

THE LUTHERAN 

AUGUST 2007

AMBASSADOR



Jesus, our first love

Annual Conference:

A new president
has been elected,
a youth ministries
director is installed
and reports were
given by various
AFLC departments.

The rush

BY PASTOR JIM JOHNSON

Like many of you, I'm scrambling.

Not only am I working hard to make a living, be a faithful husband and a good parent at the same time, but I'm running back and forth in a city of 60,000 to take children to games, doctors appointments and choir practices.

I'm in full-time ministry as a pastor of a growing church of 80. My wife, Linda, is a stay-at-home mom, but the word "stay" is not accurate. We're raising nine children, ages 19 to 2, and aging quickly. Time flies. At age 45, in ministry for 20 years, I'm learning to slow down. I'm taking time for prayer, for the kids and for the Bible. I'm re-learning the concepts of quantity and quality time with my wife. And I'm relishing the new relationships with the mix of young families and middle-of-life couples and seniors who keep us sane — and a step slower.

Recently, I grabbed a cup of coffee at 7 a.m. and read my Bible while Linda and the kids made breakfast. It was an odd moment of solace in the noise — 10 minutes of stillness before driving my daughters to the local Christian high school. I relish that time with the Lord.

During that quiet time, I looked at Isaiah 35:3-5, where God was speaking hope to the people of Israel, a nation of "runners" who were taking time to listen. He was telling them of their coming national demise. God comforts

the "listeners" who will have to suffer with the wanderers. Says verse 3 and 4, "Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble. Say to those with anxious heart, 'Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance; the recompense of God will come, But He will save you.'"

And that's what I want to say to you. God wants to pick you up. Stop running.

Perhaps you feel exhausted and feeble. Perhaps the rigors of making your budget work, digging into your work or family life day after day, making home school happen with kids who are only sometimes grateful students, or hauling teens and "tweens" to baseball practice and softball games like Linda and I do is just wearing you down.

The scramble of it all can make you feel like the remnant of Isaiah's day.

God gives this promise in Isaiah 35:5-6, "The eyes of the blind will be opened ... Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy." The Lord seemed to be saying, "I will make you glad again!" Isaiah 35 adds, "For waters will break forth in the wilderness."

Tired of the rush?

Take courage, friends. Jesus is here. Joy is coming. You don't have to rush. You believers should hear it again: "Jesus will come; He will save you." And you who have yet to come to Christ for new life: He wants to save you, too!

He will unscramble your life and bring you peace.

Johnson serves Good Shepherd Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif.

August 2007 >>

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR vol. 45, no. 8

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The Lutheran Ambassador (USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413) is published monthly by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. AFLC headquarters and publications office is at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. Phone (763) 545-5631; fax 763-545-0079.

For subscription changes and information: The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. 763-545-5631 or e-mail at luthamb@afcl.org.

Subscription rates:
\$17 a year, Group Rate, U.S.
\$18 a year, Individual, U.S.
\$20 a year, International
Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, MN, and additional mailing office.

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

From the 2007 AFLC Annual Conference

We do not “dedicate” infants like buildings or furnishings, we baptize them, convinced that they are indeed proper recipients of the sacrament. This is not bondage of mere church tradition, it is freedom of biblical conviction.

— Pastor Robert Lee
AFLC President’s Report

[In less than four weeks from the time this report is read, there will be much rejoicing in heaven (Luke 15:7, 10) because of the many students, and adults as well, who will have been “Unshackled” while in Estes Park, Colorado. What a glorious thought to think, that in less than a month, many who are held captive will be set free!]

— Paul Kneeland
Free Lutheran Youth President

We must be led away from ourselves and to God; away from our best ideas and our earthbound sinful desires and led to Jesus.

— Pastor Steve Mundfrom
Annual Conference prayer time leader

It is our prayer that our blessed Lord will continue to have “first place in everything” in the ministry of our seminary. We pray that every course and every class hour will be Christ-centered and Bible-based.

— Dr. Francis Monseth
Free Lutheran Seminary Dean



Jesus, our first love

The 2007 CONFERENCE

BY PASTOR CRAIG JOHNSON

Pastor Elden Nelson was elected to a three-year term as president of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations at the 2007 Annual Conference held June 12-15 in Sioux Falls, S.D. Nelson was elected on the third ballot. He will be the fourth president of the AFLC since its beginning in 1962.

Pastor Robert Lee has served as AFLC president for the past 15 years. He declined nomination for another term. He announced that he has accepted a call to serve as a full-time faculty member at the Free Lutheran Seminary and Association Free Lutheran Bible School. He will begin his new position starting January 2008. Pastor Nelson will be installed as presi-



TOP LEFT: Pastor Robert Lee addresses the conference for the last time as AFLC president.
TOP RIGHT: Pastor Jason Holt is installed as director of AFLC Youth Ministries.
ABOVE: Conference attendees take communion during the opening service.



ABOVE: Ralph Peterson, Portland, N.D., speaks during a dedication service for a FLAPS airplane.
 TOP: Kevin Olson, Eden Prairie, Minn., talks with Walter and Ann Rolf, Lisbon, N.D.
 RIGHT: Pastor Rick Long, Arlington, Wash., chats with Chaplain Mark Benz, Gaithersburg, Md.

dent at 7 p.m. Sept. 23 at the AFLC Schools chapel.

Most recently Pastor Nelson has served as vice president of the AFLC and assistant to the president. Previously, he had served as AFLC Home Missions director and pastored congregations in Eugene, Ore.; Dickinson, N.D.; St. Paul and Willmar, Minn. Nelson graduated from the Free Lutheran Seminary in 1972.

Pastor Michael Brandt of Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., was elected to a one-year term as vice president of the AFLC. Brandt was also elected on the third ballot. He was in the same graduating class of the seminary as Pastor Nelson.

Pastor Brian Davidson was re-elected secretary of the AFLC.

Before voting began for the office of vice president, Pastor Lee clarified that the positions of vice president and assistant to the president were separate positions that had simply been held by the same individual, Pastor Nelson, in recent years. The assistant position is salaried and part-time. Filling the impending vacant position is the responsibility of members of the Coordinating Committee. During the report of the Coordinating Committee, a desire was expressed to expand the number of hours for the position and fill it by the time Nelson begins serving as president.

Pastor Lee spoke at the opening Holy Communion service of the conference. His message was on the theme

of the conference — “Jesus, Our First Love” — taken from Revelation 2:4. He spoke of what the Greek language calls *agape* love. Love for Christ is to be of first importance and more than a sentimental feeling. “There’s nothing sloppy about *agape*,” Lee declared, then asked, “Are you serving Jesus because you love Him or because there’s a lot that has to be done and there’s no one else to do it?”

The President’s Report

In his final report as AFLC president, Lee spoke of issues on which most in the AFLC appear to be united and others on which different opinions exist. “Our theological perspective allows for open questions, and we should continue to maintain that the three creeds, the Augsburg Confession, and the Small Catechism, together with our Fundamental Principles, are a sufficient statement of scriptural convictions. ... The crying need of the hour is to evangelize, not to debate secondary issues.”

Lee reminded the conference that the work of caring for congregations is not a secondary issue. “Our goal of building free and living Lutheran congregations must never become empty words, but should inspire and inform every aspect of our common efforts.”

In reflecting on his time as president, Lee stated, “I am as inadequate to serve as your president as I was 15 years ago, but my adequacy is of God (II Corinthians 2:16, 3:5);



TOP LEFT: Pastor Kevin Olson (center) is installed as director of Distance Education. LEFT: The AFLC logo was carved in ice for a reception honoring Pastor Robert Lee. ABOVE: Bill Sonmor and John Halvorson, of the Dalton, Minn., parish, pray during an afternoon devotional.

and my joy is in the Lord, not in the AFLC (Philippians 4:4).” In accepting the call to serve as president, Nelson expressed similar feelings of inadequacy and asked for prayer.

New Things

At the opening service of the conference a new edition of “Luther’s Small Catechism and Explanation” was dedicated. The new Catechism includes updated language and format, added introductions and other materials, supplementary Scripture verses and a revised and expanded glossary. It is the result of much time spent by the AFLC Parish Education Department reviewing and editing the 1963 edition of “Luther’s Small Catechism Explained.” The new Catechism has been printed and is available for purchase.

Pastor Jason Holt was installed during the conference as the director of AFLC Youth Ministries. Holt has served Calvary Lutheran of Fergus Falls, Minn., for the past eight years. He will begin in his new position Aug. 1.

Pastor Kevin Olson, who has served as Youth Ministries director, is leaving the position to work in a new area of ministry with the AFLC World Missions department. Olson will be developing distance education and training for church leaders in various parts of the world.

The concluding worship service of the conference

saw the ordination of Shane McLoughlin to the pastoral ministry. McLoughlin graduated from the Free Lutheran Seminary in May and has accepted a call to serve Hosanna Free Lutheran of Cumberland, Wis., and Timberland-Ringebu of Barronett, Wis.

The conference welcomed six congregations that joined the AFLC during the past year. They include: Hope Lutheran, Detroit Lakes, Minn.; Acts 2 Lutheran, Wales, Wis.; Joy Christian Community, Fountain Hills, Ariz.; Christ Community, Hagerstown, Md.; St. Matthew’s Lutheran, Millerstown, Pa.; and Grace Lutheran, Bensenville, Ill.

Schools

Members of the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees told of changes that have come to the campus of the Bible school and seminary. Thanks to generous gifts, construction was completed on the third seminary housing unit and progress was made to pay off other construction debt. It was announced that approximately \$400,000 is still owed on the schools’ Heritage Hall. The board is praying the Lord will provide 400 people who would commit to giving a total of \$1,000 each over the next four years so that the debt may be retired. The board also shared about repairs and remodeling projects on campus, in particular on the chapel building.



TOP LEFT: Pastor Elden and Faith Nelson join Pastor Michael and Colleen Brandt. Nelson was elected president and Brandt was elected as vice president.
 TOP RIGHT: Mildred Strand, Remer, Minn., looks at the WMF display.
 MIDDLE LEFT: Pastor Luther Sastry (left) and his wife, Vardhini, of India, (right) stand with Pastor Zakaria and Magdalena Axwesso of Tanzania.
 RIGHT: Children who attended VBS participated in Cowboyography and learned, among other things, how to make rope.



ABOVE: Pastor Jonathan Abel, Cheryl Skordahl, Pastor David Skordahl and Pastor Curt Emerson gather together to pray during devotions.



ABOVE RIGHT: Delayne Severson, Sioux Falls, S.D., and Lois Grothe, Astoria, Ore., chat at the registration table.

RIGHT: Members from Prince of Peace Lutheran, Beulah, N.D., surround Shane McLoughlin (front row, second from right) who was ordained during the closing service of the conference.



The congregation has had two other members graduate from AFLTS in 2006, including Pastor Dean Iverson (seated, left),

and Pastor Rich Ramsbacher (seated, right). Pastor Kris Nyman (seated, second from left) serves the congregation.

During the discussion regarding the schools, information about the benefits and advantages of accreditation was shared. It led to a resolution “that we encourage the movement toward becoming accredited through TRACS.”

Missions

When a resolution was proposed encouraging congregations to plant sister congregations, many testimonies were shared. Individuals who are part of newer congregations expressed thanks for the congregations that helped them get started. Members of more established congregations shared about the blessings they received from helping plant a new congregation.

The Free Lutheran Association of Pilot Supporters reported they had been given a third plane, which was put into service in April 2007. Lavon Bohling, FLAPS director, said they are “seeking the Lord’s direction for how this gift can be best used for the long term.”

The director of the Association Retreat Center, Pat Flanders, said the ARC hosted 145 faith-based groups comprising 10,000 people during 2006. “From these church

groups at least 500 (and as many as 700) people accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior here in 2006.”

Old Business

The 2006 Annual Conference requested that a committee study the AFLC budgetary system and make a recommendation regarding how gifts that are given to the AFLC and not designated to a certain area of the ministry are distributed. After meeting this past year, members of the committee recommended that all undesignated gifts be distributed equally to the Coordinating Committee, the Schools Corporation and the Missions Corporation. Each corporation would have the responsibility to allocate the funds to the ministries under them. After much discussion this resolution was tabled.

The conference business sessions and many of the worship services were held at the Sioux Falls Christian Schools. Abiding Savior Free Lutheran and Living Word Free Lutheran, both of Sioux Falls, hosted the conference. The conference registration totaled 620 people. The 2008 Annual Conference will be held June 10-13 in Oklahoma City.



THE
NEW

PRES

Pastor Elden Nelson elected next AFLC president

Where did you grow up?

I was born and raised in eastern South Dakota. Born near Badger, S.D., lived in the Lake Preston area most of my growing-up years.

When did you come to know Jesus?

Following high school I worked with my dad in a trucking business and in 1965 during a two-week session of special evangelistic meetings in our two-point parish I came to faith in Christ. Pastor Theodore Hax was the evangelist.

How did God call you into the ministry?

It was only days after my coming to Christ that I began to sense the call to serve Him. I didn't know what it was that the Lord wanted, but as my family and my pastor (Erwin and Lorraine Brandt — parents of Pastor Michael Brandt) prayed with me it became clear that I needed to go back to school. There were five of us from my community that went that fall to California Lutheran Bible School in Los Angeles. During my two years there it became clear to me that the Lord was calling me into pastoral ministry.

How did you become a part of the AFLC?

Communications with Dr. Alvin Rogness, president of Luther Seminary made it very clear that Luther was not where I would go. I got acquainted with guys from the AFLC at CLBS and the president, Pastor Maynard Force, encouraged me to consider AFLTS. I made contact with AFLTS dean, Dr. Iver Olson, in the summer of '69 and began seminary that fall. The rest is history.

Tell us about your family.

Faith and I were married in 1971. Faith is the daughter of Pastor Andrew and Helen Hanson of Long Prairie, Minn. Both of my parents have gone home to be with Jesus. Faith has three brothers and I have one sister. Faith and I have four children. Andy is 34 years old and suffered a bout of encephalitis when he was 5, leaving him with severe brain damage. He lives at the Lutheran Home in Belle Plaine, Minn. Tricia, 31, is married to Brad Nelson of Prinsburg, Minn., and they have three girls and a boy, ages 2, 5, 7 and 9. Ben, 29, and Linn Monica are presently in the process of moving to Stavanger, Norway — no children yet. Mikal, 24, just finished his first year of medical school at the University of Minnesota. He is under obligation to the U.S. Navy until he is about 40 years old.

What were you thinking when it was announced you had been elected president of the AFLC?

Overwhelmed! The question in my mind was, “Why me O Lord?” I know that I am not able, but He is, and so I will seek to follow and obey Him.

What are some of the thoughts and hopes you have as you think about beginning in the new position?

I hope for faithfulness on my part as well as on the part of every congregation, pastor and family in the AFLC. My one desire is to finish strong and with a positive, joyful spirit. I don't have any particular aspirations or goals at this point, but I do want to be under the influence and control of God's Word and Spirit and be a servant leader.

How can people pray for you?

It was such a blessing to hear over and over from people at the conference “I/we will be praying for you.” That is so very vital. Without that support we will all flounder and fail. My one prayer request at this time is that we will be found faithful in all that He gives us to do.



ABOVE: Pastor Elden Nelson (far right) is pictured with his graduating seminary class of 1972. At far left is Pastor Michael Brandt, elected AFLC vice president.

ELECTIONS

President

Pastor Elden Nelson, Rockford, Minn. (three-year term)

Vice President

Pastor Michael Brandt, Sioux Falls, S.D. (one-year term)

Secretary

Pastor Brian Davidson, Minneapolis, Minn. (one-year term)

Coordinating Committee

Wayne Floan, Plymouth, Minn. (five-year term)

Vint Bruflat, Mesa, Ariz. (five-year term)

AFLC Schools Board of Trustees

Steve Jankord, Sioux Falls, S.D. (five-year term)

John Presteng, Grafton, N.D. (two years of five-year term)

Pastor Dana Coyle, Ottawa, Ill. (one year of five-year term)

World Missions Committee

Pastor Richard Gunderson, Cambridge, Minn. (five-year term)

Gene Finstrom, Buxton, N.D. (four years of a five-year term)

Home Missions

Loren Tungseth, Fergus Falls, Minn. (five-year term)

Stewardship Board

Brenda Carr, Minneapolis, Minn. (five-year term)

Roland Meyer, Paxton, Ill. (four years of five-year term)

Youth Board

Pastor Mark Johnson, Dalton, Minn. (five-year term)

Board of Publications and Parish Education

Candice Johnson, Stanley, N.D. (five-year term)

Board of Pensions

Roger Gamble, Seward, Neb. (five-year term)

Commission on Evangelism

Dwight Kiefert, Valley City, N.D. (five-year term)

Budget Analysis Committee

Pastor Ken Hart, St. Francis, Kan. (three years of five-year term)

Nathaniel Olson, Fargo, N.D. (three years of five-year term)

FLAPS Board of Managers

Pastor Tom Schierkolk, Eben Junction, Mich. (five-year term)

Robert Dietsche, Osceola, Wis. (five-year term)



ARC Board

Pastor Tim Carlson, Grafton, N.D. (five-year term)

Colloquy Committee

Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck, Minot, N.D.

Pastor Mark Antal, Park River, N.D.

Pastor Allen Monson, Mesa, Ariz.

Pastor Richard Carr, Minneapolis, Minn.

Pastor Steve Mundfrom, Arlington, S.D.

Pastor Don Voorhees, Dannebrog, Neb.

ARC Corporation

(five-year terms)

Pastor Earl Korhonen, Radcliffe, Iowa

Sam Nash, Plymouth, Minn.

Pastor Cal Willard, Roseau, Minn.

Dennis Jacobsen, Tioga, N.D.

Phil Johnson, Esko, Minn.

Bob Rudebush, Lakeville, Minn.

Jared Langness, Plymouth, Minn.

Steve Lehman, Milford, Ill.

Kevin O'Neil, Golden Valley, Minn.

Jim Ray, Cloquet, Minn.

2008 Nominating Committee

Eastern North Dakota — Gene Finstrom, Buxton, N.D.
Western North Dakota/Eastern Montana — Mark Gustafson, Beulah, N.D.
South Dakota — Pastor Wayne Olson, Faith, S.D.
Lake Superior — Ken Sletten, Duluth, Minn.
Northwestern Minnesota — Rod Kjersten, Roseau, Minn.
North Central Minnesota — Pastor Karl Anderson, Bagley, Minn.
Southwest Central Minnesota — Pastor James Johnson, Fergus Falls, Minn.
Nebraska/Colorado/Kansas — Pastor David White, Deshler, Neb.
Minneapolis — Lee Schierkolk, Prairie Farm, Wis.
Central Tri-State — Pastor Martin Horn, Kenyon, Minn.
Northern Michigan — Erling Langness, Ishpeming, Mich.
South Central — Pastor Craig Scavo, Durant, Okla.
Southwestern — Pastor James Johnson, Camarillo, Calif.
Pacific Northwest — Luke Long, Arlington, Wash.
Eastern — Pastor Brian Pearson, Brandon, Fla.
Illinois — John Talley, Newark, Ill.

LEFT: Pastor Wade Mobley (left to right) Pastor Jason Holt and Andrea Christenson count the ballots for the presidential election. Pastor Elden Nelson, currently serving as vice president for the AFLC, was elected after three ballots, including a nominating ballot from the conference floor in which 46 pastors were nominated.

Schools Corporation

(five-year terms)

David Borg, Maple Grove, Minn.
Pastor Dana Coyle, Ottawa, Ill.
Pastor Martin Horn, Kenyon, Minn.
Wanda Jacobson, Brooklyn Park, Minn.
Erling Langness, Ishpeming, Mich.
Dr. Daniel Mundfrom, Greeley, Colo.
Pastor Mark Olson, Lakeville, Minn.
John Presteng, Grafton, N.D.
Eric Rasmussen, Plymouth, Minn.
James Rolf, Brandon, Minn.

(four years of five-year term)

John Talley, Newark, Ill.

(one year of five-year term)

Darrell Haugen, Binford, N.D.

Missions Corporation

(five-year terms)

Pastor Steve Carlson, Dalton, Minn.
Kenneth Graham, Camarillo, Calif.

Pastor Richard Gunderson, Cambridge, Minn.

Barbara Gustafson, Beulah, N.D.

Kevin Hoops, Byron, Neb.

Steve Jameson, Earlville, Ill.

Pastor Tim Johnson, Northwood, N.D.

Dr. Robert Kohl, Brookings, S.D.

Lowell Larson, Ottawa, Ill.

Pastor Rick Larson, Fairbury, Neb.

Pastor Steve Lombardo, Gifford, Ill.

Pastor Jerry Moan, Hamel, Minn.

Pastor Henry Mohagen, Reva, S.D.

Marlow Nash, Colfax, N.D.

Lee Olson, Tioga, N.D.

Timothy Rolf, McIntosh, Minn.

Vernon Russum, Grafton, N.D.

Pastor Tony Stockman, Brandon, Minn.

Dennis Torkelson, Foxhome, Minn.

Joel Forness, Wahpeton, N.D.

(one year of five-year term)

Daniel Rugroden, Hickson, N.D.

2008 Conference Committees*

Committee No. 1

(Administration)

Carl Busse, Humboldt, Tenn.

Charles Gray, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Dave Van Hovel, Milford, Ill.

Pastor James Johnson, Camarillo, Calif.

Pastor Wade Mobley, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Committee No. 2

(Schools)

Charles Allen, Calera, Okla.

Loiell Dyrud, Thief River Falls, Minn.

Pastor Rodney Johnson, Stanley, N.D.

Pastor John Kent, Lakeside, Calif.

Ken Sletten, Duluth, Minn.

Committee No. 3

(Missions and Evangelism)

Pastor Ray Ballmann, Kopperl, Texas

Myron Compton, Spearfish, S.D.

Pastor Herb Hoff, Salinas, Calif.

Lauren Osteros, Burlington, N.D.

Greg Seeba, Camarillo, Calif.

Committee No. 4

(Pub., Parish Education & Youth)

Nadine Compton, Spearfish, S.D.

Jill Gordon, Durant, Okla.

Geri Graham, Camarillo, Calif.

Carol Gray, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Mary Seeba, Camarillo, Calif.

Committee No. 5

(Stewardship and Pensions)

Dave Berg, St. Louis, Mo.

Ken Blood, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Jack Harper, Calera, Okla.

Steve Hauptman, Camarillo, Calif.

Bob Softing, Hawley, Minn.

* Committee members will meet on June 10, 2008, preceding the conference in Oklahoma City, Okla.



An Undivided Heart

The 45th annual National WMF Convention was held June 12 at Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., with the theme “Give Me An Undivided Heart” from Psalm 86:11. A welcome on behalf of the two sponsoring churches — Abiding Savior Free Lutheran and Living Word Free Lutheran, also of Sioux Falls — was brought by convention coordinator Michele Mobley. Missionary candidate Monica Coyle, Plymouth, Minn., led devotions and a memorial service, and Jane Emerson, Canal Winchester, Ohio, shared a Bible study from the theme text.

During the business meeting, Karen Pederson, Tioga, N.D., was elected as 1st vice president and Phyllis Peterson, Portland, N.D., was elected as recording secretary. A number of resolutions dealing with encouragement, special thanks and prayer, God’s will in proposals and current events, and commitments and challenges to all women were also adopted. Special music was provided by the group “Grace Alone” from Sioux Falls. Grace Westegaard, also of Sioux Falls, was thanked for making the banner.

During the noon luncheon emceed by WMF treasurer Lynn Wellumson, Pastor Paul and Laurie Nash, Brooklyn Park, Minn., and Carol Dietsche, Osceola, Wis., presented a skit depicting a 1970s rural church kitchen. Clara Gunderson, Cambridge, Minn., shared her life experiences and lessons learned regarding living with an undivided heart. Special music was provided by a combined women’s chorus from Calvary Lutheran, Arlington, S.D., and Grace Lutheran, Bruce, S.D.

The three afternoon break-out sessions included “The Role of Godly Women,” presented by Laurie Nash,

“Having an Effective Devotional Life,” by Linda Korhonen, Cokato, Minn., and “Fear and How To Overcome It,” by Pastor Paul Nash, Home Missions director.

During the evening banquet emceed by WMF Women’s Outreach Coordinator Faylin Myhre, Tamba Abel, missionary to Brazil, shared a greeting. Pastor Robert Lee, AFLC president, installed the new officers and Jane Emerson presented a mini-concert and shared her personal testimony.

On June 13, members of the National WMF board held a leadership breakfast meeting at the conference site, Sioux Falls Christian School, for all district and local WMF officers as well as those interested in a leadership role in the WMF. After devotions led by Linda Mohagen, Reva, S.D., former WMF president Cheryl Skordahl, Argyle, Minn., shared on the theme “It is the Lord Christ You Are Serving,” based on Colossians 3:23-24.

Pastor Kevin Olson, Savage, Minn., who is developing a distance education program for the AFLC, brought the message during the Wednesday evening Mission Festival Service. Pastor Del Palmer, World Mission director, shared a video greeting from our missionaries who could not attend this year’s Annual Conference. Special music was provided by Grace Alone. Pastor Michael Brandt from Abiding Savior Free Lutheran closed the service.

The offerings taken during the convention and service were equally divided between World Missions, Home Missions and the WMF general fund.

Nikunen, who lives in Minneapolis, is the recording secretary for the National WMF.



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT:

Members of the Grace Alone group brought special music to the Mission Festival Service.

Lori and Pastor Paul Nash play their parts in a skit about country churches.

Clara Gunderson speaks on the theme of an Undivided Heart at the luncheon.

Linda Korhonen led a workshop on having an effective devotional life.

Convention attendees listen in on two of the three workshops offered.

Good news to SHARE

BY PASTOR JOHN KENT

Often you'll hear people say something like, "When I get to heaven, the first thing I'm going to ask God is ..." and then they fill in the blank with something that they wish they had an answer for.

Have you ever thought about what your first words might be when you see God face to face? Do you have any concept what your thoughts might be at that moment, if indeed anything in eternity can even be characterized as a moment? Think about it. What will you say? Or perhaps even more important, what will be said to you? It is truly awe-inspiring to ponder meeting the very One who brought us into being. It is comforting to know that He will be well-pleased with us. We have nothing to fear in His presence. He has a fatherly kind of pride over who we are that will encompass us. All of this is because we are in Christ. That's right. We will have this comfort and this peace in the face of the Almighty because of what Jesus has purchased for us by His life, death, and resurrection.

So if it is with comfort and anticipation that we who are in Christ look forward to that moment when we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2), then it is with a growing discomfort and anxiety that those who do not know Jesus are approaching this same moment. People in our world today are not living in real peace regarding their futures. They are easy marks for all that anxiety brings when they are not sure how they stand and how things will play out when they shall see God. People who are not yet reconciled to God through Christ deal with their growing anxiety in three basic ways.

Some people deny the existence of any future, or any life after death. They convince themselves that there is nothing to fear but nothingness and an end. Whatever peace this may bring thinking there is not One whom they have to face, there is still a nagging sense of discomfort about the shortness of life and the loss of opportunities. These people become bitter and wish they would have had more, done more, and experienced more. As death harkens,

frustration builds and questions must flood in.

There are some who believe that there is a Creator to be faced. They reject, however, that He will require anything more than a good solid effort at good clean living. They are not in a camp where they believe that He will require utter perfection and sinlessness. These people live their lives always trying to do what seems right in their own eyes (Proverbs 14:12). They look at the behavior of others as a guide, thinking that if they are better than "the other guy" God will be forced to let them into heaven while tossing the other guy into the flames. Even though some good behavior gives a false sense of security to these people, there are always the dreadful questions that rise: Have I done enough? Am I really good enough? Will God truly grade on a curve like I expect that He should?

Finally, there are those persons who are haunted by the knowledge that there must be a God, and that He is ultimately good. These people are in no way looking forward to meeting Him because they have looked at themselves and know that deep down they have a lack-of-goodness problem. They are terrified by the prospects of seeing God and hearing His judgments. They try each day to live better, and some even give up because they have found it too difficult.

Well Christian, if it is true that these are the three kinds of people in this world, then Jesus was right when He said, "Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest" (John 4:35). We sometimes get the idea that people do not want to hear what we have to say, but in these cases nothing could be farther from the truth. People are aching for the peace that we possess. We have the very words that can bring comfort. We should not be ashamed to be laying out before them so great a salvation. Ring the bells! Go tell it on the mountain! Proclaim the peace! Bring joy to a world that lives in torment!

Kent serves Reformation Lutheran, El Cajon, Calif.



Elder CARE

Speaking on behalf of chaplains, I know that we face many challenges in developing and reshaping individual care plans for our elders. I want to provide you and your congregation with some clearly defined ideas for their spiritual care.

My perspective comes from experience as a parish pastor and chaplain in an institution where I am responsible for the spiritual care of hospital acute care patients, residents of two nursing homes and hospice clients. One of my first assignments at Roseau Area Hospital and Homes was assessing the spiritual care needs of those we serve. I have come to realize that a large number of these elders feel, for the most part, forgotten by their church families, communities, and, for some, even their immediate families. If we care about those who have made our churches and communities what they are today, we must meet their holistic needs, including direct participation from those three areas.

The plan I developed includes their church pastor or priest — their primary spiritual caregivers. But it doesn't end there. Our vision of spiritual care must build opportunities for fellowship, including regular contact from a church, family members and the community. Many residents are very independent prior to entering a care facility. As a result, they very much miss the connection their friends and families offer.

The best reason for addressing these needs comes directly from "Learning from Hannah." Author Bill Thomas states that elders exist to teach us how to be a community. As we give to them, they give back to us their wisdom, experience and affection. When we come together to meet their needs, we learn how to live as human beings as our Lord intended. Our elders are aptly able to instruct us in the precious art of listening and caring.

I believe that the best institutions, churches and communities are those willing to pick up and carry the burdens of their frailest elders. In this context, we learn the greatest lessons from those who are unable to speak or



"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit. And there are varieties of ministries and the same Lord, And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons."

1 Corinthians 12:4-6, NASB

walk. God gifted them with life, and they have been placed in our lives by our loving heavenly Father.

What an incredible opportunity to serve those in our communities. We simply need to listen to our elders and then coordinate our efforts to meet their needs. This sets the tone for a caring Christian community. Listen to the blessing from our Lord, "As you have done it unto the least of these my people, you have done it to Me" (Matthew 25:40).

Severson, Roseau, Minn., is the secretary/treasurer for the AFLC's division for institutional chaplaincy.

conference REFLECTIONS



The 2008 Annual Conference is history, and Pastor Elden K. Nelson has been elected as fourth president of the AFLC. Pastor Nelson is certainly no stranger to our church family, having served as Home Missions director from 1976 to 1994, and for the past nine years as vice president. He has also served as a very capable part-time assistant to

the president for several years, which means that I will not need to spend much time with his orientation to the office.



Pastor Robert Lee

One of the most frequently heard comments during the conference was concerning the spirit of unity that was so clearly evident, especially in the voting process for our national officers. Our ecclesiastical ballot system is strange to many, and may

seem quite fraught with danger to those who are accustomed to church conventions with a more political bent. Yet in spite of the long list of names on the nominating ballot for president, all but two were eliminated by the third ballot, thus quickly resulting in an election. The same was true for vice president, and the secretary was re-elected on the nominating ballot. Thank you, Lord!

More than 600 men and women were registered at the conference this year, which makes it one of our largest. (The record was set in 1995 at the Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis., with 740.) We expected more, considering the fact that there would be a presidential election without an incumbent candidate. Sadly, most of the people left during the second day, and the number of votes cast on Friday was less than a third of Wednesday's totals. An attempt was made a few years ago to address the old weekend exodus by eliminating the weekend sessions and ending the conference on Friday. Initially the change seemed to help, but it was discouraging to see so many missing this year on the final day for reports, discussion and elections that are a vital part of our common endeavors.

There have been a couple of objections to the midweek schedule, noting that it makes attendance more difficult for those who must take time off from their employment in or-

der to attend. Our last conference with Saturday sessions, however, saw only two or three additional people come and register for the weekend. Some suggest that a shorter conference is the answer, while others wonder if it would be worth traveling long distances for a two-day gathering. One of our directors thinks that a longer conference should be planned, with open afternoons for recreation or special presentations. What do you think?

The Nominating Committee made a valiant effort this year to contact all of their nominees prior to the conference, but they were still unable to submit names for all of the vacancies. It struck me that certain districts provided many names for consideration, while there were no names from other districts, implying that perhaps some members of the committee did not do enough homework. Hopefully each new committee member will contact all of the congregations and pastors in their district and come to the meetings with solid possible candidates, and that everyone elected to office will fulfill his/her duties or resign in time to be replaced.

My wife, Gloria, and I are grateful to our AFLC family for the many cards, notes, and gifts that we have received, and for the reception on Tuesday following the evening service. Contrary to the message on many cards, however, it is important to correct the impression that I am retiring. (What makes you think that I'm old enough to retire?) Instead, I announced to the conference that I have accepted a call to serve full-time on the faculty of our AFLC Schools, beginning in January, and am looking forward to entering this new open door for service. In my report to the conference I said that there are many things that will be missed, but we sincerely ask that one thing will not be missing: the wonderful prayer support that Gloria and I have received during the past 15 years.



Do you **LOVE** children?

I see little children who have never known a father, never felt his strong arms holding, never knelt to hear him pray. I see little children who have never known a mother, never heard her loving whisper, brushing tears and cares away. I see little children bruised in body and in spirit, helpless children who are battered by the people they love best."

The words of this song depict the reality of many of the children who come regularly to our churches in Brazil. It's exciting to see the kids flocking to church every time the doors are open, yet we realize what a huge challenge we face in helping them feel loved and leading them to Jesus.

Our goal is to train children in the Word of God so that they may break the chain of sin and escape the terrible consequences of irresponsibility, drugs, drinking and sexual immorality that have surrounded and shaped them in their early years. The barriers sometimes seem insurmountable, but we rejoice in the certainty that our gracious heavenly Father is extending His arms to each one saying, "Let them come to Me and forbid them not!"

Pray for us as we reach out to love these children and give them hope for a better future. Perhaps through them we can also influence their families with the message of salvation and new life. We want to be Christ's arms reaching out to those who so need to be loved, nurtured and disciplined according to God's Word.

Does anybody love the children? Yes, Someone loves the children.

The Abels are career AFLC missionaries serving in Curitiba, Brazil.

Have you read a good book?

Read any good books lately? The October issue of the "Lutheran Ambassador" will be a book review issue. If you've been impacted by a certain book recently or in the past, and would be open to writing about it, please contact the editors. The deadline for the issue is Aug. 27. Contact Editor Craig Johnson by email: craigj@teleport.com, or phone (503) 325-2925; or Managing Editor Ruth Gunderson by email at ruthg@afcl.org, or phone (763) 545-5631.

Fund-raiser hopes to pay off construction debt

AFLC Schools has launched a plan to help pay off the remaining debt on Heritage Hall within four years. The school is looking for 400 people to commit to giving \$1,000 (\$250 yearly) to retire the debt. As of June, \$400,413 remains on the building's mortgage. A commitment form is available on the school's web site at www.flbs.org.

2007 Summer Institute slated for Aug. 6-10

The Summer Institute of Theology is scheduled for Aug. 6-10 at the campus of the AFLC Schools, Plymouth, Minn. Classes offered include "Studies in the Minor Prophets," by Pastor Jerry Holmaas; "The Doctrine of Baptism," by Dr. Francis Monseth; "Studies in the Book of Revelation," by Pastor Jerry Moan; "Highlights in American Lutheran History," by Pastor Robert Lee; and "History of Preaching," by guest instructor Dr. Steven Lombardo. For more information, contact the AFLTS office at (763) 544-9501.

Golf Scramble Aug. 6

The AFLBS Golf Scramble will be held Aug. 6 at Cedar Creek Golf Course, Albertville, Minn. The tournament raises funds to help AFLBS students pay for tuition. For more information on the event, email lyleg@afcl.org.

Reinke family donates plane to FLAPS

Members of the Richard and Edna Reinke family donated a 1976 Cessna 182 airplane to FLAPS (Free Lutheran Association of Pilot Supporters). The plane was dedicated during a special service at the recent Annual Conference of the AFLC.

Originally purchased in 1977 by Richard Reinke, who passed away in 2003, the airplane will now be used by FLAPS in mission work, which was the intention of the Reinke family. FLAPS is the aviation mission arm of the AFLC.

Members of the Reinke family presented the airplane to representatives from the AFLC and FLAPS April 27 in Hebron, Neb. Edna Reinke is a member of Abiding Word Lutheran, Deshler, Neb. Currently, the airplane will be used by FLAPS to transport AFLC staff and personnel around the country as they conduct ministry activities. The use of privately owned airplanes has



Members of the Richard and Edna Reinke family stand beside the Cessna 182 they donated to FLAPS in April. Pictured are (from left) Edna Reinke and her children: Russ Reinke, Sandi Wendell, Robert Reinke, Jennifer Reinke, and Pat Schardt.

resulted in an increased productivity and greater efficiency for the AFLC staff.

Since 1999, the AFLC has used privately owned airplanes as tools to conduct ministry around the country. FLAPS has also been involved

in ministry in southwest Alaska.

The Cessna 182 joins a fleet of two other airplanes owned by FLAPS: a Cherokee Six dedicated in 2001 and a SX-300 dedicated in 2003.



Tom Johnston (left) of Thrivent Financial presents a grant check for \$80,000 to the AFLC for church-wide ministries. The grant monies will be split between Youth Ministries, Parish Education, AFLTS, the WMF and Evangelism. Pastor Elden Nelson (right) accepted the check on behalf of the AFLC.

Ortley congregation celebrates 100

Members of Ortley Free Lutheran, Ortley, S.D., celebrated the church's 100th year on June 17. Pictured are pastors who have served at Ortley Free Lutheran:

(from left) Pastor Michael Peterson, Pastor John Rieth, Pastor Brian Davidson, Pastor Roy Johnson, Pastor Jon Benson, Pastor David Johnson and Pastor Raynard Huglen.



Prayer resolutions from conference

"We praise God for His blessing and leadership by providing Pastor Lee to us during these past 15 years, and ask His continued blessings upon Pastor Lee and Gloria as they pray through their future opportunities."

"We continue to pray for God to move on the hearts of faithful men as our opportunities for ministry continue to grow."

"We thank God for the ministry of Institutional and Military Chaplains, and we pray for their continued freedom to proclaim the name of Jesus."

"We encourage AFLC congregations and individuals to pray for, utilize, and support the ministry of the ARC (Association Retreat Center)."

"We encourage our congregations to prayerfully consider providing scholarship support and placement for the seminary interns."

"We thank God for His provision and pray for the resources to adequately maintain and repair existing (AFLC Schools) campus facilities."

"We encourage the AFLC to pray for and faithfully support their (Central Mexican Lutheran Church) new president, Rev. Milton Flores."

"Be it further resolved that congregations and individuals pray and financially support this distance education ministry through contributions to the World Missions office, understanding that these are above and beyond the approved budget."

"Be it resolved that our congregations be reminded of the need to support the Evangelism Commission with prayer and financial gifts specifically designated to that ministry."

"We thank and praise God for the new Catechism edition, and pray that it will be of spiritual benefit to generations to come."

"We prayerfully encourage the updating and development of additional Sunday school materials, and be it further resolved, that our congregations make this a matter of prayer."

"We pray for Kevin (Olson) and his family as they begin their new ministry in World Missions."

"Whereas Pastor Jason Holt has accepted the call as Youth Ministries Director, ... we pray for the Holts as they begin this time of transition."

"Be it resolved to uphold our youth through prayer and supportive relationships and encourage creative ways for our congregations to strengthen the family."

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Brenda Stilley, AFLBS women's resident head, has resigned her position. AFLBS is currently accepting applications for the position. Visit their web site at www.flbs.org for more information.

Pastor Glen Larsen, who has served the North Dakota congregations of Living Faith Free Lutheran, Larimore, and Middle Grove Lutheran, Mekinok, has resigned and accepted a call to serve a congregation in Stuttgart, Ark.

Pastor Robert Lee has accepted a call to serve as full-time faculty at the AFLC Schools beginning January 2008. His term as AFLC president ends in September.

Pastor Elden Nelson, elected as the fourth president of the AFLC, will be installed at 7 p.m. Sept. 23 at the AFLC Schools chapel, Plymouth, Minn. His term will run three years.

Annual Conference attendees participated with members of **Living Word Free Lutheran**, Sioux Falls, S.D., to dedicate a piece of property for their future building site in Sioux Falls. The congregation currently meets in a local school. The dedication service was held on June 14 at Sioux Falls Christian School following the laymen's service.

► AFLC Memorials for June

AFLT

Mike Ribstein
Erwin Barstad
David Langland
Richard Anderson
Lyle Grieme

Home Missions

Leone Flaa
Margaret Hall

WMF

Bjon Lofthus
Marvin Sheldon
Kermit Esterby

Jeanette Haarstad
Jenny Hunt
Earny Ronningen
Ernest Johnson
Ervin Tvinnereim
Ingeborg Bayless

World Missions

Alf Berg
... in honor of

Home Missions

Pastor Robert Lee

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- June 30, 2007

FUND	TOTAL (Subsidy)	REC'D IN JUNE	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$361,225	\$27,920	\$202,352	56
Youth Ministries	73,114	3,154	32,308	44
Evangelism	108,236	8,157	51,602	48
Parish Education	107,052	4,969	36,932	34
Seminary	216,097	17,770	100,181	46
Bible School	343,545	32,325	165,619	48
Home Missions	316,413	31,902	144,922	46
World Missions	287,808	14,711	107,525	37
Personal Support	407,198	34,514	249,288	61
TOTALS	\$2,220,688	\$180,725	\$1,090,728	49
TOTALS 2006	\$1,994,798	\$211,585	\$994,837	50

Goal 50%

These are the Annual Conference-approved budgets but do not reflect all the financial needs of the departments. Contact the individual departments for further information.

He is ENOUGH

I have a college friend whose father was a pastor in a highly structured church synod. In that group orders come from the top regarding where a pastor should serve and when he should move. When I described to him how the AFLC works, with its emphasis on the freedom of the local congregation and relying on the Holy Spirit's leading, it sounded like an invitation to chaos to him. He would think our way of determining the president of our church body is really crazy.

We can take a lesson from our recent annual conference. Even though it might seem like a foolish system to some, it works.



Pastor Craig Johnson

As we began our conference, there appeared to be no real consensus as to who our next president would be. No nominees were presented ahead of time. The first ballot was the nominating ballot. Nearly 50 pastors were nominated. Many declined, but we still had close to 20 names on the second ballot. As we began voting on Wednesday it was tempting to

wonder if we'd be done in time for Sunday worship services.

When the results of the second ballot were announced, all those with less than 10 percent of the votes were dropped, and only two names remained. Pastor Elden Nelson was then elected on the third ballot, long before Wednesday's supper.

We didn't have it all planned out — but God did. Trusting in the Lord to guide us and bring us to a united decision worked. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."

Our election procedures force us to trust in the Lord. We don't have a great structure or system to lean on. We are a spiritual movement. If God's Spirit is not present and leading us, it will be chaos.

The founders of the free congregation movement had a vision for a church body that would be forced to depend on God in all things. We have nothing else to fall back on. It

all comes apart if God isn't involved.

We didn't have position papers of nominees to analyze. That gave us more time to pray. We didn't listen to campaign speeches. Instead we spent time in the Bible, listening to God speak through His Word.

Not only in the election of a church body president, but in all of life we should live without a backup plan. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart."

Numerous times I've heard people say, "If I didn't have the Lord, I don't know what I'd do." That's the proper ap-

We didn't have position papers. That gave us more time to pray. We didn't listen to campaign speeches. Instead we spent time in the Bible ...

proach to life. It's an admission of need and an attitude of trust. It's the attitude the Psalmist had: "Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge. I said to the Lord, 'You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing'" (Psalm 16:1, 2). He was also able to say: "I will praise the Lord who counsels me; ... I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken" (Psalm 16:7, 8).

Take, for example, my trip down a zip line. I was high up a tree, about ready to slide off the platform and go flying through the air. The supervisor said he wanted to check the cable one more time. I told him I thought that was a good idea. That cable was the only thing preventing me from crashing to the ground, which looked a long way down at that moment.

We have only one cable holding us up in life. Other things — possessions, abilities, other people — can't keep us safe. All we have that we can truly depend upon is the crucified and risen Lord Jesus. But He is enough. Our cable is secure when our trust is in Christ.

building the base

BY LARRY WALKER



Secret WISDOM

You've probably heard of "The Da Vinci Code." It's a novel based on an ancient heresy (false teaching) known as *Gnosticism*. The Gnostics were a group in the early church who taught that there was a "secret wisdom" hidden from ordinary Christians. Only the very wise could possess this knowledge, and they had to protect it and keep it safe. These "elite" were supposed to have a special standing in the Kingdom of God.

In my translation work for the Georg Sverdrup Society, I often come across a Norwegian term, *børnelærdom* (pronounced, more or less, BURN-a-LAIR-dum). This was an important concept to the founders of the Lutheran Free Church, the AFLC's precursor.

What Sverdrup and the other LFC founders meant by *børnelærdom* was elementary, simple Christian beliefs. The kind of truths you can teach a small child in Sunday school; truths that he or she can understand. Sverdrup believed that anyone who possessed correct *børnelærdom* was as qualified as any pastor to share in the work of the church. That person might not be suited for every possible Christian ministry, but he/she had full authority in the Holy Spirit to actively participate in the work.

All through history there have been people like the Gnostics who thought the gospel of Christ and His Cross too simple. Repent, believe and be saved? That might be

enough for the poor and the uneducated, but I'm smart! I'm sophisticated! Surely there's some special first class section for me and my friends!

Jesus had no time for that kind of thinking. He said to His disciples, "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (Mark 10:15). In the Lord's Kingdom, being sophisticated and wise in the ways of the world is not only no help, it's a positive handicap.

The AFLC was never meant to be an impressive sight in the eyes of the world. When we gather for our Annual Conferences, the paparazzi aren't waiting to snap pictures of the celebrities and opinion makers who show up. It's more along the lines of what the apostle Paul wrote in I Corinthians 1:26-27: "For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise ..." Sverdrup believed the Holy Spirit is eager to do a work through His church. Our job is just to give Him *rom*, (room, scope) to operate. To get out of His way, in fact.

We don't need secret wisdom. We have enough trouble mastering kids' stuff.

Walker is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn.