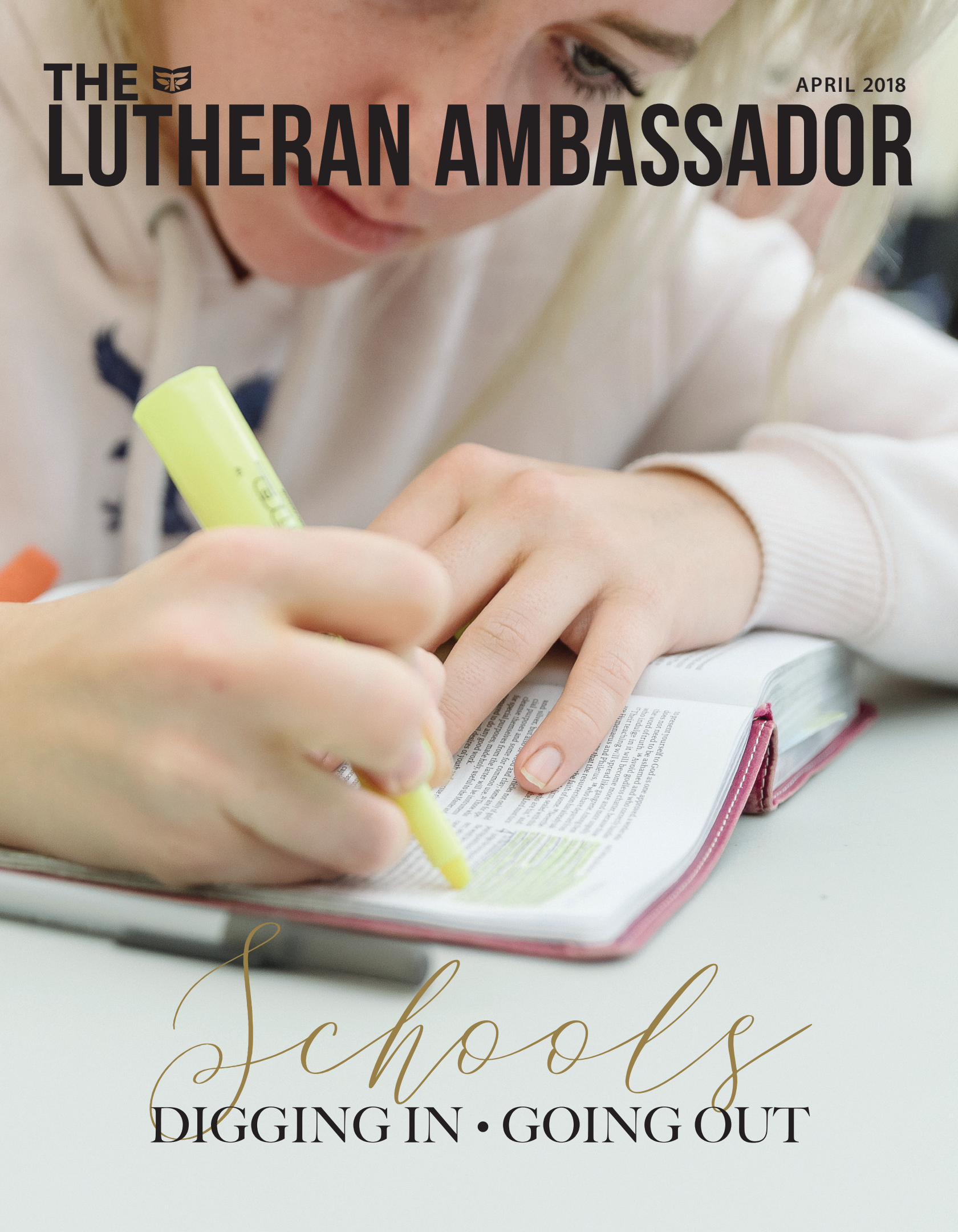


THE 

APRIL 2018

LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR



Schools
DIGGING IN • GOING OUT



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

APRIL 2018
VOL. 56 NO. 4

EDITOR

Pastor Robert L. Lee
rlee@aflc.org

MANAGING EDITOR

Ruth Gunderson
ruthg@aflc.org

CIRCULATION

Liz McCarlson
lasubscriptions@aflc.org

EDITORIAL BOARD

Monica Coyle
Pastor Jerry Moan
Pastor James L. Johnson

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

(ISSN 0746-3413) (USPS 588-620)
is published monthly by the
Association of Free Lutheran
Congregations,
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.,
Plymouth, MN 55441
Phone (763) 545-5631
Periodicals postage paid at
St. Paul, MN and additional
mailing offices.

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to
The Lutheran Ambassador,
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.,
Plymouth, MN 55441.

SUBSCRIPTION CHANGES AND INFORMATION

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.,
Plymouth, MN 55441.
763-545-5631
lasubscriptions@aflc.org

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

\$19 a year, Group, U.S.
\$20 a year, Individual, U.S.
\$22 a year, International

FULLY PRESENT

BY JENAYA CRESTIK

Can you think of a person who truly cares and listens to you? Someone who engages you in conversation beyond the often-superficial question, "How are you?" Perhaps it is a teacher, coach, mentor, or your parent. They are the type of people whom others gravitate to, not necessarily because of their skill or personality, but because of their presence and how they interact with people.

The concept of being fully present in our world of multitasking seems like a foreign concept. How *can* we be fully present when our minds must prepare, think about, and accomplish the craziness that makes up the basics of life? However, the problem lies not in our ability to be fully present, but in our choice to do so. Philippians 2:3-4 says, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others."

Being fully present involves focused and purposeful listening, "taking captive" our wandering thoughts (II Corinthians 10:5), thoughtful responses (James 1:19), and consideration for the needs and interests of other people. As I learned in one of my classes, we need to guard against the tendency to "script write" in our minds as people speak. Script writing is when we think more about what we are going to say in response to a person rather than concentrating on what they are saying at that present moment.

How can this practically be done? Isn't

this concept of being fully present only for those select personable few who are gifted with communication skills? Aren't we being overly ambitious when we aim to be fully present? Romans 12:9 says, "Let love be genuine." In order for love to be genuine, it must flow out of a heart that loves and seeks to honor God. Every one of us is fallen (Romans 3:23) and need God's transforming power in our hearts to be genuine in our love.

Therefore, this ability to be genuine stems from how fully present we are with the Lord, whether that be in prayer or reading His Word. It is when we spend time with God that we begin to consider the needs of others and think about what it may be like to be in their shoes. In other words, from these times set aside to be with the Lord we gain the proper perspective and the Holy Spirit's help.

This aim to be fully present goes beyond being kind or even seeking to be a genuine Christian. It is in these moments of fully being present that we may have the opportunity to share the good news of the gospel. In these moments we open ourselves up to the opportunity for God to use our presence for His glory. When we are praying and seeking these opportunities, God will use us in amazing and unexpected ways. What steps can you take today to be more fully present in your life?

Crestik, a 2016 graduate of AFLBS, is a member of St. Paul's Lutheran, Cloquet, Minn.

Teaching is of more importance than urging.
—Martin Luther

He who teaches the Bible is never a scholar; he is
always a student.
—Anonymous

We must defend the truth lovingly, winsomely,
letting others see in all we do the excellence of
Him who has called us from darkness into light.
—Charles Colson

Unless you can somehow participate yourself in the experience that lies
behind a doctrine, simply to subscribe to it doesn't mean much. Sometimes,
however, simply to subscribe to a doctrine is the first step toward experiencing
the reality that lies behind it.

—Frederick Buechner

Every Christian should be both conservative and
radical; conservative in preserving the faith and
radical in applying it.

—John R. W. Stott

Sophia



I am ready

AFLBS HAS PREPARED ME

BY SOPHIA ROSGAARD

{S}cen es pour into my mind of the last two years of my life and of all the places these years at AFLBS have taken me. Laughter with friends in the dorm, moments of worship in the chapel, discussions in classes, prayer with strangers in the middle of the night, children asking questions and singing songs at vacation Bible school ... I wonder what scenes will join them in the days ahead. In just a few short months my time at AFLBS will reach its completion, and the remainder of my time here will join those pictures in my memory.

The new scenes that I anticipate are not something I can see yet. I have some perspective now of what might fill them, but exactly what they will look like is unclear to me in this moment. Ahead of me awaits a summer at home of work, time with my family, and preparation. Following that I will move to Rapid City, S.D., where at Shiloh Free Lutheran Church I will work alongside the congregation as their director of children's ministry. I have a backdrop for these pictures, but the subjects and the details are not yet clear. How will I know if I am prepared to go out?

I thank God for the time He has given me at AFLBS to prepare and to grow. In countless ways, it has served as a great place for me to build on the foundation that the Lord had already started to place in my life. It has been exactly what I needed to transition into a new stage of life. As I think back over the moments that have filled these two years—from the day that I moved into the dorm to this moment as I sit and type—I realize that a lot has happened. In some ways I feel like the girl who walked into the second floor dorm room with her boxes and suitcases, not knowing what was in store for her, is now a different person. It's true. God has used these last two years to work in my heart and teach me so many things. The process is sometimes slow, and not even noticeable, but it's still happening. It's happening in the little moments and the big ones, one piece at a time.

It's not to say that everything about me needed to

change, but some did. Some things needed to be ripped apart and replaced, other pieces needed to be nourished and grown, and still some others needed to be reshaped. I have seen the Lord meet my needs in each of these areas at different times, and AFLBS has been significant in how this has been carried out. I have been shown what a faithful loving God we have and how sinful and broken I am. Rather than seeing the Sophia that I thought everyone believed me to be and maybe even I thought I was, I came face to face with the reality that my heart could desire the world just as much as anyone else.

How could I be His? How could He want someone like me who looked good on the outside, but was often a terrible, wretched sinner when no one could see?

Over and over again, I have been confronted by His grace. The Word of God surrounds me here. Our Old Testament classes taught me the faithfulness of God as I studied about how He sought His people after they had forsaken Him, and how He called them to return over and over again—because He loved them. This is the same love He has for me—for us. That love transforms us, and because of this transforming love, we wretched sinners can be His. He does want us.

This is one of the most significant ways AFLBS has given me the preparation and confidence to go out into whatever comes next: my own heart has been changed. Yes, there are unknowns ahead, but I can move forward. God has prepared, and He will continue to prepare and equip me as I go. Right now I imagine the pieces that may form my memories ahead—joy in new places, new people, worship as part of another congregation, conversations with coworkers, and more kids asking questions and learning. And while I still don't know what they will look like, God does. He has prepared me in many ways, and He will continue to be faithful.

Rosgaard, of Rock Valley, Iowa, is a member of Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D.



BY KYLE KERBY

I am not your traditional Bible school student. When I graduated from high school in the small northern Minnesota town of Laporte I wasn't sure what I wanted to do next. At the time I didn't know anything about the Association Free Lutheran Bible School (AFLBS). In fact, my picture of Bible school was not one that I would want to attend. So I followed in the footsteps of many friends and family members and decided to continue my education at Bemidji State University.

I had mentors who had successful careers after earning a business degree at Bemidji State. I looked up to them and tried to model my education after them. So in the fall of 2014 I decided to pursue a business degree in finance. I enjoyed my time in Bemidji and made many great friends while participating in various youth groups and Bible studies.

But through my three and one half years at college I knew I was still missing something. I have been blessed to have many godly mentors over the years and had developed several new friendships with former students of AFLBS. I began to realize that my biblical foundation was not as strong as some of the men in my life whom I looked up to. I grew up in the church and knew all the Sunday school answers, but I realized that I wanted more.

My plan throughout my time in college was to finish my degree and immediately pursue a career in my field. However, God changed my plans at the last minute, about a month before graduating from Bemidji State last fall.

Previously I had been offered an opportunity to start a career with a wealth management company working for two AFLBS alumni. I had worked as an intern for the company the summer of 2017 and received great spiritual

Why I came

WHEN GOD SHAPES YOUR PATH

encouragement from my employers during my time there. With this employment opportunity, however, came a greater opportunity. My employers, who were now my mentors, brought up the idea of attending Bible school to me. The idea of attending Bible school had been in the back of my mind since I was in high school, so as I finished up the last few weeks at Bemidji State, I wrestled with the idea of changing my plan to pursue God's plan.

Ultimately I decided to attend AFLBS for two reasons. The first reason was to strengthen my foundation in God's Word. Until this point I had not devoted a large portion of time to focus on God alone. There was always something else that captivated my attention and distracted me from

intentionally setting aside time to study God's Word.

The second reason was the circumstances that led up to my decision to attend AFLBS. God worked on my heart throughout my time at Bemidji State about attending Bible school. The previous few years I learned a lot about AFLBS through family and friends who happened to be alumni

of AFLBS. And last fall my younger sister, Kalei, decided to attend AFLBS. I was able to witness the joy she had from her first semester. I noticed how she was growing as an individual in God's Word.

Throughout the fall I played around with the idea, but continually pushed it to the side to focus on my plan. Once I realized the direction God wanted me to go, it was obvious to me that I needed to pursue His plan for me. Finally, about a month and a half before spring semester started at AFLBS in January, I applied and was accepted.

Looking back it's interesting how God shaped the path I took to get to here. He taught me skills that will help me throughout my life. To think that God has a position somewhere for me to serve excites me. Now that I am at AFLBS I realize how special this place really is. After attending a public university, it's refreshing to be in a place that focuses on the Word of God, where you're not looked down upon for living for Christ. I'm grateful that God provided opportunities for me to come to AFLBS to strengthen my foundation on the Word of our Savior Jesus Christ. "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:6-7, ESV). I am excited and looking forward to how God shapes me and prepares me for the next direction He will have me go.

Kerby, from Laporte, Minn., is a junior at AFLBS.





A new song

THOUGHTS ON PSALM 98

BY PASTOR PHIL HAUGEN

(M)artin Luther suggests that Psalm 98 is a prophetic psalm, prophesying of the coming kingdom of Christ.¹ In verses 1-3 of the psalm, the psalmist uses verbs in the past tense (Hebrew perfect tenses) to describe the actions and work of God. God *has done* marvelous things; His right hand and holy arm *have worked* salvation; He *has made known* His salvation; He *has revealed* His righteousness; and He *has remembered* His steadfast love and faithfulness to Israel. And then the psalmist concludes verse 3, “All the ends of the earth *have seen* the salvation of our God.”

All the verbs are past tense (Hebrew perfect tenses). If Luther is correct that this is a prophetic psalm concerning the coming kingdom of Christ, then these past tense verbs are prophetic past tense. The past tense is used to describe future coming events but serve to emphasize the certainty of these anticipated events. From the psalmist’s perspective, it is absolutely certain that God will do marvelous things, that He will work salvation, that He will make known His salvation and reveal His righteousness, that He will remember His steadfast love and faithfulness. From the psalmist’s perspective, God will certainly do this in the coming kingdom of Christ.

As the kingdom of Christ comes in the Gospels (Matthew 3:2; Matthew 4:17; Luke 17:21) and Psalm 98 is fulfilled, God in Christ does marvelous things. In Christ He works salvation (Psalm 98:1). In Christ, God makes known His salvation and reveals His righteousness in the sight of the nations (Psalm 98:2; Ephesians 3:4-6). In Christ, God remembers (effects) His steadfast love and demonstrates His faithfulness to the house of Israel (Psalm 98:3). Christ is the fulfillment of the prophetic promise in Psalm 98:1-3.

In light of the certainty of these promises, the psalmist invites the people of God to sing a new song (Psalm 98:1). The Word of God speaks of singing a new song in nine different references throughout Scripture: six references in the Psalms, one reference in Isaiah, and two references in the Book of Revelation. In each of the references, the new song that is sung is the song of redemption. For example, in Psalm 96:1-2, as God’s people sing a new song, they

tell of God’s salvation from day to day. In Psalm 98:1, the new song is sung *because* God does marvelous things and works salvation with His mighty arm. The song is the song of redemption. In Revelation 5:9, the four living creatures and the 24 elders sing a new song, celebrating what the Lamb has done: “by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God.” The new song is the song of redemption. In Revelation 14:3, the 144,000 are singing the new song, and the only ones who could learn and sing the song were those who have been redeemed. The new song is the song of praise and celebration of God’s mighty work of redemption.

Although not referred to as a “new song” in Exodus 15:1-2, the song Moses and the people of Israel are described as singing celebrates God’s deliverance of them from Egypt. They sing because “He has triumphed gloriously.” They sing because “He has become my salvation.” And they sing because “You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed” (Exodus 15:13). Moses and Israel are singing the song of redemption; essentially, they are singing a “new song.”

In Revelation 15:3, the redeemed people of God sing the song of Moses. Again, the expression “new song” is not used in Revelation 15, but the people are celebrating the deliverance God has provided in its full and final sense. The people of God are proclaiming the great and marvelous works of God (15:3; see Psalm 98:1). They rejoice that God is righteous and true in His ways (15:3; see Psalm 98:2) and they celebrate that God’s righteous acts have been revealed (15:4; see Psalm 98:2). The song of Moses sung in Revelation 15 is also a new song; it is the song of redemption sung by the people of God celebrating God’s marvelous work in Christ.

We, the people of God, are invited by the psalmist to sing a new song, for He has done marvelous things. We sing the song of redemption.

Haugen, an instructor at the AFLC Schools, is a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn.

Members

THE CHURCH FAMILY

BY DAVID NIEMELA

[O]ne Monday during mid-morning break, Dr. James Molstre, our seminary's dean, gathered the senior seminarians for a special meeting. We knew about this meeting for a few weeks, and classmate Kevin Czymbor was the first to conjecture that it might be about our seminary internship assignment locations. We all were anticipating that particular Monday. Sure enough, Dr. Molstre informed us each of our locations, each of us satisfied to see our curiosity fulfilled.

This was a turning point for me. I could now more readily anticipate the next stage in my education and life as I had Roseau, Minn., in my sights. Not only was this a new part of my seminary education, but this also meant a new spiritual family. It is true that the worldwide Church is a family under God our Father, but it is likewise true that the local congregation is a family in itself. Some of my most important lessons in the past few years before and during seminary concerned the family of the congregation.

I attended AFLBS the year after graduating from high school and found that it was a great community in which to grow. Even while we studied the Bible for hours in class during the weekdays, I knew it was important to go as an *attender* to a Sunday service at a church, but I do not think I considered it important to be a *member* of a church family. The importance of the church family was impressed upon me later after AFLBS when I considered the nature of that school. It is not disconnected from the local congregation, but it is not a congregation in itself. It is not a substantial family in itself, but it trains servants to serve the local church family. That said, I learned that the congregation was my most important family, even above the fellowship found at Bible school.

After graduating from AFLBS I became a youth director at Good Shepherd Free Lutheran in Cokato, Minn. I went through a time of struggling with the position and was wondering how much longer I could

stay there. Whenever I would pray about and consider this issue, I could not get past the thought: *Where else is there to go?* The congregation called me to a need, so it was legitimate to stay and serve. Furthermore, leaving the church would not solve anything. God would be call me back to Good Shepherd, or another church, to serve in some capacity. After this struggle, I had a conviction about where the most important action in the world was taking place: in the congregation. With that certainty I could serve in my position with more confidence.

I came to the conviction of the congregation's importance with the help of key Scriptures. First this was especially obvious in titles of New Testament letters: Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians ... etc. These are names of not just a person, but people—and more than that, the people of God. The people are specified as such in the introduction of these letters where Paul addresses whole congregations (Romans 1:7; I Corinthians 1:2; I Cor. 2:1, etc.). I saw that it is impossible to apply the teachings of these letters to just a single person, because they are addressed to groups. Furthermore, it is difficult to apply these teachings among unbelievers, since many of the commands in the letters concern “one another” (Romans 12:10; 12:16; 14:1, etc.). I saw that this “one another” had roots further back in the Bible. Christ gave the command, “love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). This is different from the older, but still applicable, “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). The difference is in its comparative magnitude: “as I have loved you,” versus “as yourself.” Dying on the cross is a much greater degree of love. They are also different in

David



their domain: “one another” versus “your neighbor.” This love is within His believers. Christ takes His gathering of believers seriously, in that they would love another with a sacrificial love, a love only one of His own would know. My conviction was to stay and love my family.

At AFLTS I was introduced to the concept of the free and living congregation. The structure is organized so that churches can live under the authority of the Word and the Spirit, not subject to another institution or the pastor. This format is used not because it seems most practical to human eyes, but because it allows congregations to reflect how the Bible describes the local church under the authority of God’s Word. As I learned this, it gave me an even greater confidence that the church is the place to

which the Christian must be committed.

The old saying goes, “If you can’t beat them, join them.” In regard to the congregation, though, it is, “You can’t beat them, so join them.” The Free Lutheran Schools desire to serve the congregations by raising up servants to join a congregation. I will be sad to leave the spiritual family of Good Shepherd, but I do look forward to joining a new family in Roseau. Even after internship, there will be yet another spiritual family waiting.

Niemela, a senior seminarian, is a member of Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Cokato, Minn. He will serve an internship year beginning in June at Rose and Spruce Lutheran churches in Roseau, Minn.

One PARISH, many STUDENTS

{K}

BY PASTOR STEVE MUNDFROM

ristina, Matt, Casey, Caleb, Justin, Beth, Aislinn, Philip, Bekah, April, Levi, Hannah, Bekah, Libby, Heidi, Tabitha, Cole, Ethan, Cody, Rachel, and Jacob.

These are the 21 students from the Valley City, N.D., area who attended AFLBS during the more than eight years that I was the pastor of Grace Free and Zion Free Lutheran Churches (2008-2016). More students from these congregations currently in high school and junior high have dreams to study God's Word at the Bible school. In the fall of 2016, eight juniors entered the class of 2018—marking the high point of the congregations' persistent commitment to promote the school as an important way to prepare for life with Jesus in His kingdom. As a testimony to the emphasis that was laid on a Bible school training, I recall that one new member asked, "Does every student *have* to go to AFLBS?" Was our promotion of the Bible school over-the-top? Was it over-emphasized? I don't think so. But it was real; it was noticed. The congregation was growing and there were large graduating classes from our local high school. Often the majority of graduates chose not to attend AFLBS—but many did, and they continue to do so.

What does that persistent commitment to promote AFLBS look like?

First, a Bible School education was widely appreciated



because of the number (about 20) of alumni who belong to the congregations—most of them did not grow up in Valley City but live there now for a variety of reasons. More than half of the 21 students who have recently attended AFLBS have at least one parent who is an alumnus. These Bible school alumni remain active in the congregation, putting their Bible training into practice. They serve as officers, deacons, trustees, youth advisors, Sunday school teachers, and committee members. In these roles they use their gifts of Bible knowledge, leadership, music, resources, and service. This army of active AFLBS alumni is not the first significant contact with the school—alumni have served as pastors in the congregations for the last 20 years and former pastors have been on the school's faculty almost since AFLBS began.

Not every congregation can build on a foundation of AFLBS alumni as extensive as this, but where alumni are present their gifts can be used, and their Bible school testimonies can be voiced—students at AFLBS are taught to do exactly that!



Another decision of the Valley City congregations that helped guide students to the school is financial support. Each congregation gives substantial gifts to their students who chose AFLBS, even as much as half of their tuition, room, and board (as funds are available). Many local congregations make these commitments to support students who desire to study God's Word at AFLBS. Often these funds are given specifically for Bible school scholarships so that families who are carefully saving to send their students to other schools after graduation are not compelled to support Bible school students. There is a significant attitude of mission in these gifts. Few young adults these days end up back in their home towns attending the church in which they grew up. When a congregation supports a Bible school student financially, they are usually helping prepare someone to serve Jesus in another congregation. Such selfless giving truly

demonstrates the love of Christ and genuine Christian commitment to the work of Christ in the world.

A third element of this persistent commitment to promote AFLBS is the continuing voice for AFLBS in the congregation. Whenever students are home from the Bible school, they have freedom to speak to the congregations about what God is doing through His Word in their lives (sometimes we twisted their arms a little). These students also place testimonies and letters of thanks in the church newsletter—their voices are always being heard. But it not just the local kids whose testimonies are heard. The congregations regularly contact AFLBS and ask for ministry teams to visit Valley City and participate in their ministries: worship services, youth events, VBS, camps, etc. Even a congregation with no students at Bible school can have a steady stream of students pass through their midst. The school

continually invests in outreach like this to the congregations. Some congregations make frequent use of this opportunity, others do not.

Even though Jesus led me to AFLBS in the fall of 1980, I do not believe that He desires to lead every student to our Bible school. Nevertheless, I do believe that every student in the congregation should consider AFLBS. Helping students to do this seriously and prayerfully is a significant ministry opportunity that every AFLC congregation can pursue.

Mundfrom, Crystal, Minn., is an AFLC Schools faculty member.

Future OF OUR SCHOOLS

BY PASTOR WADE MOBLEY

(F)

or 52 and 54 years, respectively, AFLBS and AFLTS have been establishing students in God's eternal and inerrant word for a life of faith in Jesus Christ and faithful service in His kingdom. We establish students for life in Jesus Christ. Our two-year college-level and four-year pastoral training programs are Christ-centered, saturated with God's Word, and focused on equipping servant leaders for free and living congregations. We will never change that mission, and we promise by the grace of God to accomplish that mission better every year.

By the grace of God, we will strengthen local congregations and the AFLC by providing excellent training for 150 students (currently 100) in our two-year AFLBS program and more than 30 students (currently 28) in our four-year AFLTS program. Additionally, we will provide training for pastors and lay people through continuing education opportunities and resources. This is what we are already doing and attempting to do with greater quality and quantity every year.

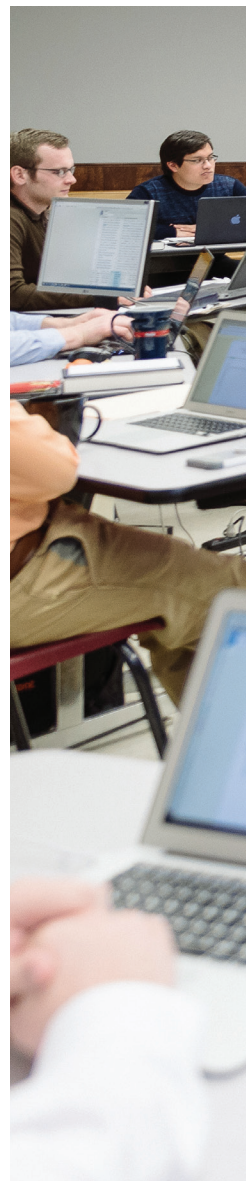
At the same time, we want to explore and lay the foundation academically, financially, and prayerfully for the expansion of current offerings to train 150 additional students at AFLBS, 10 additional students at AFLTS, and 25 students in yet-to-be-developed programs at AFLTS (a non-pastoral Master's in Biblical Studies degree and a Doctor of Ministry degree for current pastors). None of this is yet set in stone, but God has given us tremendous opportunity to explore.

God has placed the Free Lutheran Schools in the center of a global population shift. Nearly one-third of Twin Cities residents (one million people) are first or

second-generation immigrants or their families. More than 200 people groups are represented in our urban area. Very likely, your community does not have that proportion, but almost all of us have seen a demographic shift around us as precious, eternal human souls from diverse backgrounds move near us. This opportunity to spread the gospel is unprecedented and highlights the cross-cultural nature of all ministry, even in small Midwestern towns where many of us were raised.

Over the past five years members of the Schools Corporation and Board of Trustees have taken bold action to improve the Schools and secure its future. One example is the process of accreditation. By God's grace we will be finished this fall. Our accrediting agency (TRACS) has the inerrancy of God's Word explicitly in their founding documents. They serve as an outside agent of accountability, making us do what we say we are doing. Because of accreditation we now have a strategic plan, five-year budget projections, regular program review, better trained faculty and staff, an employee review process, and annual audits.

Our Seminary program improved dramatically with the addition of Dr. James Molstre last June. He brings 25 years of pastoral experience to our campus, where he directs our seminary program, teaches historical and practical classes, and actively discipless our seminarians and their families. And just one year prior, Pastor Steve Mundfrom began his service as professor of systematic theology. These two faculty positions were made possible





by generous contributions from donors to the Century Fund, which has made possible many of the improvements you see on campus—improvements that will eventually be funded by increased student enrollment and endowments.

Your giving also makes AFLBS and AFLTS a great value. Both programs enjoy reduced tuition as a result of general giving from individuals and congregations (see chart on page 22), which reduces student costs while allowing us to keep programing, student life, and discipleship quality high. AFLTS students preparing for AFLC ministry receive scholarships and reduced-price housing on top of that.

AFLBS is a great value, too. Students pay \$6,000 per year for a comfortable place to live and delicious meals to eat. Tuition is another \$6,000, and we anticipate no increases outside of inflation adjustments for the foreseeable future. Generous donors give to a growing scholarship fund (more than \$100,000 per year recently), and others have named AFLBS in their estates. We have established a number of transfer agreements with academically-excellent, Christ-centered institutions from which students can graduate in four years, debt free, including AFLBS. That number will grow, and we look

forward to the day when we can demonstrate a debt-free degree path to most of our prospective students, depending on their desired major after AFLBS.

We are praying for a fall 2018 groundbreaking on a new gymnasium, with \$2 million already raised and great plans being drawn as I write. A gym would provide space for varsity athletics, intramural activities, and expanded ministry. AFLC-wide events like Annual Conference would benefit, too. Imagine the exposure for our Bible school if we hosted sporting events or conferences.

Our mission is life and death, heaven and hell, darkness and light. It's a mission worth dying for, so it is a mission worth living. Let us plan, let us pray, and let God receive the glory through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son. Outside of God Himself there are only two eternal entities: God's Word and the human soul. There is no greater calling than connecting precious, eternal human souls to the Word of God. And through our Schools that calling will be multiplied through the work of congregations around the world.

Mobley is the president of the AFLC Schools.



BY DR. TIM SKRAMSTAD

Our Lord intends for heaven to be filled with countless multitudes of people who are redeemed by His saving work on the cross. While this is an exciting concept, we must ask if we are allowing Jesus to use us in accomplishing that great vision.

Before anyone thinks that we are coming up with a grandiose plan filled with huge numbers of converts or mega churches, we need to step back and clarify some important details. First, every soul is important to the Lord. There is nothing inferior with your congregation if it has only a dozen members. However, even the smallest congregation must be praying that lost people might be converted. God is not comparing us to larger congregations or denominations. At the same time, He is calling us to be faithful in the proclamation of the gospel. No matter how small or how large a congregation might be, our concern must be that every member and friend will enter eternity with Christ.

We do not need a spiritual pep talk or an emotional appeal to motivate us in the task before us. The Holy Spirit works through the Word of God to clarify our vision, to examine our hearts, to expose sin, and to grant us confidence to do the work. When we come with a heart that truly wants God's will to be done, He might challenge us to be like Peter and step out of the boat in faith. If we dare pray for souls

to be converted, for new congregations to be formed, for new mission fields to be developed, will the Lord actually involve us?

When we begin to pray that lost people might come to know Jesus, amazing things happen. I recently came across an old file about an evangelistic crusade at my first military assignment. As I prayed for the people at Fort Meade, Md., I was struck by how many did not seem to know the Lord. The Post Chaplain was open to my suggestion of an installation-wide evangelistic crusade and promptly made me the project officer. At first, other chaplains seemed open to the idea, but then excuses and complaints started to surface. Earnest prayer was made, and hearts were changed. God called people to a true and living faith, and soon evangelistic meetings in every chapel, plus prayer breakfasts and other events, were held. But it was not just the fact that we held an event. What we witnessed was the salvation of many souls, individuals who will be part of that great multitude in heaven.

It is vital that we understand that we are not called to dream about what we want God to do and then call Him in to help us accomplish it. The pattern in Scripture is that we submit ourselves to God and wait upon Him to show us what He is going to do, or we have our spiritual eyes open to see what He is doing around us and then join Him. What we must be concerned about is

God's purposes and not our plans.

Discerning God's will or purposes can be taxing on our limited patience. We want to know everything about the future while the Lord wants us to trust Him for today. It is one thing to say we want to know God's will and quite another to pray and do the work He gives us.

An example of this is our Annual Conference. Our people want to know how the greater work of the AFLC is progressing and how God is leading us in future ministry. Reports will soon be made available on our website and hopefully the boards, committees, and directors will not only tell us how God has blessed in the past year but share those issues they cannot decide by themselves. It is not a sign of failure to not know the Lord's will. God will reveal His will in His own time, if we would wait on Him. It is vital for each of us to join in praying for wisdom and discernment that our ministries would always be in the center of God's will.

The Psalmist wrote: "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (Psalm 46:10). Spend time before the Lord and allow Him to direct your life and the ministries He desires in our church fellowship.

Skramstad, a retired AFLC pastor, lives in Eagan, Minn.

SO, HOW WAS IT?

BY MICHAEL
ROKENBRODT

One experience common to all missionaries returning back to their home country is being asked, “How was it?” Despite a million different answers available, I believe most missionaries find themselves quite puzzled at how to answer this question. Having put varying amounts of sweat, blood, and tears into our time overseas—mostly the first one, though many, including myself, have given a little of each—we feel compelled to say something profound, something which justifies the commitment everyone made for it all to happen.

But the struggle for that profound answer is too much for many of us to come up with in a pinch in casual, polite conversation, and we usually go with something like, “It was hot. Very hot.”

Others not content with such a weak compromise like to take the inquirer to task. “How was what? What would you like to know about? The ministry? The living conditions? The traffic? The battle with mosquitoes? The politics? The people? Learning the language? The struggles? The successes? The weather?” This usually takes the inquirers by surprise, and they are as unprepared to answer the question as the missionary. Nine times out of ten, they will take the route that seems easiest and friendliest and respond with, “Everything, please.” But then this moves what began as a polite, brief, friendly question into a much more seriously demanding conversation, not to mention

putting the missionary back into the dilemma where he or she started—how to capture overseas mission work without doing it discredit.

Most missionaries you meet would say they love to talk about the heavenly treasures God has instilled in their time overseas. But many would prefer at least 40 minutes to do it justice—with PowerPoint and Scripture readings. And afterward, they are still questioning themselves on whether the right things were said and emphasized. They are angry with themselves for having failed to have the ideal pictures, instead making do with ones snapped at casual moments.

It isn't that missionaries have no response for the casual question. It's that every response they have puts limitations on what it was like to have God putting them in Abram's shoes: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you” (Genesis 12:1). Anything less than an equivalent to the Book of Genesis feels like a downgrade.

If you give me 30 seconds to answer that question, you will probably hear me say, “I've really liked it. Life goes at a slower pace there. It gives you time to rest and think.” Though it succeeds in making the other person take a moment to give an envious smile, I'll admit the answer doesn't really capture the experience at all. It doesn't give you what it was like to donate blood to a dying boy, to share the notion of “God Your Heavenly Father” to a room of orphans, to watch a parade bearing a golden idol, to learn a language for three hours a day, to figure out how to get a visa extension from an official who expects a bribe, and how sin and hell, miracles and grace follow you everywhere.

I'd love to tell you more about this. But, alas, I have just exceeded my 500 words.

Rokenbrodt, from Wadena, Minn., is an AFLC missionary serving in Uganda.



What does it mean to be Lutheran?

It's a chilly winter midmorning in a Minneapolis suburb, where plows and shovels have created mounds of snow along the boulevards. But the bright sunlight promises a welcome backdrop to the three gathered around a cozy table in one of the houses along Russell Avenue.

The men, all AFLC pastors, are deep in discussion about the meaning of "Lord" in the second article of the Apostle's Creed. The conversation, though, is light and welcoming, a dynamic that would invite a casual listener to discover a bit more about what it means to be Lutheran. And that is exactly their purpose. Before each of them is a microphone attached to a sophisticated recording system that takes up a good portion of the room. The windows and walls which surround them are covered in noise-cancelling materials. And before them is an outline of sorts, which roughly guides their conversation. Before the morning is over, they will have recorded four episodes for their podcast, *Being Lutheran*.

Their story started with a fallout amongst Lutherans in 2012. When the dust settled, Pastor Jason Gudim, who serves First Lutheran, Minneapolis, found himself being asked repeatedly by his parishioners and others what it meant to be Lutheran.

"Repetition is a good indicator of a need," he said. His answer? An adult Sunday school series based on the *Book of Concord*. "I thought, why don't I let the earliest Lutherans speak for themselves," said Gudim.

And so, creed by creed, commandment by commandment, and article by article, Gudim sketched out a series of lessons that would take his adult class far into the future. As he dug into the lessons, he began to field requests from his pastor friends for access to the material he was teaching. He was willing, but wondered if it was possible in this modern era to deliver the lessons in a more fitting format.

"We tried for about a month to record the classes," said Gudim, who noted



Pastors Brett Boe, Brian Ricke, and Jason Gudim (from left) sit down to record their podcast.

problems both technical and time-related. Editing was too much work. What he needed was something simpler. Enter the podcast.

It helps that one of his seminary classmates happens to have all of the necessary recording equipment in an urban home. Pastor Brian Ricke, who serves Hope Lutheran in Minneapolis, comes from a background of recording and producing. Another one of his classmates, Pastor Brett Boe, who serves King of Glory Lutheran in the Twin Cities suburb of Shakopee, was eager to join the group as cohost.

Now with more than 62 episodes under their belts, it's easy to recognize the rapport they have cultivated in that small recording studio. But it took some time to get there. Boe, the host and "point guard" of the trio sets up the episode each week with an easy rhythm of conversation. Gudim, meanwhile, presents the content based on the lessons he wrote for his class. And Ricke adds to the conversation in a spontaneous fashion while keeping track of the technical aspects of a recording session.

But it is the content of their conversation that draws the listener in, for it is packed with theology based on the inerrancy of Scripture. Take, for example, their presentation of the Ten Commandments. Each commandment includes two episodes on the content of the lesson, then two more episodes with Bible studies based on what the commandment prohibits and what it promotes. Similarly, each article of the Apostle's Creed includes a lesson on the creed, then two episodes with Old and New Testament Bible studies.

"It's very thorough," said Gudim, "What I'm interested in is getting as many different

BEING LUTHERAN

- Weekly podcast
- Updated on Mondays
- Found on iTunes or any RSS feed
- Or listen on beinglutheran.com
- Material written by Pastor Jason Gudim
- Cohosted by Pastor Brett Boe
- Produced by Pastor Brian Ricke

camera angles on the same truth as possible because what might resonate with someone over here might not for someone else."

With so much to dig into, it's appropriate that the group has kept each episode to a palatable 22-minutes, which allows them to be as thorough as possible, and guarantees a potentially lengthy series which could run for some time. The episodes are labeled such that, if need be, a listener could start in at any point.

"We're trying to carve out a niche that isn't there yet," said Gudim, adding that he hopes the content will be useful beyond his own congregation.

The podcast has garnered a listenership of around 700 plays per episode, impressive considering they thought their ceiling was somewhere near 80. And the content is free to download and use for both personal study and in a teaching application.

With unlimited material before them, the future of the podcast is yet unknown. But as long as the studio is open, the trio will sit before their microphones and dig into Scripture's truths, 22 minutes at a time.

—Ruth Gunderson

WMF

WOMEN'S
MISSIONARY
FEDERATION

WMF Spring Rallies

April 7

- **Pacific Northwest**
Bethany Lutheran, Astoria, Or.

April 14

- **Central Tri-state**
Emmanuel Lutheran, Kenyon, Minn.
Speaker: Jonni Sliver
Theme: Missions

April 21

- **Minneapolis**
Minnesota Valley Lutheran, Lakeville
Speakers: Steve and Glenda Kvale
Theme: How Shall They Hear?
Theme verses: Romans 10:14-15

- **Northwestern Minnesota**

Our Savior's Lutheran,
Thief River Falls
Speakers: Lyle Mattson and
Pastor Alex Amiot
Theme: Trusting God in trials
Theme verses: James 1:2-4

- **W. North Dakota/E. Montana**

Prince of Peace Lutheran,
Beulah, N.D.
Speakers: Matthew and Ednay Abel
Theme: 'R U Plugged In
Theme verses: Isaiah 40:27-30

April 28

- **Eastern North Dakota**
Trinity Bergen Free Lutheran,
Starkweather, N.D.
Speakers: Matthew and Ednay Abel
Theme: Jesus Christ, the same
yesterday and today and forever

- **North Central Minnesota**

Calvary Free Lutheran, Fosston
Speaker: Jennifer Albright
Theme: Missions

May 5

- **Southwest Central Minnesota**
Emmanuel Lutheran, Kenyon
Speaker: Jonni Sliver
Theme: Missions

MEANING OF THE WMF PIN

T

he WMF pin is not just a piece of jewelry. The pin has special significance; it should be worn as a way of witness.

There are four points on the pin representing the cross. The top points upward to God, "Turn to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is no other" (Isaiah 45:22).

The two side points reach out to all men everywhere: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The bottom point represents the foot of the cross. Each one of us must come to the foot of the cross for forgiveness and salvation. "For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon Thee" (Psalm 86:5).

The blue in the pin represents the love of

God for all men everywhere. It surrounds the globe, which symbolizes the whole world: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

The gold of the pin represents the riches and wealth that is ours as children of God. "I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see" (Revelation 3:18).

As we wear this pin, may we deny self and be a true witness for our loving Lord and Savior. These pins are for all women. They can be used to honor your ladies for their years of service, for serving as officers, or just to wear for various occasions. They are \$13 each and can be ordered from the WMF National Treasurer.

Pastor Joel Rolf resigns as dean of Bible school

Plans to return to pastoral ministry

Pastor Joel Rolf, dean of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, Plymouth, Minn., announced his resignation, effective at the end of June.

"I am very thankful for the opportunity I have had to serve students with faculty and staff at the Bible school for the past nearly twelve years," Rolf wrote in his letter of resignation to the Board of Trustees on Feb. 22, adding, "I am committed to finishing the year strong ... by God's grace."

Members of the Board of Trustees accepted Rolf's resignation during their meeting on Feb. 23, "with thanks to God and to Joel for his faithful service to the AFLC Schools for the past 12 years."

Rolf announced his resignation to the student body at the end of a chapel service on Feb. 26. Immediately after, he was surrounded by students and staff who thanked him for his leadership and wished him well.

In his chapel announcement, Rolf stated that he plans to finish up the school year, and will step down at the end of June. He stated that he will take several months to rest during a sabbatical, then will look to return to pastoral ministry.

"Pastor Rolf has served Jesus at the schools for 12 years," said Pastor Wade Mobley, president of the AFLC Schools. "His love for the Bible school and care for the students carried us through sometimes difficult seasons, most notably the intense process of accreditation."

Rolf took on the dean's role in 2006 after being nominated and elected to the post by the Annual Conference, which met in June at Warm Beach, Wash. He followed Pastor James L. Johnson, who had filled the role since his elected to the post in 1996, also at the Annual Conference held at Warm Beach.

In a letter to members of the AFLC Schools Corporation, faculty and staff, Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck, chairman of the Board of Trustees, asked for prayers for Rolf as he finishes the school year and for the board as they take steps to select the next dean. Because



of the change in bylaws approved at the 2016 Annual Conference, the position of dean will be filled in the same manner as that of calling full-time faculty, and will not require conference approval.

Geneva congregation joins AFLC World Missions, AFLC Brazil fellowship

On January 28, 2018, Pastor Del Palmer, director of AFLC World Missions, officially recognized El-Shaddai Evangelical Lutheran Church, Geneva, Switzerland, as an AFLC congregation having fellowship with the AFLC of Brazil and AFLC World Missions.

Early in 2015, members of the AFLC World Missions Committee received an inquiry from Pastor Augusto Fiuri, requesting affiliation with the AFLC on behalf of the congregation, which he serves. Fiuri is a third-generation Christian whose family came to the Lord through the work of Pastor John Abel, who served as the AFLC's first missionary to Brazil.

After receiving the request from Fiuri's congregation, AFLC World Missions and the AFLC of Brazil sent several exploratory teams to Switzerland. These teams determined that the Geneva congregation was Free Lutheran.

Members of the World Missions Committee asked the AFLC Annual Conference in 2016 if fellowship should be extended to this congregation in Switzerland. The Annual Conference resolved "that AFLC World Missions continue to investigate what it will take to work with AFLC-Brazil and El-Shaddai Evangelical Church and move forward as

God leads in starting a mission field in Switzerland/Europe."

Members of the World Missions Committee and the AFLC of Brazil moved forward to extend fellowship to this congregation by developing a mutually agreeable working agreement between the three entities. The Geneva congregation is financially self-sufficient, as Fiuri is serving them as a tent maker, and they rent space to meet in a historical Lutheran church.

Following the recognition service, Fiuri remarked, "This is one of the happiest days in my life, and the life of our congregation."

E

vangelist Billy Graham once said, "The Bible is the answer to every human longing."

In today's vernacular, that would be "high key." Meaning that it is straight up truth. The Gatherings, AFLC Home Missions church plants, are a way to bring the answer to the dark world around us, in truth.

Imagine yourself in a special place of tranquility and peace. Would you be surrounded by other people, out in nature, or inside of a serene room? What would be inviting about that place? How would you have been gathered into that safe harbor?

In a world where right has become the object of scorn and wrong held up as what is to be followed, we are hard pressed from every side to hold up the truth of the gospel. But, as Graham stated, that is where the answer lies. It is that answer which allows those who come to Christ to be set free to be just what the Creator of the universe planned for them to be. Today more than ever people of all ages are crying out for truth, openness, honesty, sincerity, transparency, and authenticity. There is no other source book in the world that covers all of these

THE GATHERINGS

BY DEBBIE SORENSEN

topics with clarity and application for those who are seeking answers.

What better tool to have in our gatherings than the high key of the Word of God? Couple that with intentionality and a purpose for bringing people together, and we have a vehicle for starting New Testament models of fellowship. Home Missions has created Gatherings as a way for people of the Word to join together in personal fellowship and, as a result, be encouraged and energized.

Each Gathering is unique to the area in which they meet, and people are encouraged to come together just as they are and be accepted for who they are. In that coming together over the inerrant truth of the Scriptures, people can study, grow in relationship with God, build bridges, and be inspired to move on to live a life of grace, joy, and fulfillment. Because of what Jesus has done on the cross, we come alongside of those who may be in the pit of despair.

The Gathering is a stepping stone in the process of becoming a free and living congregation in the AFLC. Within our Gatherings, study of the Word is crucial. Along

with that, we must recognize that we are in a battle. Ephesians 6:10-18 exhorts us to put on the full armor of God, because our battle is in the heavenly realm. It is only by standing with the Lord and staying under His protection that we will be able to prevail. Victory in warfare involves knowing the enemy. But more importantly, we must know that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ means that Satan has been defeated.

It is key to remain in a right relationship with our holy and mighty God. Intentionally gathering together for the sake of the kingdom will keep us united in a genuine way to move toward a future with hope. And it is important to allow the Holy Spirit to begin the work of evangelism. Discipleship and training will follow, which will prepare leaders for when they become a free and living congregation. In so doing, we will provide people with the truth that Graham stated: "The Bible is the answer to every human longing."

Sorensen attends the AFLC Home Missions Gathering in Butte, Mont.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Pastor Luke Emerson has accepted a call to serve Elim Lutheran, Lake Stevens, Wash. Emerson has served Newark Lutheran, Newark, Ill. He will begin ministry June 1.

Pastor Richard Gunderson has accepted a call to serve as interim pastor at Spencer Creek Lutheran, Eugene, Ore.

Pastor Rob Lewis, Camrose, Alberta, has retired as director of the World Mission Prayer League (WMPL)—Canada.

Three short term assistants have been approved by World Missions to serve with Journey Missions in Jinja, Uganda, under AFLC missionaries Pastor Brent and Emily Raan. **Ben Smith**, a member of Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, and **Josue Flores Ayala**, of Celaya, Mexico, will serve for three months beginning in May, shadowing Pastor Raan. **Emily Olson**, a member of Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., will serve for nine months to a year beginning in May, working with Emily Raan and volunteering at a crisis pregnancy center.

Three men set to graduate from the Free Lutheran Seminary in May have accepted calls to local congregations. They include:

- **Nick Schultz** has accepted a call to serve Our Redeemer Lutheran, Kirkland, Wash.
- **Matthew Nelson** has accepted a call to serve Salem Lutheran, Radcliffe, Iowa, and St. Paul's Lutheran, Jewell, Iowa.
- **Matthew Quanbeck** has accepted a call to serve United Lutheran, Laurel, Neb.

AFLC Journey Missions to host two international trips

AFLC Journey Missions, a division of AFLC World Missions, is hosting two international trips this summer. A full group of 25 students and adults are traveling to the AFLC World Missions field in Brazil June 20 through July 6.

Applications are still being taken, however, for an intergenerational trip to the AFLC World Missions field in Uganda, planned for July 25 through August 15. For more information, contact Jon Nelson at jon.nelson@aflc.org.



Pastor Les Galland

Pastor Les Galland, 79, of Shakopee, Minn., died February 16.

Born May 22, 1938, in rural Erskine, Minn., he was the son of Chester and Eldrid (Dordal) Galland. He married Jan Erickson Nov. 25, 1959, in New York Mills, Minn. She preceded him in death on Jan. 14.

His family moved to rural Mentor, Minn., in 1945. He graduated from Mentor High School in 1956 and moved to Thief River Falls, Minn., for a one-year teacher's licensing program. He enrolled at Bemidji State University to complete his undergraduate studies and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1962 in elementary education and music theory. After marriage, they taught in New York Mills and Mound, Minn. Late in 1964 they heard of a fledgling church body, the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, which had chosen to remain separate from previous mergers and take its stand on historic orthodox Lutheran pietism, church polity and a high view of Scripture. He enrolled in the Free Lutheran Theological Seminary in the fall of 1965, graduating in 1968. He was ordained on July 16, 1968, by AFLC President Pastor John Strand at the AFLC Annual Conference at St. Paul's Lutheran in Cloquet, Minn. He served the Hope Lutheran parish, Stacy, Minn.; Green Lake Lutheran parish, Spicer, Minn.; Calvary Lutheran, Everett, Wash.; Our Savior's Lutheran parish and school, Thief River Falls, and King of Glory Lutheran, Shakopee. In retirement he provided pulpit supply for a host of other congregations. He served on the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees and the AFLC Coordinating Committee and was business administrator and AFLC vice president. In later years he enjoyed serving his community with Meals on Wheels and was an election judge.

Surviving are two sons, James (Cindy) Galland, Hastings, Minn., and Jon (Sherry) Galland, Medina, Ohio; one daughter, Janeen Gimberg, Shakopee; two sisters, Bethel (Harold) Erickson, and Marjorie (John) Demsky; and three grandchildren.

The service was held Feb. 24 at Hauge Memorial Chapel, AFLC Schools, Plymouth, Minn., with Pastor Brett Boe and Pastor Robert Lee officiating.

FEBRUARY MEMORIALS

AFLBS	Joseph Corcoran,
Jim Walker, Jan	Larry Wold
Galland, Ruth Claus,	Home Missions
Duane Peterson	Floyd Olson
AFLTS	Parish Ed
Pastor Les & Jan	Marge Bischoff,
Galland, Jim Walker	Duane & Helen
Evangelism	Peterson
Pastor Les & Jan	World Missions
Galland, Arlo	Jim Walker, Jan
Kneeland	Galland, Gerald
General Fund	Tysver
Pastor Les Galland	... in honor of
WMF	AFLBS
Jan Galland, Mrs.	Pastor Raynard
Herman Pederson,	Huglen

AFLC BENEVOLENCES February 1-28, 2018

FUND	REC'D IN FEBRUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$48,765	\$98,144	\$94,393
Evangelism	11,090	23,252	20,185
Youth Ministries	7,274	27,756	12,585
Parish Education	11,191	32,111	28,871
Seminary	24,999	66,231	46,596
Bible School	43,061	102,030	66,098
Home Missions	32,266	85,474	84,241
World Missions	42,795	96,383	77,993
Personal Support	75,067	142,376	102,762
TOTALS	\$296,509	\$673,757	\$533,724
For additional financial information for each department, go to www.aflc.org/giving			

HERE WE CONTINUE TO STAND

One of the primary reasons for the organization of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC) in 1962-63 was a conviction that the Bible is the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God, and this is surely foundational for our AFLC Schools. There was a growing awareness that, in spite of solid doctrinal statements, concerned laity could no longer count on the colleges and seminaries of most American Lutheran church bodies to preserve and promote the theological convictions of our forefathers.



Pastor Robert Lee

What happened? Past generations were very proud and confident of their schools, and it was once said that if theological liberalism came into the church, it must have come from the pews. But the late Dr. Iver Olson, AFLC seminary dean, laid the blame squarely on the seminaries. By the time of the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), one church historian stated that he did not know of one seminary professor who professed scriptural inerrancy. When The American Lutheran Church (TALC) leaders were asked about the Minneapolis Theses and the United Testimony of Faith and Life—foundational theological statements of the denomination and both of which affirmed inerrancy—the response was that the statements did not define what inerrancy meant.

AFLC Schools continue to pursue accreditation through a conservative agency, and faculty members are required to annually affirm their commitment to an inerrant and infallible Bible. But vigilance is still necessary. Recent news reports tell of internal struggles in a prominent evangelical school, and one of the accusations is that it is drifting theologically, especially in regard to the particulars of the definition of biblical inerrancy, a charge that has been strongly denied by the school.

The AFLC subscribes to the United Testimony of Faith and Life, which states:

We bear witness that the Bible is our only authentic and infallible source of God's revelation to us and all men, and that it is the only inerrant and completely adequate source and norm of Christian doctrine and life. We hold that the Bible, as a whole and in all its parts, is the Word of God under all circumstances regardless of man's attitude toward it.

This has always seemed to be quite adequate. Yet your editor recalls a meeting with the leader of a large evangelical mission organization who said that he was encouraged to learn that AFLC believed that the Bible was inerrant “only” in matters of doctrine and life. When Dr. Francis Monseth replied that doctrine and life applies to everything, the man said, “But no one believes that!” Perhaps our statement is not as adequate as we thought. What does biblical inerrancy mean? Perhaps some thought and discussion need to be devoted to defining and explaining our position, for it seems that nothing can be taken for granted.

All of the statements, explanations, and definitions, however, cannot absolutely promise to preserve us from doctrinal drift and error. A five-page list of Lutheran statements on Holy Scripture, dating back to the 1870s, ring with conviction and clarity that the Bible is God’s inspired Word, inerrant and infallible. Yet the church bodies today that share the legacy of these statements no longer stand on them. Walking through the impressive campus of a Midwestern Lutheran college several years ago and noting the names of the school’s forefathers on many of the buildings, I was struck that none of them would be welcome to teach there today.

What is the answer for us today?

Watch—the Bible commands us over and over again, be on the alert, be awake and vigilant. Know what is taught in our schools, get acquainted with the instructors, read what they have written, ask questions if something seems unclear. This is not a call to be suspicious but to be informed.

The requirement for faculty members to sign the annual commitment to biblical inerrancy is good, but there are no infallible solutions or safeguards. Drifting is not inevitable, but it is predictable, and it can be uprooted. Two large conservative denominations in America today were able, by the grace of God and with much painful struggle, to turn things around in their seminaries.

Watch and pray—the two belong together (Matthew 26:41, Mark 13:33, Luke 21:36). Prayer sharpens spiritual alertness and discernment; it can make us more watchful. Pray fervently and faithfully for our AFLC Bible school and seminary and those who study there, for

Prayer sharpens spiritual alertness and discernment; it can make us more watchful.

the administration, faculty and staff, for the Board of Trustees. As I work on the history of the AFLC, it seems clear that our schools have been under attack since the beginning, that they have only survived and continue to serve our fellowship by God’s grace alone.

The past generation was faithful. May we continue to stand on the firm foundation that they preserved for us.

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

Periodicals

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

association retreat center

WHAT I LEARNED THIS YEAR

BY KIRK RAUTIO

It has been said that education is an investment. One may ask what that means, though. There are many educational forces that grab our attention and demand time of us, from pre-primary school to post-doctoral work, every person on earth engages in education. From the simplest of educational experiences—we may have heard parents directing us, “Don’t touch! The stove is hot!”—to more formal instruction in the physics equation for mass: $E=MC^2$. What is it about a lifetime of learning that drives us? Or is it the life that drives our learning? The wise King Solomon wrote that “an intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge” (Proverbs 18:15).

This April marks the one-year anniversary of my family’s move to the Association Retreat Center. We have been given the opportunity to live and work in the ARC mission field. Learning and

knowledge have been a large part of the education process that I have encountered here during our first year. From how to turn off the water heater so that the furnace can run, to the invaluable stack of doors—of which the one on the bottom is the most necessary—I’ve had many invaluable lessons in our first year here.

I could say the same of the lessons I’ve learned throughout my life, including those which my mother imparted to me when I was young. Much deeper still is the knowledge and passion that I have learned while at the ARC. Whether that be sitting and talking with Bob Dietsche about the countless souls he has met, singing with a youth group during their opening session, talking and praying with quilters, or having new groups of ladies and men come out and ask how they can pray and help. These, my friends, are lessons in knowledge. Not earthly lessons that will pass away or need to be passed down to others who will

need to know how things run, but eternal knowledge of souls whom I will one day join in Heaven to rejoice at Jesus’ feet.

This year has been a year of lessons (which I needed to learn), but also a year of knowledge gained, and people changed for Christ.

We are all students on the road of life learning from Jesus our Master teacher, lesson giver, and knowledge imparter. He longs to teach us each in unique and powerful ways. No matter your age, keep your mind and heart open to what God wants you to learn today, this week, this month, and this year. Will you be open to listen? Will you be willing to learn? And will you impart your knowledge to others for a heavenly impact?

Rautio is the executive director of the Association Retreat Center, located near Osceola, Wis.