WMF Convention, luncheon and banquet on Tuesday, June 12, and for the WMF leadership breakfast on Wednesday, June 13. The convention will be held at the Evangelical Free Church, 211 Arnold Ave. N., Thief River Falls, Minn.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home congregation: _____

Address: _____

| Item | Cost | # | Total |
|---|---------|---|-------|
| *Registration | \$7.50 | | \$ |
| Tuesday luncheon | \$8.50 | | \$ |
| Tuesday banquet | \$11.50 | | \$ |
| Wednesday breakfast (Our Savior's Lutheran) | \$6.50 | | \$ |
| Total | | | \$ |

The registration fee is required for all attending the convention. **Make checks payable to "WMF of AFLC" and mail to: WMF Treasurer, Lois Grothe, 3745 Franklin Ave., Astoria, OR 97103. Registrations must be postmarked by May 31. Preregistration is required to attend luncheon and banquet. Childcare and VBS will be provided.*

AFLBS names students to summer teams

The Association Free Lutheran Bible School, Plymouth, Minn., will send out eight teams this summer to minister to congregations and camps throughout the United States. Here is a list of teams and their members.

Ambassadors

*Luke Quanbeck, Moorhead, Minn.
Isaac Paige, Shakopee, Minn.
Olivia Johnson, Esko, Minn.
Maia Coyle, Hutchinson, Minn.
Bethany Papillon, Sheridan, Ill.

Majesty

*Sean Buchfink, Glyndon, Minn.
Tim Carlson, Sheridan, Ill.
Katy Dahl, Felton, Minn.
Joanna Rumohr, Champion, Mich.
Katie Erickson, Maple Grove, Minn.

Cornerstone

*Steven Peterson, Thief River Falls, Minn.
Paul Eikom, Eagan, Minn.
Stephanie Kantonen, Cloquet, Minn.
Michelle Alverson, Osakis, Minn.

Foundation

*David Niemela, Cokato, Minn.
Andrew Strand, Kenyon, Minn.
Naomi Olson, Savage, Minn.
Emily Kregel, Crescent City, Ill.

Timothy

*Luke Erickson, Maple Grove, Minn.
Matthew Grothe, Astoria, Ore.
Hannah Ruth Patterson, Des Lacs, N.D.
Kari Knudson, Tioga, N.D.

Joshua

*Michael Johnson, Cloquet, Minn.
Jared Nash, Wahpeton, N.D.
Ruth Peterson, Thief River Falls, Minn.
Annette Kylo, Byron, Minn.

South Barnabas

*Josiah Nelson, Minneapolis
Esther Long, Arlington, Wash.
Andrew Kneeland, Tucson, Ariz.
Rachael Ballmann, Glen Rose, Texas

North Barnabas

*Kyle Smith, Howard Lake, Minn.
Courtney Jacobsen, Burlington, N.D.
Tim Papillon, Sheridan, Ill.
Krista Heylens, Volga, S.D.

* Denotes team leader



Members of St. Paul Lutheran, Mansura, La., voted to submit a resolution of affiliation with the AFLC. The congregation dates back to 1898.

AFLC adds first Louisiana congregation

St. Paul Lutheran Church, Mansura, La., is the newest AFLC congregation, welcomed by members of the Coordinating Committee during their February meeting.

Organized in 1898, this former Lutheran Church Missouri Synod congregation was served from 1925 to 1963 by the Rev. Dr. Calvin Peterson Thompson, whose life and ministry was the subject of a documentary film entitled, "A Man of His Times." Fifteen Lutheran pastors are sons of the congregation, including Rev. Joseph G. Lavalais, who was elected in 1981 as the first African American vice-president of the LCMS.

The church building, located two miles from Mansura in an area known as Lutherville, is listed on both the National and African American Register of Historic Places for providing a quality education to the local black community for many years



through its parochial school, which closed during the late 1930s.

The congregation, currently including 40-50 members, is served by Lay Pastor Ron Gallerson.

Boyertown congregation celebrates one year

Living Faith Lutheran Church of Boyertown, Pa., celebrated its first anniversary in January with approximately 60 people in attendance. The service included special music from an all-male choir, worship and communion service led by interim Pastor Eugene Enderlein, who also conducted the first worship service one year ago. Following the close of the service, a time of fellowship was enjoyed by all in attendance.



The congregation meets in a local school building.

Conference information available online

Registration forms, promotional video also available

Information and registration forms for the AFLC's 50th annual conference are now available online (www.aflc.org). The conference will be held June 12-15 at Lincoln High School, 101 Knight Ave. S., Thief River Falls, Minn., and hosted by Our Savior's Lutheran in Thief River Falls. Information currently available online includes:

- Conference registration forms (printed on page 18)
- A list of housing options in PDF format
- Table display registration forms
- Youth and child registration forms
- Conference choir registration form (see article below)
- A 10-minute promotional video, which includes archival pictures from past annual conferences and other AFLC events.

Register now for conference choir

The AFLC's 50th anniversary conference will be held June 12-15 in Thief River Falls, Minn. The conference theme is "Jubilee," taken from Psalm 118:23-24.

The conference opening service will be Tuesday evening at 7:30 p.m. A special effort is being made to have a conference choir to sing at the opening service. The choir will be directed under the leadership of Andrew Hanson, music director at the

AFLC Schools. Music is available ahead of time to be sent to those interested, and a practice session will be held sometime Tuesday before the evening service.

If interested in singing with the choir, please contact Hanson by e-mail at ahan-son@aflc.org or write to AFLC Schools, 3134 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. A registration form is available online at aflc.org.

Rekindle the Fire planned for June 11

The AFLC Commission on Evangelism will host the 10th annual Rekindle the Fire conference for pastors and their wives on June 11 at Our Savior's Lutheran, Thief River Falls, Minn. The event takes place the day before the start of the AFLC annual conference.

The featured speaker for the conference is Pastor Mike Brandt, who will focus on encouraging pastors during two afternoon workshops and an evening session. The sessions begin at 2:30 p.m. A dinner will be held at 6 p.m. at the Ralph Engelstad Arena.

The cost of registration for pastors and their wives is paid for through the Commission on Evangelism. However, space is limited. Preregistration is required. The registration deadline is May 31. For more information and to register, visit the AFLC Evangelism Web site at www.aflcevangalism.org, or email evangelism@aflc.org.



Historical photos sought for 50th anniversary

Members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee are requesting help from anyone who has photographs of events or people from the beginning years of our AFLC. The photos may be included in a DVD or an anniversary book. Please write—in pen-

cil—on the back of the photo the names of people, events, and approximate date of the event. We will not be able to return your pictures. Please send a copy of your photos to: Karen Floan, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441.

Annual conference housing options

Conference hosts reserve rooms; campsites also available

Hosts of the 2012 Annual Conference have compiled a list of housing options in Thief River Falls, Minn., for those attending the 50th anniversary conference June 12-15. Blocks of rooms have been reserved under "AFLC Annual Conference." A limited amount of space is available.

- Americas Best Value Inn & Suites
1915 Hwy. 59 SE
Phone: (218) 681-6205
Reservations: 1-888-890-9568
www.americasbestvalueinn.com
 - AmericInn of Thief River Falls
1920 Hwy. 59 SE
Phone: (218) 681-4411
www.americinn.com
 - Best Western Inn
1060 Hwy. 32 S
Phone: (218) 681-7555
or 1-800-569-8123
www.bestwestern.com
 - C'mon Inn
1586 Hwy. 59 SE
Phone: (218) 681-3000
or 1-800-950-8111
www.cmoninn.com
 - Cedar Lodge
1009 Main Ave. N.
Phone: (218) 681-6800
or (218) 689-5185
www.cedarlodgetrf.com
 - T-59 Motel
1510 Hwy. 59 SE
Phone: (218) 681-2720
www.t59moteltf.com
- Camping in Thief River Falls:**
- Petro Pumper
Hwy. 59 & Hwy. 1
Phone: (218) 681-3546
 - Thief River Falls Tourist Park
Hwy. 32 S & Oakland Park Rd.
Phone: (218) 681-2519
www.citytrf.net/tourist.htm

Surrounding communities also offer housing options.

AFLC memorials: February

AFLBS

Jeannene Ballmann, Ruda Hanson, Allan Ensrud, Mary Lou Pender, Ruth Claus

AFLTS

Jeannene Ballmann, Herbert Stuegelmeier, Helene Brend, Ruda Hanson, Allan Ensrud, Lyle Voiss, Ernie Miedema

Ambassador Institute

Jeannene Ballmann

Evangelism

Arthur Arneson, Ernie Miedema, Jeannene Ballmann

FLAPS

Ernie Miedema

General Fund

Ernie Miedema

Home Missions

Ken Sander, Arthur Arneson, Arvid Anderson, Jeannene Ballmann

Parish Education

Margery Bischoff

Vision

Ernie Miedema

World Missions

Kathy Olson, Arthur Arneson, Ernie Miedema

Youth Ministries

Arthur Arneson

... in honor of

Home Missions

Sean and Jodi Dianchrist

People and Places

Pastor Richard Sliper has accepted a call from First Lutheran Church, Ellendale, Minn., where he has been the interim pastor.

Pastor Dana Coyle, Sheridan, Ill., has resigned as senior pastor of Helmar Lutheran, Newark, Ill., and accepted a call to be the pastor of Freedom Lutheran Church, rural Ottawa, Ill., where he served previously.

Pastor Dennis Norby has resigned as associate pastor of Helmar Lutheran, Newark, Ill.

Pastor Craig Benson, who has been on active duty as an Air Force chaplain, returns to parish ministry, having accepted a joint call from St. Peters Lutheran, Armour, S.D., and Amazing Grace Lutheran, Mitchell, S.D.

Internship assignments for two Free Lutheran Seminary senior students were recently announced. **Luke Emerson** will intern at St. John's Lutheran, Newark, Ohio, with Pastor Thomas Olson as supervising pastor. **Sam Menge** will intern at Our Savior's Free Lutheran, Stanley, N.D., with Pastor Rodney Johnson as supervising pastor.

Pastor Eugene Enderlein, Plymouth, Minn., has resigned from interim work at Disciple Lutheran Fellowship, Reading, Pa., and Living Faith Lutheran, Boyertown, Pa., and accepted a call from Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, to serve as visitation pastor.

Pastor Jerome Nikunen has announced his retirement as pastor of the Winger, Minn., parish (Dovre and Union Lake), and is moving to Richfield, Minn.

Jim Christiansen has resigned as pastor of the Badger, Minn., parish (Badger Creek and Oiland), and accepted a call to serve Free Lutheran Church of Roseau and Norland Free Lutheran, Salol.

EEMN celebrates 20 years with banquet

East European Missions Network will celebrate 20 years with a banquet and program on April 20 at Heritage Hall on the AFLC Schools campus in Plymouth, Minn. Special guests will be Emilia Slabunova, Tanya Popyskhova and Wendy Jespen. For more information and to reserve a spot, please call (505) 990-1639 or email eemn.org before April 13.

Congregation honors longtime organist

"Each one should use whatever grace he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms"
(1 Peter 4:10).

In these transient times very few of us have the calling to stay put in one congregation. Bonnie Huff is one of those rare people. Not only is she a life-long member of St. Paul's Free Lutheran in Leitersburg, Md., she also served as church organist for 64 years. Friends who knew her as a youngster remember Bonnie being called in to practice the organ while they were able to continue playing. She took on the duties of organist when she was only 14 and has recently retired from that role.

On Jan. 28, more than 75 congregation members and friends gathered at a surprise luncheon to thank Bonnie for her faithful service. Those who honored her spoke not only of her musical talent, but also her Christian example to many young people in the church over the years.

The congregation will commemorate her years of service by placing a plaque on the organ bench where Bonnie spent so much time serving God and her fellow members.

-By Joan Culler



Bonnie Huff

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-Feb. 29, 2012

| FUND | REC'D IN FEBRUARY | TOTAL REC'D TO DATE | PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| General Fund | \$23,281 | \$48,545 | \$47,895 |
| Evangelism | 12,801 | 27,032 | 17,197 |
| Youth Ministries | 6,754 | 14,846 | 39,215 |
| Parish Education | 6,521 | 17,418 | 17,172 |
| Seminary | 15,125 | 38,304 | 34,425 |
| Bible School | 22,544 | 49,027 | 72,231 |
| Home Missions | 23,616 | 107,389 | 80,195 |
| World Missions | 35,562 | 69,516 | 100,820 |
| Personal Support | 33,538 | 94,474 | 63,396 |
| TOTALS | \$179,741 | \$466,549 | \$472,546 |

Contact the individual departments for further information about specific financial needs.

In remembrance

Estonia

It was 20 years ago when the opportunity came for this writer to join a delegation of Lutheran pastors who were invited to attend an educational conference in Estonia, a country that had recently emerged from behind the communist Iron Curtain. The sponsor of the conference, Campus Crusade for Christ, had become aware that some Estonian Lutheran pastors might attend, and AFLC Pastor Don Richman was the contact who was asked to recruit some evangelical American Lutheran pastors to be present, too, in

order to connect with them.

A book could be (should be?) written about the adventures of the eight pastors, as well as the resulting formation of a U.S. fellowship committed to providing

initial funding for the establishment of an academy to train religion teachers for the Estonian public schools. Later in the year the East European Missions Network (EEMN) was organized, and today they maintain a close relationship with the Tartu Academy of Theology (TAT), which has expanded to become a Christian liberal arts college, the only one in the nation, and it continues to need international support in order to survive.

It was the life-changing experience of a lifetime, introducing our group of pastors to something we had never known, to a land scarred by communist tyranny, and to brothers and sisters who had survived decades of persecution. We saw a mound of stones topped by a rugged cross which commemorated those whose burial places were unknown, for there was hardly a family that had not lost a loved one as thousands were arrested by the secret police

and “disappeared.”

There was a pastor who had been tortured by electric shock treatments and a portrait of an elderly woman whose bravery had made it possible for the doors of her church to remain open. An Estonian banner hangs from the bookshelf in my study, together with a Russian officer’s cap purchased on a street corner, which recalls to my mind the tale of authorities who were so afraid of those two shades of blue with a white background that underground cables combining these colors were ripped up and removed for fear that someone might associate them with the forbidden emblem of lost freedom.

Signs of the Spirit of God at work were evident, as old congregations were touched by renewal in order to meet the new and fresh challenges of freedom. What a privilege to learn from them! Our group of pastors had been cautioned not to come to Estonia with our agendas, but to wait on the Lord and discover what He had in store for our visit. He had a surprise in store for us, as He often does, for we had come expecting to give but left having received. It was a mountaintop experience, and God used it to prepare my heart and life for the valleys that followed. All praise to Him.

Ernie

A funeral service for Ernest J. Miedema, 80, was held on Feb. 15 at Grace Free Lutheran Church, Valley City, N.D., of which he was one of the charter members. It would be hard to think of anyone who has been more a part of the life of the AFLC over the past 50 years than Ernie. Officially he served as a member of

the Coordinating Committee, and later as Director of Development for about 17 years, and he may have never missed an annual conference—including the organizational meeting in 1962—until recent years when his health failed.

Ernie was my first contact with the Valley City parish, as he traveled to our home in Tioga, N.D., to interview me for a possible call. During our years in Valley City, where he operated a successful local business, as well as serving as mayor and state representative, he, together with his

Signs of the Spirit of God at work were evident, as old congregations were touched by renewal in order to meet the new and fresh challenges of freedom.

wife, Darlene, was an unfailing source of encouragement and support. He was a good friend.

He was a man who got things done ... from touring our parsonage and discovering that there was a need for a new washer and dryer, to arranging for our AFLC Schools faculty members to have separate offices when he found that three of us were sharing one. He was an advocate for the pastors, many of whom tell of the encouragement that his visits and prayers brought them as he traveled throughout our congregations. The AFLC has benefited over the years, too, from the counsel that he provided to many of our members in their estate planning.

Ernie loved his Lord, his family, his congregation, and the AFLC. Blessed be his memory!



Pastor Robert Lee

association retreat center

Following the Shepherd

BY MIKE FISK

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:27-30).

The Bible often refers to those of us who have accepted Christ as our Savior as sheep and Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Sheep are pretty defenseless animals. They depend on the shepherd for protection from wild animals, bad weather and finding adequate food and water.

The Association Retreat Center's theme for 2012 is "Follow Me," taken from Mark 1:17. ARC board members and staff focused on this theme from Feb. 1 through Feb. 21, praying for the ARC ministry as well as our own personal walk with Jesus. Each day we looked at a different passage that taught us how to better follow Jesus.

In John 10 we are taught by the Master that there will be those who will try to snatch the sheep from the fold. The robber is intent on keeping us from enjoying the protection and freedom we can experience because of the sacrifice Christ offered on the cross and the power over death through His resurrection.

Whenever Scripture mentions something twice, it's done for emphasis. In John 10 we are given two promises. First, we are promised that we are known by the Good Shepherd. The phrase,

"He knows us by name," doesn't mean He knows us superficially, it means He knows us intimately and deeply; He knows our every fear and concern.

Second, we are warned that the enemies will come. We are told over and over in the Bible that the believer will experience hardship during this journey we call life. However, the promise we have is that even though enemies attack us, there is no enemy strong enough to snatch us from the hand of a loving and gracious heavenly Father. Jesus mentions this protection twice in order to emphasize its importance in our lives.

As we grow closer to Jesus through prayer and Bible study, we learn to know Him better and learn to follow His voice. We follow a Good Shepherd who not only knows our names, but will never allow us to be snatched from His hand. What wonderful promises to live by.

The ARC was once a place of military defense for our nation. Now, through the grace of God, we are a place of defense for the body of Christ. Thousands of people from virtually every denomination come here every year to learn how to better hear the voice of the Good Shepherd.

Fisk is the director of development for the Association Retreat Center, located near Osceola, Wis.