

THE LANGUAGE OF LIFE

BY PASTOR STEVE LOMBARDO

"He thought with the learned, but he also thought and talked with the people. Often there is lack of elegance, and sometimes downright coarseness, but on the whole his style of speech was clear to the people, warm with life and sentiment, and vigorous with the robust nature of the man himself."

(E.C. Dargan, A History of Preaching, vol. 1)



artin Luther lived to communicate God's Word with clarity and conviction. As Steven Lawson notes: "Luther had an extraordinary faculty of expressing the most profound

thoughts in the clearest language for the common people" (The Heroic Boldness of Martin Luther). His approach was in keeping with what he saw in Jesus' preaching. "For Luther, Christ is the model preacher, the great Rabbi, and Christ did not talk philosophy or theology, but the language of everyday life, known to all ... He speaks only of the ploughed field, of the mustard seed, and uses only common rustic similitudes" (James Mackinnon, *Luther and the Reformation*, vol. 4).

Also, Luther was adamant that preachers should know Hebrew and Greek, the biblical languages, as well as Latin. But, writes Mackinnon, he warned against a parade of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin in the pulpit for the purpose of winning praise from the people. This was one "parade" that should be rained on.

He emphasized and exhibited the marriage of simplicity and substance in his preaching. It was not mere rhetoric but a message that the hearers could understand and, then, take home with them. Luther wanted the biblical text to define the sermon, to be the message. It was to be clearly and forcefully communicated. "For him simplicity does not mean mere drivel. It is nearly

always combined with substance. He possesses a wonderful faculty for bringing his stores of knowledge and experience into play, in simple fashion" writes Mackinnon.

One cannot escape the conclusion that Luther gave himself to preaching. In the midst of Reformation battles the task of preaching was preeminent with him. As a consequence, the sermon was no longer just optional but rather an essential part of Christian worship, notes Fred W. Meuser in his book *Luther the Preacher*.

Luther was not a perfect preacher because he was not a perfect man, as he certainly knew. Christian preachers are at the same time saints and sinners. A congregation that seeks the perfect pastor will search in vain. And, with Luther there were a few times when his pulpit speech went beyond good taste. He could be crude. This can be a danger for a preacher when making an application in the sermon. However, only a small number of his expressions would be inappropriate in our churches, notes Meuser. After all, God uses earthen vessels, some broken, some tarnished, none perfect, yet all gifted—to deliver the treasure, God's Word.

Lombardo, retired AFLC pastor living in Yorkville, Ill., spoke on "Luther As Preacher" during the fall Revival Conference at the AFLC Schools.



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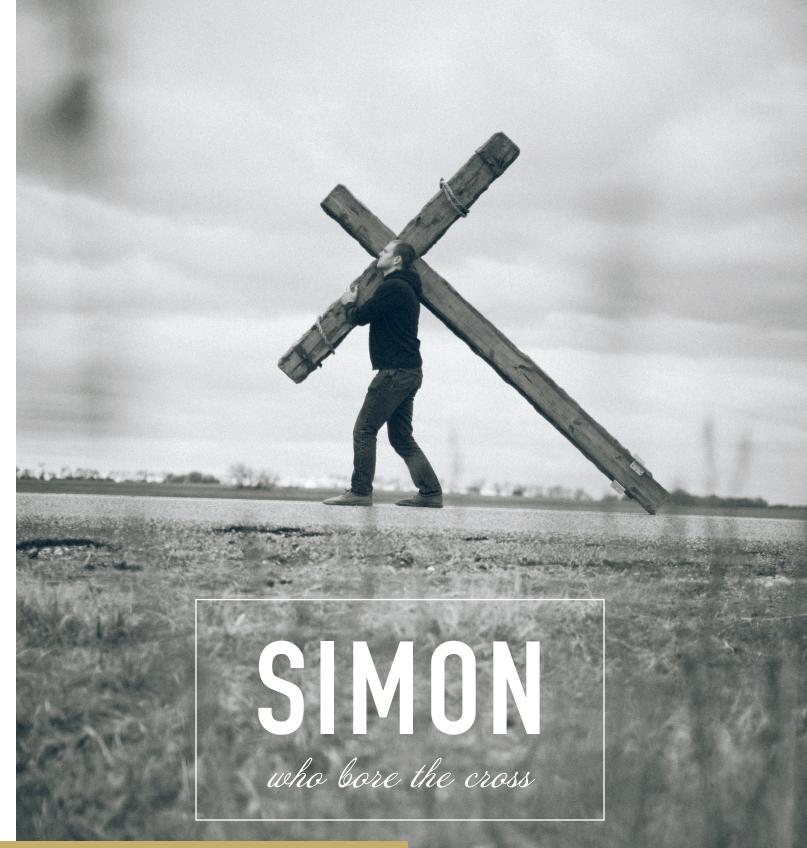
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sound bites

Lent is the season in which we ought to be surprised by joy. —Graham Greene
The purpose of Lent is not to escape the conscience, but to create a healthy hatred for evil, a heartfelt contrition for sin, and a passionately felt need for grace. —Edna Hong
Discipleship is commitment to the suffering Christ. —Dietrich Bonhoeffer
As we stand before the cross, we begin to gain a clear view both of God and of ourselves, especially in relation to each other. Instead of inflicting upon us the judgment we deserved, God in Christ endured it in our place. Hell is the only alternative. —John Stott
The Resurrection narratives are not a picture of survival after death; they record how a totally new mode of being has arisen in the Universe. —C.S. Lewis
Love is the victor. Death is not the end. The end is life. His life and our lives through him, in him Christ our Lord has risen. —Frederick Buechner



By Rick Rasmusser

alk about being at the wrong place at the wrong time. A man named Simon was just entering Jerusalem's city gates as the unmistakable procession of a crucifixion was exiting. As they passed Simon, the One now being crucified was unable to take another step while carrying His cross—no matter what methods the Roman guards used to encourage Him.

No Roman in his right mind would touch the cross of a condemned man. Likewise a Jew would never willingly touch a cross because it was regarded cursed (reflecting on Deuteronomy 21:23, "... cursed of God is the one who has been hanged on a tree"). Nonetheless, Simon of Cyrene, a Jew, was grabbed by the Roman soldiers and forced to pick up the cross of the condemned man, now stained with His blood, and carry it all the way to Golgotha.

Two millennia later we know that the condemned man was Jesus the Christ, who was carrying that cross to Calvary so that He could provide forgiveness for the sins of all mankind.

The wonder of this incident recorded in Mark 15:21 is not that Christ wasn't in a condition to carry His own cross, but that He was even alive at all. His physical abuse began long before he was taken to Pilate for His final trial. When Pilate eventually handed Christ over to the Roman soldiers for execution, they continued the torture.

The man Simon met on the road to Golgotha was beyond recognition. As Jesus started down the road to His crucifixion with His cross on His shoulder, He was in very poor physical condition. His back had been mostly stripped of its flesh; He was wearing a crown of thorns which pierced His head in several places; and oh—His face. His face was "so marred, beyond human semblance, and His form beyond that of the children of mankind" (Isaiah 52:14). His face was distorted so badly from His beatings that it was hardly recognizable as being human.

Simon's task that day was his physical cross to bear. But this event generated the phrase which is now familiar throughout the English-speaking world. And it harkens back to a poignant moment in Jesus' time with His disciples. Earlier in His ministry Jesus taught His disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

Self-denial is the first of the three requirements given in this verse that must be met before anyone can qualify as a follower of Jesus. Christians have always been taught that they must allow Jesus to take the place of self in their hearts and minds.

It has been my experience that the second item in the list is the one that we probably understand the least: We must also take up our cross. But what exactly is our cross? Our cross is commonly misunderstood as being a burden, trial, or responsibility in life that one must accept, even though it is very difficult and, perhaps, one that cannot be changed.

To a Christian, taking up one's cross conveys a very different concept. In his *Large Catechism*, Martin Luther wrote the explanation of the Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer:

"We who would be Christians must surely count on having the devil with all his angels and the world as our enemies and must count on their inflicting every possible misfortune and grief upon us."

The cross and our bearing of it has to do with our enemies: the devil, all his angels, and the world. Our cross is whatever grief and suffering we experience because we are followers of Christ.

The cross can also be considered our identification with Christ since suffering often accompanies those who choose to follow Christ. It is most often our living like Jesus which elicits the most animosity from Christ's enemies.

It is a mistake to call all of our sorrows in life "crosses." Even unbelievers have many sorrows in life; but they do not bear a cross.

Last, Jesus taught His disciples that they must follow Him and keep on following Him. They are words echoed by Paul as he sought to encourage the believers in Galatia: "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9).

All three imperatives are impossible for us. We can only do them by God's grace, daily renewed.

Though we do not know for sure, the Bible seems to indicate that Simon of Cyrene later came to faith in Jesus. We take our cue from Simon's description, "the father of Alexander and Rufus." These sons were apparently well known to Mark's readers, as he uses them as witnesses to the story. Perhaps they were leaders in the early church. It would seem very plausible for their father, Simon, to come to faith after having touched the very blood of Jesus.

Must Jesus bear the cross alone, and all the world go free? No, there's a cross for everyone, and there's a cross for me.

The consecrated cross I'll bear till death shall set me free; and then go home my crown to wear, for there's a crown for me.

(Ambassador Hymnal, 480, vv. 1, 3)

Rasmussen, Monticello, Minn., is a member of Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn. He regularly attends the Summer Institute of Theology.

The Roman CENTURION

By Rachelle Klemme-Thunem

ruly this man was the Son of God." Out of everything a prestigious career as an officer in one of world history's most powerful empires could offer, one particular Roman centurion became known for a line spoken at a brutal public execution scene. It is a pretty counter intuitive thoughtone would think that someone with divine might and favor would have escaped the experience of death. It goes against basic human nature—don't people tend to admire and identify with characters who escape and not the character who suffers a horrific demise?

> Not much information is given about the centurion overseeing the death of Jesus. He is unnamed and at the scene of the crucifixion in the synoptic gospels (Matthew 27, Mark 15, and Luke 23). Venerated as a converted Christian saint and martyr in Catholic and Orthodox churches, he is traditionally known by the name Longinus and considered to be the same Roman soldier who pierced the side of Jesus after He died in the book of John. In Mark 15, at the very least, Pilate summons the centurion to confirm that Jesus was indeed already dead.

> In the Roman military of the time, a centurion was an officer in command of a unit called a centuria or century. In their position of leadership, one would imagine they would have had some familiarity with the local religious beliefs of the regions to which they were assigned. It wasn't always a matter of detached imperialism—Matthew 8 and Luke 7 tell of another centurion who had supported the synagogue in Capernaum and was well-regarded by the Jewish elders there. This centurion sought help for his ailing servant, believing Jesus could heal him from a distance; and Jesus commended the man's faith. Acts 10 also tells of a centurion named Cornelius, described as a devout and God-fearing Gentile who also had a good reputation in the local Jewish

With these examples, and assuming an officer would know some context about the person whose execution he oversaw, the centurion in calling Jesus the "Son of God" could have been thinking in terms of the local beliefs and Jesus's controversial claims, as well as the Roman Empire's beliefs.

The Roman Empire's approach to religion is also an important part of the context here. Crucifixion was a particular form of capital punishment designed to send a message and make a public example of the victim while showing the empire's might. The government tolerated a variety of religions and cultures and gave occupied countries some level of self-determination. But no human was allowed to rival Caesar, who was held to be divine. Jesus' claim to be

God contradicted this—whether the Roman civil authorities considered Him an actual threat or took Him seriously at all.

Reserved for non-citizens, insurrectionists, and people of low social status, crucifixion was designed to kill the victim after hours of torture affecting multiple systems of the human body, turning the person's physical mortality and vulnerability against them. After being brutally scourged, the person being executed would be forced to carry the cross—which could be designed in a number of different shapes—and then hung to it in any one of a number of different positions that ensured a slow death. One can find different articles on the internet, including formal research, speculating on the exact medical cause of Jesus's death: hypovolemic shock from blood loss, suffocation, heart failure, exposure to the elements, and so on. A broken body and shed blood, far removed from the usual understanding of divine might.

Crucifixion was intimidating and effective in humiliating criminals and discouraging rebellions, but a good centurion would have been prepared for the off chance that Jesus' followers could attempt a rescue or stage a hoax to save face. And first, there was nothing special; just a few helpless onlookers, no attempt to fight back, one more execution carried out without a hitch.

Then, there was a darkness in the middle of the day and an earthquake that shook the centurion to his core—it forced him to admit Jesus was righteous and innocent, the horror felt in common by those of us sinners who realize our hand in all of this. But that wasn't all. The centurion was also moved by Jesus's last words. In Luke, Jesus says, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." In the account by Mark, after being mocked for not escaping or being rescued, Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The paradox of God being forsaken by God would have gone against every conventional idea of how divine power worked, and this uniqueness of Jesus as fully human and fully divine was not lost on the centurion.

Again, Scripture by itself does not say what happened to the centurion afterward. But as the same person who personally confirmed the real death of Jesus, the centurion would have gladly accepted the later news of the also real resurrection.

Klemme-Thunem lives in Breckenridge, Minn. and is a 2006 alum of Association Free Lutheran Bible School.

By Tamara Dyrud Schierkolk

esus shifted on the iron spikes, and his head drooped. From a distance, my friends and I watched—and prayed. That morning, soldiers had shredded my Lord with their whips and strung him up on a cross to die, but now they laughed as if sharing a joke at the market instead of in this place where hell touched earth. My stomach roiled, and I took a deep breath to quell the nausea.

Salome looped her arm around mine. "But he was going to be king." Her features twisted, and she searched my face. "He can't die, Mary. He can't."

Another Mary, the mother of James and Joses, peered at me, and her chin wobbled.

"Maybe we didn't understand," I said. "Maybe he knew something we didn't. And it was better." But my heart clenched like a fist, refusing to let go.

The one who is forgiven much, loves much.

Years earlier, I had loved nothing. My broken body had housed a shattered mind. Illnesses, accidents, and compulsions battered me. Once, I even thrashed into the flames of my cooking fire. Afterward, I writhed in the dirt in blistered skin; my hours melted into blackness.

But then came Jesus. He rested his hand on me, calling out the seven demons that had tormented me.

"Mary Magdalene," he said. And for the first time, my name had sounded like beauty. "It is finished."

And it was.

The crowds at the cross scattered, exposing us women, huddled far from where the masses had jeered or sobbed. Many of Jesus' followers had vanished, too. But my heart anchored me to the soil. How could I leave my Lord to his pain when he had saved me from mine?

Jesus struggled against his nails and scanned the meager gathering. Then his gaze rested on me. Those eyes that had once seen through my affliction still saw me.

"It is finished," he cried out.

The same words that had made me new.

His muscles twitched; his head slumped. The sky darkened, and although only mid-afternoon, shadows draped the body of my Savior. Jesus was gone.

A rich man named Joseph carried Jesus' body to a tomb in his garden. Mary and I trailed him and hid behind a tree as we watched the man spread ointment and spices onto fresh linens. And then he wrapped our friend. The burial complete, Joseph heaved a stone into place to seal the entrance to the grave. Dusk was approaching; the Sabbath was near. And I had work to do.

I scurried home and scooped sweet spices into a bowl, my hands trembling. I thumbed away tears as I stirred. The day before, I had prepared the meal for Jesus' supper in the upper room with his followers. If only I were mixing oil into the flour for bread tonight instead of oil with perfumes to

anoint my friend's body. If only I were roasting the lamb with thyme and rosemary instead of blending my tears with myrrh and aloes. If only I had known then what was to come.

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On the first day of the week, I squinted at the early rays of light that sliced through the darkness of my house. The start of a new week without my Jesus. How would I live without him?

A knock at the door. I unlatched it. Mary and Salome stood outside, each holding a bowl. Grief had stripped their faces of color and rimmed their eyes with purple.

"I'm ready," I said, my own bowl of spices cradled in one arm.

Gravel crunched under our sandals, and dew drenched the hems of our tunics as we trudged to the garden.

"Oh no," said Salome. "How will we anoint his body? Remember the stone? It's too big for us." A sob jostled her words. "Who will move it?"

I inhaled a shaky breath. "I don't know."

Mary gripped her bowl in both hands. She stared into the distance, her mouth a straight line.

In the garden, the crocuses exploded in yellow and the hyacinths in pink. White narcissus curled around our path. Where were these flowers two days ago? Or had our sadness hidden them? They bloomed now—the bougainvillea as profuse as forgiveness and the lilies as fragrant as hope.

We neared the grave. But what was that up ahead? I gasped. "The stone's already been moved."

I hurried into the tomb, and my friends followed. A young man, in a robe whiter than light, sat inside. Salome shrieked. My heart hammered, and my bowl clattered onto the stone floor, spilling the spices. Terror clawed its way up my throat. Mary splayed a hand over her mouth.

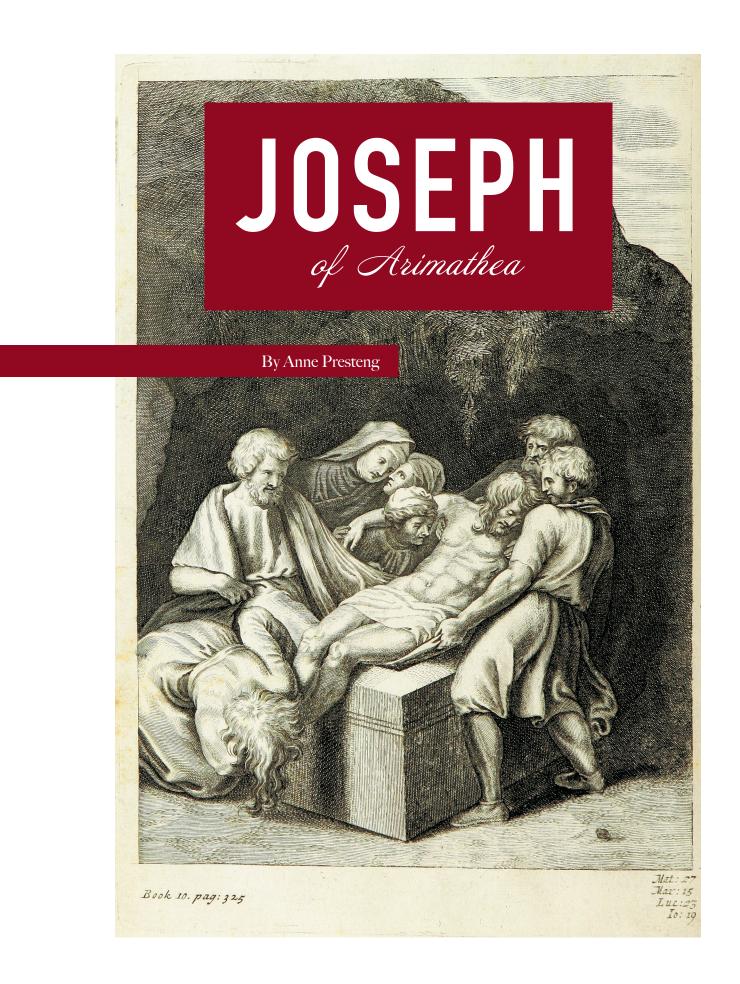
"Don't be afraid," said the young man. "You're looking for Jesus who was crucified. But he's not here. He's risen." He stood and gestured toward the door. "Go and tell his disciples."

My friends and I clambered from the tomb and scrambled back onto the path. We clutched the fabric of our skirts and ran. Blinded by joy, we forgot all about our tear-soaked beds, our morning's task at the tomb, and the spices we had abandoned somewhere along the way.

Because it didn't matter anymore.

Dyrud Schierkolk graduated from AFLBS in 1990. She writes about life and her North Minneapolis neighborhood in her blog My Blonde Life in the Hood (www.tamarajorell.com).





esus' words rang out in the temple as He shared the parable of the vineyard and the shameful treatment of the owner's son, "So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him" (Mark 12:8). The church leaders listening to his words knew He had spoken this parable against them. They were equally furious when they heard Jesus saying, "the stone the builder's rejected has become a capstone; the Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes" (vs. 10-11). Would they proclaim Jesus as their King? Never! Mark 14:55 tells us that after hearing Jesus, "they were looking for evidence against him in order to put him to death."

I have often wondered how I would have responded to Jesus if I had been there to hear His words in the temple and to see Him face to face. My hope is that I would have responded with faith and joy. I hope I would have been bold in my witness. But part of me fears that I would have been swayed by the leaders of the church (the Sandhedrin) or at the very least may have believed but not had the courage to proclaim my faith.

Would I have been like Joseph of Arimathea? A prominent member of the Sanhedrin, he would have had intimate knowledge of his peers' hatred of Jesus. Joseph believed Jesus, but in the face of their strong animosity, he remained quiet. The Bible tells us that "he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews" (John 19:39). I share a certain amount of empathy with Joseph; it is not comfortable to challenge peers, especially when they are militant and powerful.

It seems Joseph stepped out of his secret discipleship and his fear of the Jews the day that Jesus died. His bold actions point to an apparent transformation. His faith, once hidden, now took center stage. The Bible tells us Joseph went "boldly" to Pilate to ask for Jesus' body. I wonder what his fellow council members thought. Joseph's faith was no longer practiced in secret. He boldly claimed the body of Jesus and put Him in his own tomb, which fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah 53:9, "His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth."

Joseph is described as one "who was waiting for the kingdom of God" (Mark 15:43). His Lord had been crucified, and when confronted with Jesus' death it appears that "waiting for the kingdom of God" could be done in secret no longer. Experiencing Jesus' death seemed to replace Joseph's bonds of fear with a heart of courage. What a horrific day. Removing

Jesus' torn and bloody body from the cross and preparing it for burial must have been gruesome. Jesus was dead, but because Joseph loved Jesus he refused to be paralyzed by fear of others and acted in a way that was highly visible, caring not what it would cost him. His wealth enabled him to provide a tomb and proper burial for Jesus, his Lord. Desiring to pay Him honor, Joseph claimed Jesus' body. John 19:39 tells us that about 75 pounds of myrrh and aloe were used in the burial process. This extravagant amount was usually reserved for kings. Could Joseph possibly have known that death would not hold his King?

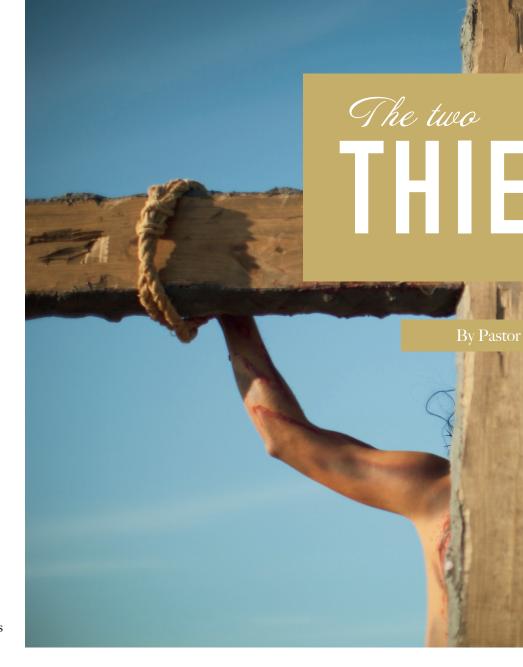
Joseph's bold actions made his love for Jesus evident to all. Despite fear of persecution and death from the Sanhedrin, he acted. These changes seem evident: he became bold, his life was now focused on Christ, his standing and position in the council no longer motivated him to secrecy, and the love of Christ controlled him. Although the Bible doesn't tell us what happened to Joseph after the crucifixion and burial, some sources record him as one of the first missionaries to England (The History of That Holy Disciple *Joseph of Arimathea*, 1770, author unknown). What a contrast if true! A one-time secret follower was now heralding Christ's message to a new continent.

How glad I am to live on this side of the cross. From here we see the plan of salvation laid out clearly in the Bible.

"But God had so much loving-kindness. He loved us with such a great love. Even when we were dead because of our sins, He made us alive by what Christ did for us. You have been saved from the punishment of sin by His loving-favor. God raised us up from death when He raised up Christ Jesus. He has given us a place with Christ in the heavens. He did this to show us through all the time to come the great riches of His loving-favor. He has shown us His kindness through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 6:4-6, NLV).

Oh that God would give me grace to live like Joseph lived in his new-found courage, to be controlled by the love of Christ and to wait for His kingdom boldly so that others may see Jesus and know Him, "that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11).

Presteng, a 1975 graduate of AFLBS, is a member of Bethel Free Lutheran Church, Grafton, N.D.



hroughout the course of Jesus' three years of public ministry, He had many encounters with a wide variety of people. Some who met Jesus were intrigued, curious, friendly and hopeful. Others who met Jesus were skeptical, critical, and rude. As Jesus hung on the cross, both supporters and skeptics witnessed His sufferings and death. There were three crosses that day on Calvary. One for Jesus, and the other two

reserved for two criminals. On one side of Jesus hung a skeptical angry criminal. He had been sentenced to die for his crimes. On the other side of Jesus hung another criminal. He was sentenced to die for his crimes, too.

Although Mark's Gospel implies that both criminals were insulting Jesus from the cross (Mark 15:32), Luke's Gospel mentions that one of the criminals must have stopped with the insults while the other continued to curse Jesus.

According to Luke, one criminal proceeded to disparage and discredit Jesus. Many in the crowd that day also slandered Jesus for His claim that He was indeed the king of Israel. The Gospels remind us that soldiers mocked Jesus. "If you are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" (Luke 23:36). Others in the crowd—including rulers—defamed Jesus by yelling, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His chosen One" (Luke 23:35).

Yet, we are told by Luke that some time on that fateful Friday, one of the criminals stopped his slander.

He became quiet, introspective, and perhaps fearful. He knew that he would not survive a Roman crucifixion. The enormity of the consequences of his wrongdoing had finally caught up with him. Scared and uncertain of what would happen to him after he succumbed to his fate, he grew quiet. His conscience began to bother him while others around him continued their assaults on Jesus, including the other criminal. Finally, he couldn't remain quiet anymore; he spoke up and rebuked the other criminal hanging on his cross. "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly; for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong" (23:40-41).

The account of the two criminals who died with Jesus that afternoon on Calvary is a picture of all humanity. There are only two kinds of people in the world, but we all are criminals. Everyone who is born and lives is like the two criminals who hung next to Jesus because each of



lim Ritter



us has violated God's laws. The Apostle Paul reminds all of us that we are criminals. Romans 3:10-12 says, "As the Scriptures say, 'No one is righteous—not even one. No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one."

All of humanity is similar to the two criminals in different ways. Each of us deserves the death penalty. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

The question we must ask ourselves is this: "Which side of the cross am I on?" All of us are right there at Calvary. We all fall short of God's perfect standard because of our sinful behavior, habits, and nature. As a result we deserve the spiritual death penalty of being forever severed from a holy and righteous God.

We can go through life mocking God and His commands. We can also try to "save ourselves" through good works, trying to live a moral life. But really, that is

another form of disbelief and delusion. Or, we can turn to Jesus Christ for help. We can say, as the one criminal, "We are getting exactly what we deserve." We can further agree with God and Scripture that we indeed are "punished justly." We can also by faith turn to Jesus and ask as one criminal asked, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (Luke 23:42).

That simple request is like a prayer, a response to God's grace that Jesus loves to hear. "Remember me." There wasn't anything this criminal could do for God or for himself. He could not be rehabilitated back into society since he was under the curse of death. He couldn't promise Jesus that he would try to live a better life. There was nothing he could do to merit God's love. All he could do is ask Jesus, "Remember me."

That simple expression of faith was enough. Jesus said to that criminal, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

Two criminals facing the same death sentence. One went to his grave lost and condemned while the other joined Jesus forever in paradise.

Which side of the cross are you on?

Ritter, Prior Lake, Minn., serves Faith Lutheran Church, Shakopee, Minn.

2017 SEMINARY GRADUATES

CHAD FRIESTAD

Crystal, Minn.

am grateful for the spiritual heritage I received in the community of Newark, Ill. My parents, Kirk and Phyllis Friestad, placed utmost importance on salvation in Jesus Christ. Shortly after I was born on Aug. 14, 1983, my parents brought me to



the Lord in baptism and they faithfully took me to church at West Lisbon Lutheran. When I was about 9 years old, I came to an understanding of my faith through VBS and personal study of Scripture. I recognized

my sin and called on Jesus to save me.

After facing some doubt in high school, I eventually came to understand through Scripture that faith is a gift and that I was called to be a follower of Christ. I attended AFLBS where my faith was strengthened and knowledge of God's Word deepened. After Bible school, I got involved in youth ministry at my home church and sensed the Lord's call into ministry. I attended Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, where I earned a degree in youth ministry. I served three years at Good Shepherd Lutheran in Camarillo, Calif., as a youth minister and assisted with pastoral ministry and congregation outreach.

I was called to serve on staff at AFLBS, and began taking seminary classes. A couple of years later I enrolled full-time. I married Christie (Ballmann) on Aug. 13, 2011. God has blessed us with three children, Eben (4), Isaac (3), and Gracia (1), and another baby expected to arrive in April.

God has used my seminary experience to provide much-needed discipline and biblical instruction in my life, so that with His help I can shepherd His people. I am also thankful for the practical ministry experiences I have had during my internship at King of Glory Lutheran in Shakopee, Minn., where a true shepherd's heart has been modeled by Pastor Brett Boe. I am deeply indebted to wonderful seminary professors and many godly pastors who have invested in my pastoral training and spiritual development over the years.

GIDEON JOHNSON

Stanley, N.D.

was born on June 16, 1989, to Pastor Rodney and Candice Johnson. I was later baptized into the Christian faith and by the grace of God have remained in that covenant since then.

When I was 6 months old my dad



took a call to serve Our Savior's Free Lutheran in Stanley, N.D., and First English Lutheran Church of Lostwood, N.D. I grew up in Stanley with two older siblings and one younger. While being raised in a Christian

home I continued to grow in my faith and came to a clearer understanding of God's grace in my life.

After I graduated from high school I chose to attend the Association Free Lutheran Bible School where I continued to grow in my faith and knowledge of God's Word. It was during my senior year that I initially felt called into the ministry. It was also there that I met my wife Erin (Olson). We have been married for almost five years, and have been blessed to be the parents of two boys, Charlie (2) and Otto (8 months).

Upon my graduation from AFLBS I attended Northwestern College, St. Paul, Minn., where I earned a bachelor's degree in history.

In the spring of 2013 I was accepted to attend AFLTS, and that fall I began my first semester of studies. Like Bible school, seminary gave me the opportunity to further ground myself in God's Word, and God has continued to show me His will throughout.

I spent my internship serving at Helmar Lutheran Church, Newark, Ill., under the pastoral supervision of Dr. James Molstre. I have been encouraged and stretched in many ways over this past year, and I look forward to seeing what God has in store for the future. I have accepted a call to serve Hauge Lutheran and Emmanuel Lutheran churches, Kenyon, Minn.

ANDREW OLSON

Shakopee, Minn.

was born on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 28, 1991. I have truly much to be thankful for as I grew up in a Christian home, the son of Pastor Kevin and Pam Olson. I was further blessed to be surrounded in my formative years by the loving com-



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Minn., and Emmaus
Free Lutheran,
Bloomington, Minn.,
where I was taught
the Word of God and
strengthened in my relationship with Christ.
After high school,

I attended AFLBS. It was there that I first heard of the vast need for Bible translation efforts around the world, as numerous people groups are still waiting to receive the Bible in their heart language. I then set out to prepare myself as best as I could for that ministry, attending the University of Northwestern in St. Paul and our Association's seminary.

In the summer of 2015, I was married to the creative and visionary Alexis Wise, whom I met in Uganda through serving with the Nate Jore family. We share a love for missions and a desire to see revival in East Africa. Together have one smiley daughter, Mariah, who is 6 months old.

Serving with Abiding Savior Free Lutheran in Sioux Falls, S.D., has provided me with a wonderful chance to feel the heartbeat of a pastor this year. Internship is a chance to experience the joys and challenges of ministry, and this was a marvelous group of people to do that with.

I consider it an enormous blessing and privilege to be part of the mission-minded fellowship that the AFLC has been and continues to be. It's my hope and prayer that God would use Alexis and I to bring the soul-saving gospel to those waiting for this good news overseas. Please pray for us, and for the Word to go forward.

ALEX AMIOT/ Crookston, Minn.

he Minnesota Twins thought October of 1987 was a great month for them, but it was even greater for my parents. Mark and Nancy Amiot of Crookston, Minn., welcomed me to the family a few weeks before the Twins beat the Cardinals. They brought me to the Lord in baptism and raised me in the faith. I



grew in God's Word at Resurrection Free Lutheran, Beltrami, Minn.

After high school, I attended AFLBS. During subsequent studies at North Dakota State University I studied organizational communication in preparation for seminary. On the heels of two philosophy courses I experienced a crisis in my faith as I began to elevate reason above faith and God's Word. After some months of deep doubt, God graciously restored faith to my heart by the Holy Spirit

working through His Word. A season of ministry paralysis followed as I was thankful for restored faith, but painfully aware of its small size. I considered my faith too weak for God to use me. When a friend suggested that I was putting faith in faith itself rather than putting faith in Christ Himself, I scoffed. I thought I knew better than to do that. God used that conversation to bring me to repentance again. God convinced me that it is not my strength that matters, but only Christ's. He can use me for His work despite myself.

My wife Julia (Olsen) from Beulah, N.D., has been a strong support during these years of preparation. We are thankful to God for our children, Hudson (4) and Phaedra (2).

We have loved our internship time at Ruthfred Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa. It is with II Corinthians 3:4-6 in mind that I have accepted a call to serve Our Saviour's Lutheran and Reiner Lutheran Free Church in Thief River Falls, Minn.

JOHN LEE/ Bangladesh

was born at LAMB Hospital in Parbatipur, Bangladesh, on July 23, 1989, to missionaries Pastor Robert William Lee and Margaret Anne (Ottesen) who raised me in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Because of my heritage, I was a part of a variety of congregations, schools, cultures, and communities.



After attending and receiving a certificate in Bible from AFLBS, I graduated with a bachelor of arts in English literature from Northwestern College, St. Paul, Minn. During college and afterward, I worked in aerospace manufacturing as a material handler. In the summer of 2013, I visited Alaska, met my future wife, and received a call to prepare at the Free Lutheran Seminary (AFLTS). On June 15, 2014, I married Hannah Swanson, and on

April 10, 2016, Bethany was born into our family. We look forward to meeting Elizabeth in May.

After three years of on-campus book work, I interned under Pastor Richard Long at Atonement Free Lutheran Church in Arlington, Wash. My ministry focuses included teaching in the Kids' Club program and building up a young couples' ministry. God used this time to teach me the importance of outreach, administration, and personal equipping in the lives of those I serve. I am thankful for family, friends, faculty, and mentors who have prayed me through my ways, and I pray for a fruitful ministry by God's grace.

PAUL KINNEY/ Montgomery, Ill.

was born Oct. 18, 1961, to Kenneth and Virginia Kinney of Elberta, Ala., and attended St. Mark's Lutheran (LCMS) in Elberta. Most recently, I was a member of St. Olaf Free Lutheran in Montgomery, Ill. I attended Pensacola Jr. College and later Concordia, St. Paul, Minn. I was a literacy teacher with Lutheran



Bible Translators for 20 years. I married Tammy Beavers (deceased 2007) in 1987 and we were blessed with Luke, Erin, Ethan, and Josiah. I married Kedra Larsen in 2009 and we were blessed with Anastasia (6).

During seminary, I grew in love for God's Word. God reveals Himself and salvation through Christ to sinners, and the church has this revelation. He wants sinners to know their Redeemer (Ephesians 4:13). He calls pastors to proclaim this good news. In seminary I

heard professors stress the importance of loving the congregation as Christ has loved the church (Ephesians 5:25). As I reflect on the weakness of my flesh, I am humbled (Isaiah 6:5). Yet, I am reminded that the Lord does accomplish His work through His power. I rest in His care and grace.

I am grateful to Pastor Rodney Johnson and Our Savior's in Stanley, N.D., and First English, Lostwood, N.D. During internship, the Lord placed II Corinthians 5:21 on my heart, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." My thoughts kept returning to the great exchange: my sin for His righteousness. How amazing this is and how humbling it is to share this good news.

STEVE JENSEN/ Loveland, Colo.

was born on Jan. 3, 1979, in Loveland, Colo., to Annette Jensen and John Roberts Burke. I grew up in Loveland, and after graduating from high school I attended AFLBS. During my first year of Bible school I met Brandi Weiker. We were married on Nov. 28, 1999. After graduating from AFLBS, I attended the aviation institute of maintenance in Atlanta, Ga., and then followed a carreer path in retail management. After 12 years of working in retail management, God guided me to begin the process of attending the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary.



Brandi and I have nine children, three of whom were born during our time in seminary. Their names are as follows: Quincy (16), Kiah (13), Weston (11), Breckin (8), Isaiah (6), Levi (5), twins James and John (2), and our baby girl

This past year, I served my internship at Rose and Spruce Free Lutheran churches in Roseau Minn., under the guidance of Pastor Todd Erickson. Seminary was the hardest thing

I have ever done in my entire life! It is only by the grace of God that I was able to finish. The greatest impact during my internship was not something learned, but was a feeling that has developed. I describe it as feeling like a guard dog. I feel the need and desire to guard the congregation from the enemy, including those who would take advantage of the congregation. I feel that this is not something that can be taught in the classroom, but it is something that God has given me during internship which has also confirmed my call to ministry. I have taken a call to serve the congregation of St. John's Lutheran of Schwer, Milford, Ill.



Christ Jesus lay in death's strong bands

he hymn "Christ
Jesus Lay in
Death's Strong
Bands" is based
on the ancient
hymn, "Christ Is Arisen," the
oldest Christian Easter hymn
in existence, dating from the
1100s. It underscores the truth
that Jesus' resurrection from the
dead is the cornerstone of our
Christian faith and hope.

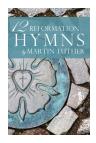
This Easter hymn by Martin Luther is considered next in importance to "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." In stanza two, Luther writes about life and death's struggle. And then as Christ rises in victory over death, death is swallowed up, and its sting is lost forever. Luther concludes his Easter hymn with a grand verse of joyous Easter praise.

Luther wrote "Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands" in the year 1524. The years 1523 and 1524 were very busy years for Luther. During these two years, Luther wrote two-thirds of his 37 hymns.

~Pastor Gordon Waterman Crown of Life Lutheran Tomball. Texas

- Christ Jesus lay in death's strong bands, For our offenses given;
 But now at God's right hand He stands And brings us life from heaven;
 Therefore let us joyful be And sing to God right thankfully Loud songs of hallelujah!
 Hallelujah!
- 2. It was a strange and dreadful strife When Life and Death contended; The victory remained with Life, The reign of Death was ended; Holy Scripture plainly saith That Death is swallowed up by Death, His sting is lost forever. Hallelujah!
- 3. Here the true Paschal Lamb we see, Whom God so freely gave us; He died on the accursed tree— So strong His love!—to save us.

- See, His blood doth mark our door; Faith points to it, Death passes o'er, And Satan cannot harm us. Hallelujah!
- 4. So let us keep the festival Whereto the Lord invites us; Christ is Himself the Joy of all, The Sun that warms and lights us. By His grace He doth impart Eternal sunshine to the heart; The night of sin is ended. Hallelujah!
- 5. Then let us feast this Easter Day
 On Christ, the Bread of heaven;
 The Word of Grace hath purged away
 The old and evil leaven.
 Christ alone our souls will feed,
 He is our meat and drink indeed;
 Faith lives upon no other.
 Hallelujah!



These hymns are featured in a new booklet from Ambassador Publications, 12 Reformation Hymns by Martin Luther. Featuring a hymn of Luther for each month of the year, the booklet is available for \$2/each. For more information, visit ambassadorpublications.org.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

BY HALEY THRAMER



esus is faithful. We see it over and over again in His Word. I'm thankful that in this life, I

don't have to go at it alone. Jesus is by my side through the ups and downs, through the joys and sorrows. He is faithful and the One who truly satisfies in this crazy, twisted world. And He is using me, a sinner saved by His grace, as a parish builder at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Springfield, Mo.

Living in Missouri has taught me so much about building relationships. Although at times it seems daunting, forming new friendships means simply stepping out of your comfort zone wherever you are. It may be at the grocery store or while at your job. In Missouri, we are building relationships at our church, as we travel through the airport, while volunteering at the LifeHouse, or going to Andy's Frozen Custard. Being kind maybe means asking, "Hello, how are you doing today?" or saying to someone, "Have a joy-filled day in the Lord!" You never know when those simple yet powerful phrases can open doors for further conversation.

Let me just tell you a quick story about our friend, Esther. It was my first week in Missouri. For some reason my teammate, Diana Alverson, and I ended up at this frozen custard place three times—we love ice cream! By the third time we ended up having a conversation with Esther and made a new friend. A few weeks later, we met Esther for coffee and found out that she loves Jesus, too. Esther



is preparing to serve in Africa soon, where she will help build a church. It's so neat how God works and places people in your life, even if it's at your favorite ice cream joint. You never know what doors may open to share the gospel when you step out of your comfort zone and go that extra mile to say hello.

Besides building relationships in our community, we have really enjoyed building relationships within the church. Diana and I are currently leading the youth group and have started a Sunday school class. It has been great seeing how God is working in each of the girl's lives, even though our group is small. You may relate to this, but sometimes it is easy to get caught up in numbers and how many people attend church or youth group. But I'm learning that numbers aren't what ministry is about. Ministry is about introducing people to Jesus Christ and His saving grace. Then, we focus on equipping them to share that message with others around them—being a disciple of Jesus, who then makes disciples.

I want to encourage you with a verse from Romans 15:13, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Go and share that hope that you have in Jesus.

Thramer is a parish builder with AFLC Home Missions, serving Immanuel Lutheran, Springfield,

The role of prayer in church

What do you think are the most important ingredients to a vibrant, growing church? At first you might be drawn to different ministries or programs. Maybe it is good long-range planning. These are vitally important, but I would propose that one of the most important things that we can do as a church is pray.

Jesus spent a whole night in prayer before He chose His twelve disciples (Luke 6:12-19). This was serious business, for these men would walk with Jesus, learn from Him, and later carry the good news to the ends of the earth after His death and resurrection.

As Jesus walked with His disciples, He gave us a powerful example of how to pray in Matthew 6:1-15. Prayer is not meant for the street corner so as to put on a show of faithfulness. Rather, prayer is a humble act that does not draw attention to self.

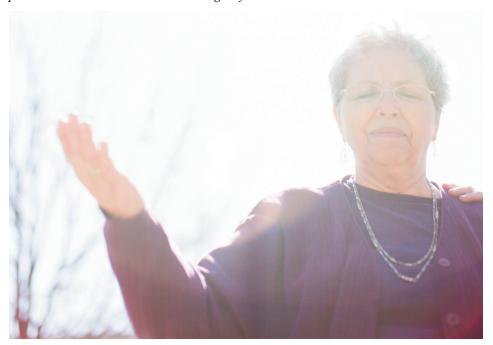
Another dynamic of prayer in Jesus's ministry is that when He saw lost souls, He encouraged His disciples to pray that God would send workers into ministry (Matthew 9:35-10:15). As Jesus prayed, He also sent out the disciples with authority to minister in dramatic ways. Are we praying for workers?

When Jesus' time on earth was drawing to a close and the cross stood before Him, He strongly reprimanded those in the temple and reminded them, "My house shall be a house of prayer" (Matthew 21:13). What a reminder for us today. We can have lots of programs, with lots of activities, but if we are not seeking God's will and direction, and pleading for the salvation of souls, church can simply become a well-oiled mechanism that doesn't serve God's purpose. This powerful statement should bring us to our knees in prayer.

As God works in our lives through His Word, and as the Holy Spirit prompts us to pray, remember the prayer that Jesus prayed as drops of blood came out of His pores in the Garden of Gethsemane, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done" (Matthew 26:42). Jesus surrendered to the will of His Father, taking on sin and defeating the enemy. By God's grace, God calls us to surrender to Him in the same way.

In the final minutes of His life on earth, Jesus continued to call out to His Father, "Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). God calls us to pray as Jesus did. As we pray, God revives our passion for Him, changes our hearts, and helps us grow in depths of wisdom and compassion for the lost.

By Pastor Mark Johnson, who serves the Dalton, Minn., parish of Kvam, Tordenskjold, and Zion-Sarpsborg. Reprinted from the parish March newsletter. Does your church publish a newsletter? Consider sending us yours.



EEMN to host banquet at AFLC Schools campus

The East European Mission Network will host a Midwest Event at 6 p.m. April 29 in Heritage Hall, located on the campus of the Free Lutheran Schools in Plymouth, Minn. Featured during the dinner will be Pastor Oleg Schewtschenko from Ukraine. You may RSVP for the event by April 24 to office@EEMN.org.

Stories of Lutheranism to mark anniversary year

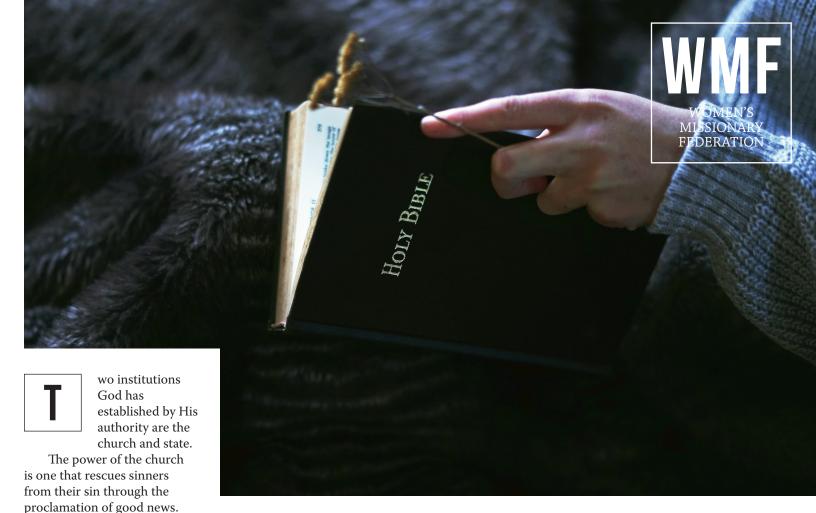
Lutheran University Press will publish *Most Certainly True: Lutheran Stories in Brief* later this year. The book will include 75 stories that illustrate Lutheranism after 500 years, plus additional materials, most of which were originally in the former *Metro Lutheran* newspaper, based in the Twin Cities of Minnesota. Two of the authors are Dr. Francis Monseth, former dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary, and Pastor Robert Lee, editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador* and AFLC Schools faculty member.

Pederson honored with NRB Milestone Award

Wayne Pederson, global ambassador for Reach Beyond, received a National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) Milestone Award March 2 at Proclaim 17, the NRB 2017 International Christian Media Convention in Orlando, Fla. Peterson is a 1972 graduate of AFLTS.



Milestone awards are presented to pioneers of Christian communications who have demonstrated exemplary service in the industry for five decades or longer. Pederson began his radio career as an announcer on KTIS. In the years that followed, he served as manager of KTIS (1980-19940, executive director of the SkyLight Network (1994-97), and executive vice president for radio (1997-2002). He was a member of the NRB Board of Directors, executive director of the Christian Music Broadcasters, president of the Mission America Coalition, and president of HCJB Global (now Reach Beyond). Pederson has served as global ambassador for Reach Beyond since last September.



FREEDOM IN CHRIST

BY PASTOR JON AND LYNN WELLUMSON

bring punishment on the wrongdoer."

Romans 1:16 says of this good

the Jew, then for the Gentile."
This power changes people from the inside and makes them

desire to do what is pleasing to

God. Concerning this power,

Jesus instructed His disciples,

"If you forgive anyone his sins,

not forgive them, they are not

The power of the state,

people whether they want to do

good or not. Consider Romans

13:1, 4: "Let everyone be subject

for there is no authority except

that which God has established.

to the governing authorities,

... For the one in authority is

God's servant for your good.

But if you do wrong, be afraid,

for no reason. They are God's

servants, agents of wrath to

for rulers do not bear the sword

however, is one of coercion.

It uses outward incentives to

encourage good behavior in

they are forgiven; if you do

forgiven" (John 20:23).

news, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for

Both of these institutions are a wonderful gift from God for our good. But given mankind's fallen nature, imagine how these gifts could be misused and abused by those who, rather than desiring to love their fellow men, want to control others for their own benefit. Imagine further the abuse that would take place if the distinction between these institutions and the powers given them are blurred.

Early 16th century Germany was in this perilous state. Souls in purgatory were set free when enough money had changed hands. The murderous wrath of evil-intentioned men had its citizens in tortured agony concerning their souls and their families' souls. Into this volatile situation there came into the hands of common men and women a pamphlet in their own language called the 95 Theses along with other writings by a Wittenberg professor named Martin Luther. Biblical teachings within these writings threatened to undo the stranglehold power held over the common people living in that day.

By the grace of God, people were set free

from their sin and guilt through faith in Jesus Christ as they heard the good news from God's Word clearly taught by Luther. The opportunity to profit from guilty consciences fearing God's wrath through the manipulation of power and wealth was threatened. Those wielding that power were not willing to let it go without a fight.

Among those who received the good news of which Luther wrote were a group of nuns in a Nimbschen convent. At the risk of their lives, nine nuns decided—on the basis of this new freedom—to flee the convent and find refuge at Wittenberg on the night of Easter Eve, April 4, 1523. Included in this group was Katherine von Bora, who would later marry Luther.

What a glorious Easter celebration for them that day. And what a glorious Easter we continue to celebrate each year. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!

The Wellumsons serve Emmauel Free Lutheran, Williston, N.D., and Beaver Creek Lutheran, Ray, N.D. Lynn is the president of the National WMF.

Regional Reformation conferences planned for East, West & Northwest

To mark the quincentenary of the Lutheran Reformation, the AFLC will host four Reformation regional conferences and a hymn festival this summer and fall.

Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther nailed his *95 Theses* to the door of the Wittenburg Castle Church. His statement, "Here I stand," has summarized his defense of the theology of the Word of God alone, faith alone, grace alone, and Christ alone. This year, the Protestant Church around the world will remember and celebrate these life-giving truths in various ways.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written 'The righteous shall live by faith" (Romans 1:16-17).

The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations is planning to observe this historic landmark with a prayerful desire that the Holy Spirit and Word of God will work once again through His transforming grace in our congregations.

Reformation regional conferences have been planned and will be hosted by three AFLC congregations. Speakers at all three conferences will be Pastor Wade Mobley, president of the AFLC Schools; Pastor Robert Lee, professor at the AFLC Schools and editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador*; and Pastor Brett Boe, pastor and adjunct teacher at the AFLC Schools.

Dates and locations for the regional conferences include:

- October 6-8: Ruthfred Evangelical Lutheran Church, Bethel Park, Pa.
- October 27-29: Atonement Free Lutheran Church, Arlington, Wash.
- November 17-19: St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church, Salinas, Calif.

All three speakers will present their Reformation messages during the AFLC Annual Conference June 13-16, which will be held at the AFLC Schools in Plymouth, Minn. Time will be set aside at the end of each day's business session for these three presentations.

Finally, the AFLC Schools will host a Reformation Hymn Festival on Nov. 10 in Hauge Chapel on the School's Plymouth, Minn., campus. Andrew Hanson, AFLBS music director, and Marian Christopherson, director of Parish Education, will lead the hymn sing, which will also feature choral presentations by a festival choir made up of students, alumni, and friends.

More information regarding these events will be posted on the AFLC website (aflc.org). If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Terry Olson at the AFLC headquarters: (763) 545-5631.

AFLC considers property purchase

Members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee are considering the purchase of property which abuts the entrance to the AFLC campus in Plymouth, Minn. The family of Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Charles, both now deceased, has offered their property at a reduced price to the AFLC. The 1.2 acres of property, which includes 200 feet of lakeshore, would complete the rectangle of property owned by the AFLC and the Schools. The property and its buildings are available for \$650,000 through May, at which

point it will be offered to the general public for \$695,000. Possible uses for the property include more seminary housing, housing for campus leadership or teachers, a seminary classroom, or the headquarters.

Coordinating Committee members are asking the AFLC churches and their members to make this a matter of prayer. To give to this project, or for more information, contact Pastor Tonnes Pollestad, director of Development, at tonnes@aflc. org or call (763) 545-5631.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Pastor Scott Guhl has accepted a call to serve St. Paul's Lutheran, Gifford, Ill., and began ministry there on March 15. The congregation was last served by Pastor Steven Lombardo, who has since retired. Pastor Ken Thorson has served as interim pastor.

Alex Amiot has accepted a call to serve Our Saviour's Lutheran, Thief River Falls, Minn., and Reiner Lutheran, Goodridge, Minn., upon his graduation from the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary in May.

Steve Jensen has accepted a call to serve St. John's Lutheran Church of Schwer, Milford, Ill., upon his graduation from the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary in May.

Gideon Johnson has accepted a call to serve Hauge Lutheran and Emmanuel Lutheran churches in Kenyon, Minn., upon his graduation from the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary in May.

Kirk Rautio, Jamestown, Wis., has accepted a call to serve as executive director of the Association Retreat Center, located near Osceola, Wis. Rautio will begin work at the ARC on April 1. The ARC's board members continue to work to fill other key positions since reorganizing the leadership structure.

Pastor Brent and Emily Raan, missionaries with AFLC World Missions, are unable to obtain a visa to return to their field of work in India. The Raans feel called to Asia today more than ever. According to World Missions Director Del Palmer, God seems to be opening other doors in that area of the world. Members of the World Missions Committee are currently investigating those opportunities. Until a decision can be made, committee members have assigned the Raans to work with Dr. Kevin Olson to publish the fourth level of Ambassador Institute curriculum. The Raans still need your prayers and financial support while they are waiting to get back on the mission field.

Pastor David Skordahl is serving as interim pastor at Living Hope Church, Rogers, Minn.

Peace Lutheran Church, Crescent City, Fla., closed in February.

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Kernville, Calif., closed.



LIVING THE WORD

BY MICHAEL ROKENBRODT

Moses knew what I am trying to describe; the practice of the Seder meal, the pilgrimages to Jerusalem, or the week they spent living outside in tents as a community during the Feast of Tabernacles are examples of a living Word. It is perhaps a loss to God's people that we no longer get up during Passover supper to see if Elijah is outside, raise a lamb or dove for slaughter, or feel the sprinkling of hyssop. I am not suggesting we bring back these practices, but I maybe we can find ways to live out the Word beyond our comfortable seats in church.

The Jews who followed

Let me use the way I have experienced the story of the battle of Jericho.

As a camp counselor in Minnesota, I taught Joshua 6 one summer as a part of our curriculum. After the counselors dramatized the preliminary parts of the story to the children, we asked our campers to join the actors in marching around the city we had built out of milk crates. Inside our city, we had two counselors who taunted and laughed at us during the first

six marches. But the children knew the scorn was not everlasting, and soon they would have the opportunity to knock the walls over and chase down those unlucky counselors. During the march you could feel the rising suspense during the enforced quiet among the children as the seventh time drew near. Equally satisfying was the moment the children of Israel shouted and mounted the fallen barricade. These children had a moment of living the Word.

As a high school theology teacher in Illinois, I led a study on the book of Joshua. To help my students better live the text of Jericho, we visited another classroom (with only the teacher being forewarned) and marched silently around the desks of their peers. Some of the band students had fetched their trumpets. After the seventh circuit around the classroom, we gave a great shout and blew our horns. Like the campers, my high schoolers had a moment of living the Word.

In a Ugandan village, I experienced Joshua 6 in a way I never thought possible. When we reached the point in our Ambassador lesson for enacting the story, we had at least 30 adults present. As there was not adequate space in the church, we moved outside. The Jericho walls were built with benches from the church. Children suddenly appeared to take in the spectacle, and we immediately included them

among Israel's army. The adult students had already read the story orally three times and were ready to improvise it themselves. And then all generations—toddlers, children, youth, parents, and grandparents—came together to make the silent march.

The old marched with as much enthusiasm as the young. The youths experienced none of the nervous awkwardness of my high schoolers, but all of the excitement being modeled by their older mentors. The air had every bit of the suspense that it had with my Minnesotan campers. An American spectator might have said with a smile that we were all willing to become children for the moment. Maybe. But for a moment, we had more importantly become the Israelites who marched in arms across the grounds of Canaan so many years ago. And when we gave our cry of triumph, no one held back. We had a moment of living the Word. And it was not the same moment that it was for my high schoolers nor even my campers.

If only such a moment could be regular for all Christians.

Rokenbrodt, Chippewa Falls, Wis., is a short term assistant with Journey Missions, serving in Uganda with AFLC missionary Micah Berger.



In Memoriam

Pastor Harris Van Someren, 84, of Princeton, Minn., died Feb. 17 at Fairview Northland Regional Hospital in Princeton.

Born March 23, 1932, in Baldwin, Wis., he was the son of Adrian and Dora (Zwitser) Van Someren. He married Sylvia G. Bol Dec. 30, 1952, in Baldwin. They moved to Salina, Kan., where he was stationed in the U.S. Air Force. He was discharged in 1956 as a mid-air refueling specialist instructor. He worked in the automotive industry as a sales manager in Minneapolis. In 1979 he enrolled at the Free Lutheran Seminary. After graduation, he served Drummond-Mason Parish in Drummond, Wis.; and Dovre-Union Lake Parish in Winger, Minn. He retired in 1997 and returned to his home in Mason, Wis. They moved to Princeton in 2001, and he became the director of the Evangelical Lutheran Bible Fellowship. He retired in 2011. He provided seminary training to pastors of Helping Hands Mission in Kenya.

Surviving are his wife; one son, Mike (Kathy) Van Someren, Kalispell, Mont.; two daughters, Connie (Burt) Bartz, Princeton, and Kate (Tom) Law, Minneapolis; six grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

The service was held Feb. 23 at Wyanett Evangelical Free Church, Princeton. Memorials preferred to Helping Hands Mission (the mission arm of Evangelical Lutheran Bible Fellowship).

FEBRUARY MEMORIALS

AFLBS

Peter Bergstedt, Larry Behne (2), Dick Dahle, Allen Herset (3), Lloyd Sowden, Ruth Claus, Pastor Ted Berkas, Hilmer Rice, Delmond Borg, John Larson

AFLTS

Pastor Ted Berkas (8), Evelyn Tillgren, Larry Behne, Betty & Jack Conat, Audrey Rogenes, Dick Dahle

Evangelism

Janice Schmitke (2), Gladys Baier, Burton Grosfield, Delmond Borg, Dean Hobelmann (4), Phillip Lund

General Fund Larry Behne

FLAPS

Janice Schmitke

Parish Education

Helen Peterson, Margery Bischoff

Ruth Ann Kungle

World Missions Ivadelle Clauson Audrey Rogenes,

... in honor of

Parish Education Kent Quanbeck (2)

Journey Missions short term assistants update

• Jenaya Crestik returned to the U.S. on Feb. 23 after serving nine months in Ecuador six with Justo and Tricia Pillman and three months with Alethia Bible School. Crestik. who is a member of St. Paul's Lutheran, Cloquet, Minn., will pursue training in English as a second language.



- Israel Vazquez-Flores has been approved to serve as a short term assistant this summer in Switzerland helping within the outreach/evangelism ministry as well as teaching English and French to the congregation there. Flores, from Leon, Mexico, is currently a middler in the Free Lutheran Seminary.
- **Jessica Smith**, Brookings, S.D., will serve as a short term assistant at St. Paul's School and Horeb Home in Chirala, India, this summer. Jessica, who is currently a student at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, previously served as an STA in Brazil. While in India, Jessica will help teach English and Bible classes while also working with discipleship of children in the Horeb Home through tutoring students.
- Rebekah Ehlert, from Antigo, Wis., will serve as a short term assistant based in Jinja, Uganda, for at least nine months starting in May or June. She plans to serve with Nate and Rhoda Jore through the Ambassador Institute in neighboring villages around Jinja as well as helping in a local print shop. With a background in journalism, she hopes to create videos, articles, and other content about the ministry.
- Danielle Thompson, a member of Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, has been volunteering in Columbia since January, where she has worked with underprivileged children through a ministry in a small fishing village. In April she will travel to Brazil and work under Jonni Sliver at the Miriam Children's Home, focusing on discipleship and care of the children. While in Brazil she will also be actively working with the Bible school/seminary students on the campus.
- Michael Rokenbrodt, Chippewa Falls, Wis., is currently serving in Uganda alongside Micah Berger in the Ambassador Institute. He will return to the U.S. in Mav.
- Anja Ferkinghoff is serving as a short term assistant at the St. Paul's School and Horeb Home in Chirala, India, through August.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-February 28, 2017					
General Fund	\$58,143	\$93,256	\$60,786		
Evangelism	11,554	19,831	21,836		
Youth Ministries	6,792	12,527	14,447		
Parish Education	17,908	28,817	19,174		
Seminary	28,887	46,596	42,299		
Bible School	39,177	63,303	64,181		
Home Missions	46,831	115,244	94,315		
World Missions	48,337	77,993	93,780		
Personal Support	62,209	102,262	96,257		
TOTALS	\$319,837	\$559,829	\$507,076		

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

FROM FRIDAY TO SUNDAY

any years ago my father heard a powerful sermon on the radio by an African-American pastor, entitled *It's* Friday ... But Sunday's Coming! He ordered a taped copy of the message, which has become quite famous, listening to it many



Pastor Robert Lee

times himself as well as sharing it with others, and the expression was often repeated by him. "It's Friday ... but Sunday's coming!"

This sermon came to mind recently while listening to messages in preaching class and

chapel by two of our seminary students. The text was Matthew 16:21-23, a pivotal portion of the gospel in which Jesus began to tell His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and that suffering and death were awaiting Him there. The disciples heard the Friday story, that Jesus would "suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed," but it seems that the Sunday good news—"and be raised up on the third day"—did not register with them at all. And this was not the only time that He prepared them for His resurrection, for Matthew records two other instances (20:18-19 and 26:31-32).

It was not only the words of Jesus that the disciples failed to understand; it was also the words of Scripture. "For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead" (John 20:9). Jesus spoke plainly and precisely to the Twelve, declaring that "all things that are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished," His suffering and death, "and the third day He will rise again" (Luke 18:31-33). It is striking and significant that He pointed them to the Old Testament prophecies which He must fulfill, the Living Word pointing to the written Word of God.

One cannot help but be reminded also of the disciples who met the resurrected Christ on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24). They were among those to whom the words of the women who witnessed the empty tomb and heard the angelic messengers seemed like unbelievable nonsense (v. 11). What did Jesus say to them? He conducted a Bible study, explaining from Moses and all the prophets "the things concerning Himself" (v. 25-27). The failure of the disciples to believe was a failure to believe the Scriptures!

It's Friday ... but Sunday's coming.

We walk on

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and it is vital

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Sadly some merely seem to use these words as a source of comfort during the hard days of life that come to us all. You fell and broke your leg; the pain will soon go away. Don't worry, things will get better, remember that tomorrow is the first day of the rest of your life, etc. But things don't always get better, do they? Surely we all know of times when one tragedy followed another, and there's even an old saying that troubles usually come in threes.

It is easy to err when we try to draw what may be called "practical life applications" from the days between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. We walk on holy ground, and it is vital not to trivialize this time, for it is essentially gospel ground. Friday speaks of the awfulness of our sin and the awesomeness of the price that was paid. The three days speak of still another

prophecy to be fulfilled, the sign of Jonah (Matthew 12:39-40). Easter Sunday shouts the glorious good news that our Savior lives, for death could not hold Him, and that we shall live because He lives. "He is risen" is God's Amen to Christ's "It is finished." Hallelujah!

The disciples were not waiting for Sunday because they did not believe. Yes, it is probably okay to sympathize with them, for the possible suffering and death of the Messiah—not to mention His resurrection—did not fit into their theological system. They expected

> the coming of the triumphant conqueror, not the suffering Servant-Savior. But note again, please, that they did not believe. They had the Old Testament words of prophecy, they heard the words of Jesus, and they did not

Friday is not all about me, my troubles and trials; it's all about Jesus, who took my place and paid the price for my sins. Sunday is all about Jesus, too, even as the inspired words

of Holy Scripture declare, and because He lives we look beyond our years of this life to a day when faith becomes sight. Both Friday and Sunday have come, and in this good news we rest and wait. Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief. Amen.

believe.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Periodicals

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association retreat center

WHERE IS YOUR MISSION FIELD?

BY PASTOR RICH CARR



hen I was a child I remember hearing of wonderful stories of mission work in faraway lands, and I would think, "Surely those places need to

hear the gospel." When I grew older I visited Mexico a couple times, and I realized that truly there was a place that needed mission work. Truly Mexico was a mission field that needed evangelizing. Currently I serve a church in the Bakken Oil Field of North Dakota, where people from all over the world come to work and live. This was a major reason I took the call, because these people need the gospel.

But do you know what? All people need to hear the gospel message of Christ's redeeming work on the cross. Jesus addressed this concept amongst His disciples when they were in Samaria. He wanted them to see that all people need to hear and receive the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus, even those in their backyards. Jesus said, "Do you not say, "There are still four months and then comes

the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest" (John 4:35, NKJV).

Jesus was making a point to His disciples to look around at the people right in front of them; they were standing in the mission field. For many of us, mission work means going to a distant land to share the gospel, to build a house, or fix an aging church. Yet if we listen to Jesus' words, He encourages us to open our eyes to the people right next door in our own communities. We are living in the mission field.

Perhaps some reading this wonder how they can have a missions attitude toward their own community. First, talk to your pastor; ask him how you can help minister to the needs of your immediate local community. After that, if you are still looking for a mission trip locally, I would encourage you to consider the ARC. If there is a desire in your congregation to go on a mission trip, consider coming to the ARC to

partner with our ministry.

The ARC has a specially trained team of people who can help your group find housing, prepare your meals, and custom tailor service projects and outreach work that is designed to maximize your group's skills, talents, and gifts. And the benefits of volunteering at the ARC go far beyond the immediate gratification of completed service projects. The harvest of souls for the Lord will be impacted for years to come because of groups and individuals who had the vision to come and help share in the ministry of the ARC. For a fraction of the cost of traditional mission trips, the ARC can provide all the needed support to make your trip a success. Prayerfully consider contacting us at the ARC and setting up a local mission trip for this year.

Carr, who serves Zion Lutheran in Tioga, N.D., serves on the Association Retreat Center Board.