

THE LUTHERAN 

AUGUST 2012

# AMBASSADOR

THE 50TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## JUBILEE

PSALM 118:23-24

# Cultivating community

BY RACHELLE KLEMMME

**W**hat is AFLC Annual Conference? I would have a hard time defining it, since I have only attended once in my adult life, and that was for WMF rally only. While a lot of people who go are pastors—and as a pastor's kid I got to go along for the ride several times—anyone who is able to take the time off and travel can attend. And because almost all the conferences I've been to were as a kid, I associate them with friendships and family memories more than resolutions or workshops.

I remember going to the Association Retreat Center of Wisconsin in the early '90s. While the adults were doing whatever adult stuff they had, the kids had vacation Bible school and "Mount Ararat" by the artificial lake. We went again to the ARC as a family in 1995 and somehow all six of us managed to be stuffed in the small camper trailer. After they screened a promotional video for the conference at Warm Beach in Stanwood, Wash., I was already excited for 1996.

That road trip from Minnesota to the West Coast, taking in all the sights along the highway, camping in the forests and mountain areas along the way, is one of my favorite childhood memories. When we actually got to our destination, we all got sick, but recovered in time to at least meet some people.

In 1998, the conference was held at Red Wing, Minn. I was excited to be just old enough for youth group, rather than vacation Bible school.

In 2000, the small teen group at the ARC got to go to



Valleyfair in the Twin Cities and a Twins game. My friend, Hannah, and I bonded over writing and mutual geeky interests. We were acquaintances as kids from previous conferences, but this time we were intentional about staying in contact, and still are.

The 2001 conference was in Williston, N.D., before the oil boom. Amazingly, at that time, it was just another quiet mid-sized town. We made another family vacation of it and saw the Badlands.

The next time I was at a conference was as an adult in 2010 when my mom and sister and I went to the WMF sessions together on the AFLC Schools campus in Minneapolis. It was later that same week when the EF4 tornado hit my hometown of Wadena, Minn.

Regardless of age, what I've heard people enjoy about the conferences are the friendships they cultivate there. Everyone has their own stories and memories, and people get to appreciate each other's familiar faces. Having community is not just fluff or a side benefit—it is an integral part of the Christian faith, and the conferences are one way to cultivate community. We are all branches of the vine (John 15:5) and diverse members of one body (I Corinthians 12). The "communion of saints" is part of the creed recited every Sunday in many AFLC churches, and I believe it applies to informal fellowship as well as regular worship and the sacraments.

*Klemme is from Wadena, Minn., and attends Zion Free Lutheran Church.*

August 2012 >>

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR vol. 50, 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](mailto:luthamb@afcl.org).

**Subscription rates:**  
\$19 a year, Group Rate, U.S.  
\$20 a year, Individual, U.S.  
\$22 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.

The one thing that stands out over the past 50 years is that we have been urged to fix our eyes on Jesus.

—Pastor Timothy Skramstad  
Chairman, AFLC Coordinating Committee

[ There is no place in the United States of America ... that is not in desperate need of Jesus! Do you see the people Jesus sees? What are you and your congregation doing to reach the unchurched for Jesus? ]

—Pastor James Rasmussen  
Director of AFLC Evangelism

Let's be careful so that we do not spend too much time looking at the past that we do not see God's direction for the future of all the ministries of the AFLC.

—Pastor Tonnes Pollestad,  
Director of Development

So much of what youth face today is broken—their friendships, families, and themselves. Where can one go to find hope and healing in the midst of all this brokenness? The answer is Jesus Christ, the One who was broken for us.

—Pastor Brett Boe, AFLC Youth Board

Lovingkindness (*Chesed*) is the consistent, ever-faithful, relentless, constantly pursuing, lavish, extravagant, unrestrained, furious love of God.

—Author unknown  
Quoted in the opening message on June 12



# ANNUAL CONFERENCE





# JUBILEE

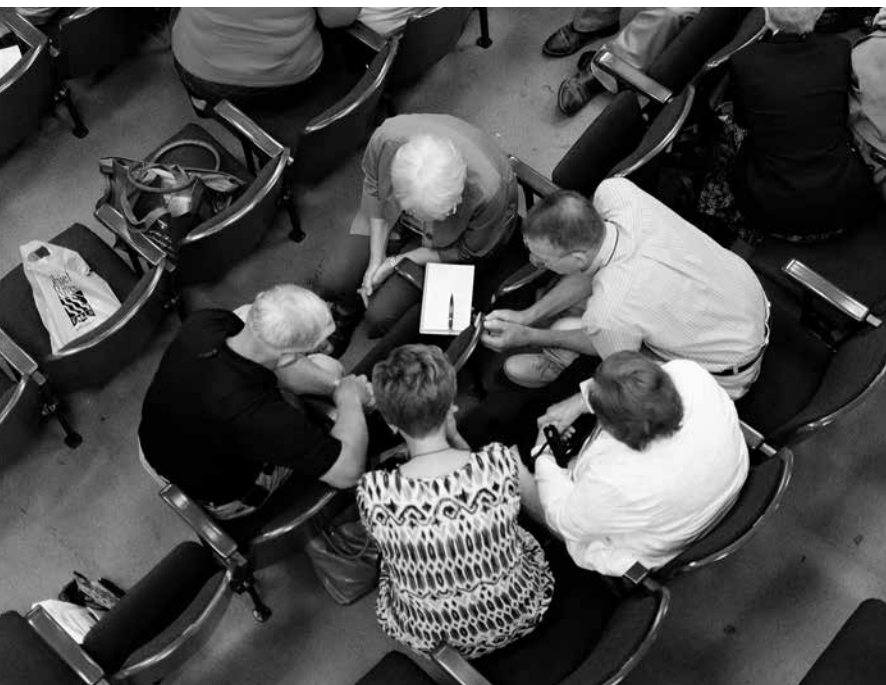
PSALM 118:23-24

By Pastor Robert Lee

The 50th year had special significance for the people of Israel. It was the jubilee year, a season of celebration, announced on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, by the blowing of the shofar, an instrument made from a ram's horn. Thus it was a solemn and festive opening for the AFLC's golden anniversary annual conference, our jubilee year, as Jerry Nelson (Dassel, Minn.) blew on a shofar acquired for the occasion.



The dates were June 12-15, and the place was the Lincoln High School auditorium, in Thief River Falls, the northwestern Minnesota community where the organizational meeting of the AFLC was held in 1962. It was a time to become better acquainted with our heritage. The host congregation, Our Saviour's Lutheran, provided an excellent historical booklet with photos in the conference packets, and Pastor Raynard Huglen, Newfolden, Minn., pioneer AFLC pastor who led the daily prayer hours, included memories of our beginnings in his meditations. Loiell Dyrud, Thief



ABOVE: Throughout the Lincoln High School auditorium, groups huddled in prayer. OPPOSITE: Scott Erickson, Badger, Minn., takes time to pray during the devotional hour with Pastor Frank Cherney (left), Jamestown, N.D., and Jordan Langness (top), of Beulah, N.D.

River Falls, also reminded the conference that exactly 100 years ago the Lutheran Free Church held its annual conference in Thief River Falls.

The opening service was led by the host pastor, Greg Schram. Special music was provided by a conference choir and a trio consisting of Dr. Francis Monseth, Pastor John Rieth, and Roger Strom. In the early days of the AFLC, the three men traveled among AFLC congregations during the summer months, together with several other young men. Speaker for the evening was the undersigned, past president of the AFLC, and one who was there in 1962. The message was from Psalm 118:23-24, the conference's theme verses, calling the 700-800 people present to jubilee joy.

Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC president, presided during the conference sessions, together with the AFLC secretary, Pastor Brian Davidson, who was re-elected to another one-year term. President Nelson announced that this will be his final year in office and that a new president will be elected in 2013.

The vice-presidential election surprisingly became a major item of business. Pastor Michael Brandt, the incumbent, failed to receive the necessary 75 percent vote to be re-elected and removed his name from consideration after eight ballots were cast. Pastor Peter Franz, Maple Grove, Minn., was elected on the tenth ballot to serve a one-year term.

Seven congregations were officially welcomed: New Hope Lutheran, Jamestown, N.D.; Amazing Grace Lutheran, Mitchell, S.D.; First Lutheran, Ellendale, Minn.; United Lutheran, Manteca, Calif.; Mission Lutheran, Swink/La Junta, Colo.; Hope Lutheran, Enderlin, N.D.; and St. Paul's Lutheran, Mansura, La. It was also announced that four congregations were removed at their own request.

In reading the report of the Coordinating Committee, its chairman, Dr. Tim Skramstad, announced that a 50th anniversary book of memories and reflections will soon be available, and that Pastor David Peterson, who serves the Landisburg-Loysville, Pa., parish has been appointed to a part-time position as the AFLC East Coast Information Contact.

Special scrutiny was given to a resolution calling for the termination of the Stewardship Board, a committee whose members reportedly arrived at the conclusion that its work was adequately covered by the respective ministries. Since the board cannot be abolished without a change to the Rules for Work, the resolution was amended to call for further study of its mission and vision.

## AFLC SCHOOLS

Progress continues in seeking accreditation for the seminary and Bible school through the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS).

Three committees (Prayer, Building, and Finance) have been formed to pursue the next phase of Vision (the building ministry of the AFLC Schools), construction of a multipurpose auditorium/gymnasium and a new dormitory.

Pastor Connely Dyrud resigned as director of the







## ANNUAL CONFERENCE



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: Roger Strom, Ashby, Minn., Dr. Francis Monseth, Rogers, Minn., and Pastor John Rieth, Grand Forks, N.D., sing during the opening service. Pastor Raynard Huglen, Newfolden, Minn., leads the prayer hour. Donald Hansen, McIntosh, Minn., talks with Phyllis Nikunen, Richfield, Minn. Jen Thorson, Larimore, N.D., and Samantha Norby, Enderline, N.D., talk during coffee break. Pastor Robert Lee, Crystal, Minn., was the speaker at the opening service of the annual conference. Pastor Scott Stroud, Salinas, Calif., takes notes during a session.





Ministry Training Institute (MTI), and Kyle Dunham as Food Services manager.

## WORLD MISSIONS

India: Funds have been received through legacies to construct a new facility in Chirala to house the St. Paul's School, offices, chapel, medical clinic, children's home, guest rooms, etc.

Brazil: Pastor Jonathan and Tamba Abel and their family have returned to the field after their furlough, and the missionaries report a growing unity among the congregations.

Mexico: Pastor Todd and Barb Schierkolk and their family have prolonged a furlough in the U.S. due to the continued violence, hoping to return to the field in September

Uganda: Pastor Nate and Rhoda Jore and their family are furloughing in the U.S., and the training of pastors and leaders continues with the help of two short-term assistants, Micah Berger and Andrew Olson.

Ambassador Institute: Development of the oral curriculum continues under the direction of Pastor Kevin Olson, and is already utilized in India, Uganda, and Brazil, with possible expansion of the ministry to at least seven other countries.

Ecuador: Justo and Tricia Pillman have departed for Ecuador to begin mission work there.

## HOME MISSIONS

Mission congregations receiving subsidy: Naknek, Alaska; Enderlin and Jamestown, N.D.; Hastings and Brainerd, Minn.; Springfield, Mo.; Madison, S.D.; Reading and Boyertown, Pa.

Personnel changes: Lavon and Fern Bohling were honored by a reception after the Wednesday evening service, in grateful recognition of his years serving as assistant director of FLAPS. Christie Friestad is stepping down as administrative assistant as she and her husband, Chad, await the birth of their first baby. Loren Tungseth, Fergus Falls, Minn., accepted a part-time call to serve as director of Resource Development.

## PARISH EDUCATION

The history of AFLC parish education was presented to the conference in the form of a skit by the board members and director.

A new daily devotional book, *Threads of Grace*, published in commemoration of the AFLC's golden anniversary, arrived in time for sale at the conference.

## EVANGELISM

The Commission on Evangelism has sponsored several Red Thread Retreats and continues to offer Share Jesus and Friend to Friend training. The annual Rekindle the Fire day for AFLC pastors and wives was held on the Monday preceding the conference, with Pastor Mike Brandt as the speaker.

## YOUTH

The board sponsored the youth workers' retreat in January, together with the biennial FLY Federation



Pastor Terry Culler, Hagerstown, Md., speaks to a resolution on the conference floor.

Council, as well as hosting FLY Beyond (the former Youth Leadership Conference) in July. Youth Ministry Director Jason Holt and the board are working with the FLY Committee to plan the national youth convention for 2013 in Estes Park, Colo., under the theme, "Broken" from Isaiah 53.

The 2013 Annual Conference will be held at the Association Retreat Center (ARC) near Osceola, Wis.; and Valley City, N.D., will host the 2014 Annual Conference.

*Lee is the editor of The Lutheran Ambassador.*

# ELECTION RESULTS



## OFFICERS

### Vice President →

- (One pastor, one-year term)  
Pastor Peter Franz,  
Maple Grove, Minn.



### Secretary

- (One-year term)  
Pastor Brian  
Davidson, Dickinson, N.D.

## COLLOQUY COMMITTEE

- (Five pastors, one-year terms)  
Pastor Herb Hoff, Salinas, Calif.  
Pastor Mark Richardson, Wahpeton, N.D.  
Pastor Wade Mobley, Sioux Falls, S.D.  
Pastor Micah Hjermstad, Ishpeming, Mich.  
Pastor Walter Johnson, Shakopee, Minn.

## BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

### Coordinating Committee

- (Two layman, five-year terms)

Vint Bruflat, Mesa, Ariz.

Ron Strand, →  
Wahpeton, N.D.



### AFLC Schools Board of Trustees

- (One layman, five-year term)  
Steve Jankord, Surprise, Ariz.

### Board of Publications & Parish Education →

- (One layman, five-year term)  
Clara Gunderson,  
Cambridge, Minn.



### Benefits Board

- (One layman, five-year term)  
Dennis Fronning, Battle Lake, Minn.

### Youth Board

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

### Home Missions Committee →

- (One layman, five-year term)  
Ron Jorgenson,  
Beulah, N.D.



### Budget Analysis

- (One layman, three-year term)  
Bob Dietsche, Osceola, Wis.
- (One layman, two-year term)  
David Borg, Maple Grove, Minn.

### FLAPS Board of Managers

- (One layman, five-year term)  
Dave Mattson, Sioux Falls, S.D.
- (One pastor, five-year term)  
Pastor Mark Antal, Park River, N.D.

### Stewardship Board

- (One layman, five-year term)  
Ruth Antal, Park River, N.D.
- (One pastor, three-year)  
Pastor Wayne Hjermstad, Bruce, S.D.

### Bay Broadcasting

- (One layman, three-year term)  
Wayne Olson, Blue Earth, Minn.

### World Missions Committee →

- (One pastor, five-year term)  
Pastor David  
Nelson,  
Ontonagon, Mich.



### Commission on Evangelism

- (One layman, five-year term)  
Eldon Hesterberg, Gifford, Ill.

### Not available

- ARC Board (one pastor, five-year term)
- ARC Corporation (Ten terms of five years)



## CORPORATIONS

### Schools Corporation

- (Ten terms of five years each)

David Borg, Maple Grove, Minn.  
Pastor Dana Coyle, Ottawa, Ill.  
Pastor Seth Forness, Glyndon, Minn.  
Pastor Martin Horn, Kenyon, Minn.  
Wanda Jacobson, Brooklyn Park, Minn.  
Erling Langness, Ishpeming, Mich.  
Dr. Daniel Mundfrom, Las Cruces, N.M.  
John Presteng, Grafton, N.D.  
Pastor Eric Rasmussen, Fergus Falls, Minn.  
James Rolf, Brandon, Minn.

### Missions Corporation

- (Twenty terms of five years each)

Pastor Steve Carlson, Pittsburgh, Pa.  
Joel Forness, Wahpeton, N.D.  
Kenneth Graham, Camarillo, Calif.  
Pastor Richard Gunderson, Cambridge, Minn.  
Barbara Gustafson, Apache Junction, Ariz.  
David Handsaker, Radcliffe, Iowa  
Pastor Tim Hinrichs, Mankato, Minn.  
Kevin Hoops, Byron, Neb.  
Steve Jameson, Earlville, Ill.  
Pastor Craig Johnson, Astoria, Ore.  
Pastor Tim Johnson, Pipestone, Minn.  
Dr. Robert Kohl, Brookings, S.D.  
Pastor Richard Larson, Ortonville, Minn.  
David Mattson, Sioux Falls, S.D.  
Pastor Jerry Moan, Corcoran, Minn.  
Pastor Henry Mohagen, Reva, S.D.  
Marlow Nash, Colfax, N.D.  
Tim Rolf, McIntosh, Minn.  
Vernon Russum, Grafton, N.D.  
Pastor Tony Stockman, Madison, S.D.

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE

**Central Tri-State:** Jan Strand, Kenyon, Minn.

**Eastern:** Pastor Tom Olson, Newark, Ohio

**Eastern North Dakota:** Gene Finstrom,  
Buxton, N.D.

**Illinois:** David Osland, Dekalb, Ill.

**Lake Superior:** Ken Sletten, Duluth, Minn.

**Minneapolis:** Mary Pollestad, Andover, Minn.

**Nebraska/Kansas/Colorado:** Lavon Bohling,  
Inman, Kan.

**North Central Minnesota:** Roger Tollefson,  
Beltrami, Minn.

**Northern Michigan:** Nancy Langness,  
Ishpeming, Mich.

**Northwestern Minnesota:** Corrine Mattson,  
Greenbush, Minn.

**Pacific Northwest:** Pastor Cal Willard, Everett,  
Wash.

**South Central:** Pastor Rich Ramsbacher,  
Springfield, Mo.

**South Dakota:** Pastor Dave Skordahl,  
Pipestone, Minn.

**Southwest Central Minnesota:** Pastor Gary  
Jorgenson, Brainerd, Minn.

**Southwestern:** Pastor Paul Kneeland,  
Sahuarita, Ariz.

**Western North Dakota/Eastern  
Montana:** Randy Pederson, Tioga, N.D.



## 2013 COMMITTEES

### Committee No. 1

*(Administration)*

Pastor John Brennan, Melvin, Ill.  
Scott Ducote, Meade, Okla.  
Joel Erickson, Oslo, Minn.  
Pastor Todd Erickson, Roseau, Minn.  
Emil Hass, Valley City, N.D.

### Committee No. 2

*(Schools)*

Pastor Jason Gudim, Crystal, Minn.  
Pastor Dennis Gray, Newfolden, Minn.  
David Haugen, Pelican Rapids, Minn.  
Brian Henderson, Ellsworth, Iowa  
Joel Nash, Waconia, Minn.

### Committee No. 3

*(Missions and Evangelism)*

Pastor John Amundson, New Leipzig, N.D.  
Ed Cafoncelli, Reading, Pa.  
Pastor Joe Faldet, St. James, Minn.  
Mark Keller, St. Francis, Kan.  
Glen Larson, Fosston, Minn.

### Committee No. 4

*(Publications and Parish Education)*

Pastor Paul Kneeland, Sahuarita, Ariz.  
Erling Langness, Ishpeming, Mich.  
Matt Olson, Minneapolis, Minn.  
Matt Rieniets, Tioga, N.D.  
Pastor Scott Stroud, Salinas, Calif.

### Committee No. 5

*(Stewardship and Pensions)*

Leo Brackel, Mott, N.D.  
Nathan Dalager, Argyle, Minn.  
Pastor Jerry Peterson, Oklahoma City  
Pastor Marc Rakow, Valley City, N.D.  
Mark Gustafson, Apache Junction, Ariz.



# *Thus far has the* **LORD** *helped us*

BY MARY ANN WARD

**W**MF Day was the perfect time to remember and celebrate our theme for the day, “Thus Far Has the Lord Helped Us” taken from I Samuel 7:12. Nearly 300 ladies gathered June 12 in Thief River Falls, Minn., to listen to speakers and to fellowship together. Using the facilities of the neighboring Evangelical Free Church, members of Our Saviour’s Lutheran, the host congregation, did a wonderful job of preparing and welcoming us. We were blessed to have the Ambassadors, a summer ministry team from the Association Free Lutheran Bible School in Plymouth, Minn., lead us in music.

Following registration, the morning events included a devotional time on the theme verse, shared by Cheryl Aakre, Stephen, Minn. Our 2012 Bible study writer, Faylin Myhre, of Abercrombie, N.D., led the Bible study. She challenged us to think of what God has done for us. Laurel Johnson, Cambridge, Minn., led a meaningful memorial service assisted by Joyce Harris, of Mora, Minn., with Avis Dyrud, of Newfolden, Minn., on the piano. It was a special time of remembering those dear ladies who have gone on to be with the Lord. JoAnn Strandlund, of Roseau, Minn., and Arlene Jensen, of Greenbush, Minn., shared a beautiful musical number during our offering.

The business meeting was held prior to breaking for lunch. The secretary’s report was given by Phyllis Peterson, of Portland, N.D., the treasurer’s report was submitted by Lois Grothe, of Astoria, Ore., and Lorilee Mundfrom, Beresford, S.D., gave the president’s report. Resolutions were read and accepted. Lynn Wellumson, of Williston, N.D., was voted in as the new president of the WMF and Barbara Strand, of Wahpeton, N.D., was elected as communications secretary.

Following the luncheon, the afternoon continued with three workshops. Karen Knudsvig, of Buxton, N.D., presented a workshop with a theme of “SPOONS.” She used the word to show how mankind was made to worship and serve Jesus. The letters stood for service, patience, obedience, objectivity, and nurturing. Sarah Nelson, of Ontonagon, Mich., shared on the ways she has experienced God’s timing, ways, and answers. We enjoyed hearing from Home Missions Pastor Jeremy and Lacey Crowell on their work in Alaska.

The day closed with a banquet, and Pastor Elden Nelson installed our new officers. We were blessed to have two numbers performed by a sign choir. Many of our past presidents gave a greeting and shared how the Lord blessed them as they served as WMF president.

The following morning, June 13, approximately 100 ladies attended the WMF breakfast. Pam Olson, of Savage, Minn., shared with us under the theme, “It’s All I Got.” It was good to hear some testimonies of her mission trips and how the Lord has blessed them.

The WMF Mission Festival service was held on the evening of June 13. Leading the service was WMF President Lorilee Mundfrom. Once again, the Ambassadors led the congregation in praise and worship. Pastor Nate Jore, AFLC missionary to Uganda, brought the message. Greetings via video were shared from other AFLC missionaries. Past and present missionaries and international guests who were present were acknowledged. Our service closed with the challenge from the hymn, “Hark, The Voice of Jesus Calling.”

*Ward, Ottawa, Ill., is the communications secretary for the National WMF.*







CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: Women attending the WMF Day take notes during a session. Karen Knudsvig led an afternoon workshop on the theme of SPOONS. Women listen in during Karen Knudsvig's workshop. Pastor Jeremy and Lacey Crowell talk about their mission work in Naknek, Alaska. A sign language choir from Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn., perform during the evening banquet. Sarah Nelson, Ontonagon, Mich., leads an afternoon workshop. Women take notes during Sarah Nelson's workshop. Pastor Nate Jore, an AFLC missionary to Uganda, was the featured speaker during the Mission Festival Service.



Hi Dad,

I guess when you are reading this you will be somewhere in the middle of your retreat weekend. It brings back memories to thinking of how our family often spent Saturday nights driving to sing for people on these retreats at supertime. I hope you are finding your time away to be enjoyable and as spiritually fulfilling as it has always been in the past.

Mom told me the general theme of the weekend is "knowing yourself, knowing Jesus, and going out and telling others." I feel like some of this letter should be devoted to expressing the role that you, as my Dad, have played in my spiritual life.

It is funny how, looking back, I realize many of my memories revolve around church. Sundays were spent going to Sunday school and church, while summers meant vacation Bible school and the always anticipated church yard sale. Christmas meant not just getting together with family, but also participating in the Christmas play and helping decorate the church tree. Church for us was not just a place we attended once a week, or on holidays, but the place where we engaged in most of our extracurricular activities. When I went to Germany as an exchange student, members of the church wrote to me as often as my friends did. In essence, the church was another part of my extended family.

Back then I knew that all of my friends were as involved in church as we were. However, it is really now, as an adult, that I recognize the true impact that it has had on my life. At work as a school psychologist, I constantly come across children from homes with very little stability. This reminds me of how blessed I have been to have parents who were devoted to providing not only a stable home life but a religious base in which to grow and learn. I am sure that many of my feelings of security, along with my moral compass and value system, were developed through our involvement with the church.

As an adult, we both know I have not always attended church regularly. However, every time you came to visit me, you brought me to church, and provided suggestions. I never felt that you were pressuring or pushing me to join a church. You were just there with some words of encouragement. You have also been a constant source of spiritual guidance. If I have a question or concern about my faith life, my first thought is to call you.

Anyway, going back to the weekend theme, when we think of "telling others," our first thought goes to telling the masses, the unbelievers. Sometimes we forget that telling others can start, first and foremost, with those we love and care about the most. You have been "telling me" for as long as I can remember, both as a child and as an adult. I just want you to know how grateful I am and what a wonderful influence knowing Jesus has been in my life. I hope that one day, when Nick and I have children, we will be able to pass it on.

Your daughter,

Kate

Kate Clem is the daughter of Pastor Terry Culler who serves St. Paul's Free Lutheran Church in Leitersburg, Md. She and her husband live in North Myrtle Beach S.C.



# PASSING IT ON





# Why wear the uniform

BY CHAPLAIN MARK ANTAL

**W**hy should a man or woman wear the uniform of the United States military? Is it right for a Christian to bear arms against another human being? What branch of service is best? These questions, and many others, are asked by young men and women today.

Let me start off by saying that military service is not for everyone. The federal government does have some restrictions on who can serve. Some of these restrictions include age, weight, height, mental and physical aptitude, and medical restrictions. Before a Christian ever gets to a recruiter, he or she must first come to the Lord. Our motive in any vocation must be to bring glory to God. Psalm 119:35-36 says, "Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain." And Jeremiah 10:23 gives this advice, "I know, O LORD, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps."

When we know the Lord Jesus Christ, we want to serve Him. It matters not what vocation God calls us to. He can use His children in every walk of life. By His loving grace He has called us. By His grace He will equip us to serve Him in any vocation of His choosing. Consider Colossians 1:10-12, "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light."

In the military you will find every vocation from infantryman to cook, chaplain to medic, mechanic to lawyer. The question is, is God calling you to serve Him in uniform? Today there is no draft. Our military is based on voluntary selection. Don't join the military because you are motivated by the benefits. Don't join because you think it is the right thing to do. Don't join because of family tradition. Don't join to "see the world." If God has awakened your heart, He will lead you to serve Him in or out of uniform.

Is it right for a Christian to bear arms against another human being? One could quote the Fifth Commandment, "Thou shall not kill," and base all decisions on this one verse. If God is calling you to a life of peace, and this is your conscientious objection, then that is what God is saying to your heart. Follow Him. The Bible speaks of the Lord raising mighty armies for His name. The conquest of the Promised Land was not a non-violent journey. King David was a man after God's own heart, yet he was a mighty warrior.

I had to answer this question for myself while I was a private during basic training for the Army. As a young boy I was taught by my father to be a good marksman and hunter. Years later I found myself alone with my drill sergeant on the rifle range. I missed the first two targets (out of 40) and my instructor stopped the range. He asked me what my problem was. I told him that the targets looked like people. To this he said, "They are. Those targets represent people who want to kill you, all the people in your unit, and our way of life. Young man, you have a choice to make." He gave me a few minutes to think about my choice. When the range opened again I hit *all* of the remaining targets and qualified as an expert marksman. God gave me peace and a calm heart to serve Him, even with rifle in hand.

The last question is probably the easiest to answer of the three. Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, or Army, what should it be? God blessed me with 23 great years in the Army, but we need every branch of military service. It does not matter if you wear Navy blue, Marine olive green, Coast Guard blue, Air Force blue, or Army green. Serve the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

I am very thankful to have had a loving wife and family who supported me during my years of service. I was very thankful to serve the AFLC as a military chaplain. I am thankful to my Savior who has called me out of darkness into His glorious light.

*Antal, a member of the AFLC's Division for Institutional Chaplaincy, serves Victory Free Lutheran, Park River, N.D., and Grace Free Lutheran, Edinburg, N.D.*





# AUGUST 10 WATERS IN THE WILDERNESS

“He answered and said, ‘Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, I now see’” (John 9:25).

When Christ touches a life there will be a response. Some will turn away, but some will believe in Jesus and worship Him as God’s Son. This is the response that will begin a life of adventure in faith that goes on to new levels day by day. The man born blind showed a beautiful development as his faith was questioned. Faith cannot remain static; it must diminish or grow. The light that blinded the Pharisees showed the way to the blind man.

A growing faith will also be a witnessing faith. Yet it is so easy to become entangled in useless argument, even when it is based firmly on Bible truth. If we could only think about the blessings we

have received and let our hearts overflow—then it becomes easier to tell others! The man born blind gave this convincing testimony, “One thing I know, whereas I was blind, I now see!” This positive assurance of the touch of Christ in one’s life is the only irrefutable witness. Even miracles cannot reason away the testimony of one who knows what the Lord has done for him. A Christianity that results in a life-changing experience with God through personal faith is something against which even Satan has no argument. Is such a witness yours?

Leone Snipstead, now deceased, was the wife of former AFLC president Pastor Richard Snipstead.

*Waters in the Wilderness* is a daily devotional published by the AFLC Board of Parish Education in 1971 with Dr. Iver Olson, editor. All 365 meditations were contributed by AFLC members from many walks of life. “Here, they offer each a glass of cool and refreshing water each day to thirsting souls,” wrote Olson in the preface. Reprinted by permission. The volume is out of print.

# Olson will serve in Mongolia with Norwegian Lutheran Mission



**D**avid Olson, son of Pastor Terry and Jean Olson (Grafton, N.D.), has accepted a call to serve in Mongolia with the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM). A 1997 graduate of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, Olson most recently worked as an economic development director and then as a bank loan officer in Crosby, N.D.

The NLM's work in Mongolia consists of two humanitarian projects, working with children's rights and primary health-care. Olson will administer these projects in Khovd, located in western Mongolia.

Olson first became familiar with NLM and the Go Out Center while living in Norway from 1999 to 2001.

"The Lord blessed me with the fellowship I experienced there, and I grew tremendously in my faith because of what the Lord was doing within these mission organizations," wrote Olson. "The NLM is a private, conservative group with teachings very similar to the Association Free Lutheran Congregations. They hold the Scriptures as the inerrant Word of God and look to the Bible for direction regarding Christian faith and life. Their world mission work involves spreading the Word of God to unreached people groups. They

use humanitarian work like health projects, serving homeless children, and many other types of social projects to create opportunities to reach out to people groups with the gospel of Christ."

Olson visited Mongolia after returning to the United States and finishing a degree at the University of North Dakota. While there he contacted the NLM and the Hauge Foreign Mission to visit the work they were doing there,

"Even at that time I was searching for the Lord's leading to do mission work," said Olson. "I spent two weeks in Mongolia learning about what the Lord was doing there. It left a lasting impression."

While working in Crosby, Olson also visited Tanzania and Kenya, where he toured NLM projects.

"After returning I began to feel the Lord putting overseas mission work on my heart. I decided to contact the NLM to see if it was possible to work for them," said Olson.

The NLM has worked in Mongolia since 1994. The mission agency works in cooperation with local authorities in the areas of health, agriculture and social work. The two projects in Mongolia include *Strengthening Children's Rights*, which works to improve living conditions for growing children, and *Strengthening*

*Primary Health Care*, which focuses on improving the health and wellbeing of the local population.

According to Olson, Bible study groups that were first formed when NLM began work in Mongolia have now developed into local congregations with Mongolian leaders and pastors. The NLM supports these congregations by equipping leaders and helping them develop Christian literature in local languages.

"There is also effort under way with other Lutheran missionary groups to help establish a national Mongolian Evangelical Lutheran Church within the next few years," said Olson.

Olson is spending a few weeks this summer in Norway as he is commissioned for the work with NLM. He will leave this fall to begin work in Mongolia.

"I am very excited about the doors the Lord has opened for me in Mongolia," said Olson. "Please pray for the work in Mongolia. Pray that I point to Jesus in everything I do. Pray that the Lord will give me wisdom to make the right decisions during my service. Pray that all my preparations go well. Pray that I learn the language. Pray that I come in good contact with all the people of Mongolia and with the other missionaries. And finally that the Lord gives me strength in all that I do."



# Life in a house of death

BY PASTOR TODD SCHIERKOLK

If you were to drive by Ana's house you would think it was Christmas time because of the colored lights hanging on the front. But on closer inspection of the house you would quickly realize that there is no manger scene illuminated by the lights. Rather, a grotesque four-foot-high statue of a cloaked skeleton with glowing red eyes stands out front holding a sickle in its bony hand. Beside the glass-encased statue is a poster that reads, "In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit we commend ourselves to Saint Death."

Ana is in second grade and comes faithfully to our Tuesday Kid's Club. Recently she received a big calendar with a picture of Jesus praying on it as part of her Christmas gift during our outreach service. After Christmas vacation was over, Ana overheard a couple of kids who were asking if I was going to come by on Sunday to pick them up for church.

"Can I come, too?" Ana asked excitedly.

"Ana, you have to have your parents' permission in order to come," I told her.

"My dad will give me permission!"

I thought, "Yeah, right," but I didn't say it. Instead I asked, "Ana, are you sure?"

"Yes, yes, yes," she protested, "I'm sure he will!"

"Well, I'll stop by your house on Sunday at 11 a.m. and talk to your dad to see."

Of course, I only said this in order to appease Ana because I knew there was no way on the face of the earth he was going to let her come. He is known as a *curandero* (healer), or a *brujo* (witch) in the neighborhood. People come to him for healings or to put curses on others.

When Sunday rolled around, I took my daughters, Kirstie and Rachel, with me to pick up some kids for church and to stop at Ana's house for what I was sure would be a vain effort to see if she could really come. We pulled up to the house and I walked up to the open door and rang the bell. As I waited, I looked around the inside and saw several altars with the same figure of death on them. There was what looked like a prayer room, filled with death



paraphernalia. As my eyes scanned the room I could see that the walls were covered with posters and pictures of the death figure. And then I caught my breath. There in the middle of two pictures of Saint Death was a picture of Jesus bowing and praying. It was the calendar we had given Ana not long before.

Ana's father came down the stairs and I reached out and shook his hand as I introduced myself. He had a grizzled look and his eyes were glassy. I explained that Ana had asked me to stop by because she had told me she wanted to come to church with us but that she needed to have her parents' permission.

He said, "Yes." It was okay!

I was somewhat stunned, but Ana came running down the stairs, scampered by us and jumped into the truck. She came faithfully nearly every Sunday that we were able to pick her up. Please pray for Ana, that the darkness she lives in would be overwhelmed by the light and love of Jesus. Pray that in a home where death reigns, life might be victorious.

*Schierkolk is an AFLC missionary serving in Jerez, Mexico. He and his family are currently on furlough, hoping to return to Mexico this fall.*



TOP: Children attended a VBS program at conference. MIDDLE: Kent Quanbeck, McVile, N.D., wore his name tag from the 1962 organizational conference. The VBS program was led by several ministry teams from AFLBS. BOTTOM: Members of Parish Ed.t Board presented a history of AFLC publications through a skit. Barry Nelson (far right), was ordained during the closing service of the conference.



# More to Nebraska church's story

St. Peder's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Nysted, Dannebrog, Neb., was listed among the congregations withdrawing from the AFLC in the report of the Coordinating Committee to the annual conference this year, but there is more to the story than it seems. The church building, built in 1919 and included on the National Register of Historical Places, is now the home of a thriving new Lutheran congregation.

Nysted was once the center of a thriving Danish community, with a folk school across the street from the church. (The Martin Luther bust in the AFLC seminary office came from the old folk school, which closed in the 1930s.) But today the village is virtually a ghost town, and St. Peder's congregation, which joined the AFLC in 1973, had declined in number to less than ten as an average at Sunday worship. Pastor Don Voorhees, who has served since 1998, is a hospital chaplain in nearby Grand Island.

The future of St. Peder's was not encouraging, but developments within the ELCA congregation in nearby Dannebrog



Members of St. Peder's Evangelical Lutheran, Dannebrog, Neb., recently voted to turn their property over to NALC congregation.

in 2010 changed things dramatically. When a vote to leave the ELCA failed, the pastor and a major portion of the congregation withdrew and organized Faith Lutheran Church, and the new congregation, which joined the North American Lutheran Church (NALC), was offered a home in

Nysted. The two congregations conducted joint worship services, and then the remnant of St. Peder's voted to disband and turn the property over to the new Faith congregation.

And now you know the rest of the story.



Pastor Tim Jones is pictured with his wife, Loida, and children, David (left) and Daniel (right).

## Pastor Tim Jones ordained

Pastor Timothy Jones, Oceanside, Calif., was ordained into the ministry of the AFLC on May 6, at Community Lutheran Church, Oceanside, with AFLC President Elden Nelson officiating. A graduate of Bethel Seminary in San Diego, he completed a colloquy program while serving as licensed pastor of Community Lutheran since 2003.



New members were welcomed June 10 at Bethany Free Lutheran, Abercrombie, N.D. Pictured are (back row): Heather Hansen, Zachary Hansen, Scott Hansen, Andrew Attleson, John Hagan, and Leah Hagan. (Middle row): Elijah Hansen, Mary Hansen, Sophie Hagan, and Shannon Hagan. (Front row): Emily Hagan, Madison Hagan and Payton Hagan.

## AFLC memorials: June

### AFLBS

Ruth Claus, Pastor Laurel Udden, Phyllis Peterson, Betty Nelson (3), Dorothy Presteng, Fern Holmen

### AFLT

Phyllis Ness, Betty Nelson, Dennis Gardner, Jeremy Erickson, Pastor Laurel Udden

### Parish Education

Dorothy Presteng, Betty Nelson

### Development

Betty Nelson

### Home Missions

Gustav Upmanis

### Miriam Infant Home

Yvonne Swanson Anderson

### World Missions

Betty Nelson, Dr. Ernest Thorsgard, Pastor Laurel Udden

... in honor of

**AFLTS:** Mildred Myhre

## ARC hosts Classics Retreat

The Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis., will host a Classics Retreat Sept. 14-16 for those ages 55 and older. The cost is \$75/person or \$130 couple. Pastor Tom Parrish, Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, will speak on Real Hope. Pastor Roger and Rose David will lead praise and worship.

For more information on this retreat, contact the ARC by e-mail at [arcregistration@centurytel.net](mailto:arcregistration@centurytel.net) or call 800-294-2877. You can also visit the ARC Web site at [www.arc-aflc.org](http://www.arc-aflc.org) for more information.

## Worship conference set for August 17-18

Pastors, worship leaders, and members of AFLC congregations are invited to attend ADORATION: A Worship Leadership Conference

August 17-18 at Emmaus Free Lutheran Church in Bloomington, Minn. This conference is designed to equip believers to effectively facilitate worship ministry in their home congregations through building a biblical philosophy and by offering practical tools and training for worship and worship-related ministry.

Join us Friday night at 7 p.m. for a night of worship led by local AFLC worship leaders and a full worship team, including organ and brass players. The evening will focus on a life-changing encounter with God. Saturday events will feature main sessions, times of worship, and workshops that will equip attendees for worship ministry in local congregations. Friday night is open to everyone; a free-will offering will be taken. Saturday's registration fee is \$30. Pastors are welcome to attend free of charge.

For more information or to register for the Saturday workshops, please visit [www.adorationconference.com](http://www.adorationconference.com).



## Pastor Laurel Udden

Pastor Laurel Maynard Udden, 88, of New Hope, Minn., died June 20.

Born April 4, 1924, in New London, Minn., he was the son of Frits and Mabel (Knock) Udden. He married Joan Alger in 1949.

He served in the U.S. Naval Reserve from 1943 to 1946. He was a graduate of Gustavus Adolphus College, the University of Minnesota (1949), and the Augustana Seminary (1953). He served as pastor at Immanuel in Evansville, Minn., (1953-56), and Augustana in Fergus Falls, Minn., (1956-69) before becoming an instructor at AFLC Schools (1969-74). He served as director of the Lutheran Evangelical Movement (1974-83), and later took a call as pastor at Medicine Lake Lutheran (now Grace Free Lutheran) in Plymouth, Minn. (1983-91).

Surviving are his wife, Joan; children, Lauren, Louise (Peter) Burton, Mark, Marie, Janet (Horst) Ferkinghoff and James (Nancy); and seven grandchildren.

The service was June 26 at the AFLC seminary chapel, Plymouth. Memorials are preferred to World Mission Prayer League, 232 Clifton Ave. Minneapolis, MN 55403 or The AFLC Bible school and seminary, 3134 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.



## People and Places

**Pastor Richard Sliper** was installed April 29 at First Lutheran, Ellendale, Minn., with AFLC President Elden Nelson officiating.

**Nate Nash**, Newark, Ill., has accepted a call to serve as youth and family ministry pastor at Ebenezer Lutheran, Northwood, N.D.

**Adam Osier**, a 2012 graduate of AFLTS, was ordained and installed July 1 at Bethany Free Lutheran of Bluegrass and Zion Free Lutheran, Wadena, Minn., with Pastor Elden Nelson officiating.

**Pastor George Lautner** was installed July 8 at Abiding Word Lutheran, Deshler, Neb., with Pastor Elden Nelson officiating.

**Pastor Jon Benson** was installed July 22 at Trinity Free Lutheran, Janesville, Wis., with Pastor Elden Nelson officiating.

**Pastor Barry Nelson** was installed July 29 at First American Lutheran, Tripp, S.D., and Hope Lutheran, Delmont, S.D., with Pastor Elden Nelson officiating.

## AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-June 30, 2012

| FUND   | REC'D IN JUNE    | TOTAL REC'D TO DATE | PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE |
|--|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| General Fund   | \$27,593         | \$145,839           | \$144,924          |
| Evangelism   | 11,611           | 72,923              | 55,835             |
| Youth Ministries   | 5,702            | 42,026              | 65,800             |
| Parish Education   | 12,160           | 57,207              | 60,705             |
| Seminary   | 12,760           | 113,168             | 111,887            |
| Bible School   | 28,916           | 226,112             | 237,379            |
| Home Missions  | 32,323           | 243,036             | 225,345            |
| World Missions   | 41,434           | 209,097             | 226,585            |
| Personal Support   | 15,382           | 241,338             | 182,315            |
| <b>TOTALS</b>  | <b>\$187,880</b> | <b>\$1,350,747</b>  | <b>\$1,310,775</b> |
| Contact the individual departments for further information about specific financial needs. |                  |                     |                    |



# Conference reflections

## Resolutions

"I hate conference resolutions!" exclaimed the director of a crisis pregnancy center. When asked to explain, she said the problem is that people think they are really doing something for or against a particular cause when they pass a resolution on it. But conference resolutions, in her opinion, are rarely translated into action.

The role of conference resolutions in the AFLC is a unique one. Our *Fundamental Principles* (No. 10) state that "free congregations have no right to demand that other congregations shall

submit to their opinion, will, judgment, or decision," and it was encouraging when one of our pastors commented during the recent conference that some resolutions sound too much

like mandates to the congregations rather than recommendations.

There is a certain sense of authority conveyed when we state that "the AFLC says," yet we need to remember a conference resolution simply reflects the consensus of the majority of those who happened to be voting in favor of it at the time. This may be a difficult hurdle for you who have joined the AFLC from a more synodically structured church body, and are accustomed to hearing, "our church says." But you are encouraged to remember your dismay when church leaders took authoritative positions on controversial issues that did not reflect the convictions of your congregation. (Another issue for us is that some of the more controversial resolutions may be presented on the last day of the conference, immediately prior to the conclusion, when most of the voters have usually departed.)



Pastor Robert Lee

What is the point of conference resolutions, especially in a non-synodical association like the AFLC? Most of them, of course, are not controversial at all, i.e. expressions of gratitude to those who serve in our common endeavors, reflections on the reports of the directors and committee chairmen, etc. Some resolutions are policy recommendations, and need to be carefully considered by the respective ministries to whom they are addressed, since they represent the thoughtful and prayerful deliberations of the conference committees and have been adopted by a vote of the assembly.

What about resolutions regarding abortion or the definition of marriage or other current concerns? One may say that our annual conference voted for this or that. Take the resolutions back to your congregation, discuss and debate them, and if you wish to make them your own, then do so. It is the voice of the congregation that has authority, not the voice of the AFLC.

Better yet, remember that it is the voice of God in His Word that is the highest authority of all, overruling resolutions contrary to His will and empowering the ones that are faithful.

## The Nominating Committee

The AFLC began as a grassroots movement 50 years ago. Considering the number of congregations involved, attendance at the annual conferences was really quite amazing. During the first annual conference in 1963, 435 lay people and 21 pastors were registered. Please notice the proportion of lay voters to the pastors. The boards and committees elected represented a good cross-section of our people, and those who served on the Nominating Committee had a fair acquaintance with the congregations and those who might be qualified to serve.

Your editor served on the Nominating

Committee this past year. Each member was instructed to contact all the pastors in his district for suggestions of those who might be willing and able to fill the various vacancies. Unfortunately each member reported to the committee that the response from the pastors was little or nothing; several said that they did not hear from any of the pastors in their districts. Thus, the committee members were mainly left to their own knowledge and circle of acquaintance, which sadly narrows the field of those who might be called upon to serve. The problem is compounded when some are elected to the committee who have barely moved into the district and are not yet acquainted at all.

Who was elected this year from your district to serve on the Nominating Committee? Pray for him or her, please. Your own parish is the place to begin. Look around in your congregation and note some who may have special interests or abilities that might qualify them to serve the Lord and our AFLC family through one of the boards or committees. Corporation membership, which is a requirement for service on the missions and schools boards, may be a good starting point. Talk to your pastor about it. Encourage people to attend the annual conferences, too, so they might become more knowledgeable of our church work in general and thus prepared for possible future service.

The AFLC will not thrive as a grassroots movement unless the grassroots are truly involved. This begins on the congregational level, and our goal must be to have a broad geographical representation on all of our boards, committees, and corporations. The qualified people are there in our congregations, but members of the Nominating Committee and conference attendees need to know who they are. What are you willing to do to make this goal a reality?

*building the base*

# Mobilizing congregations

BY PASTOR GENE SUNDBY

**T**he founding conference which put in place servant leadership for all areas of our common work has been history for 50 years. Mobilizing leadership is one thing; mobilizing congregations is another. Congregations are units of people God designed to do the important work in His Kingdom. Leadership has its place but the congregation, in sync with leadership, is where the rubber hits the road.

Congregations can get very lazy, or perhaps ignorant, and leave the work to leadership while leaders can, and often do, usurp the role of the congregation. If we wish to survive and thrive as an AFLC, we must reaffirm that “the congregation is the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth” (*Fundamental Principles* No. 1).

All the gifts of the Spirit are given to the congregation to do the work closest to the heart of God—reaching and retaining the lost through the cleansing blood of Jesus, His beloved Son. Then, the congregation must ceaselessly work to equip and empower each convert through the means of grace found in God’s Word, so that all might reach for, and find, spiritual maturity. This goal is strongly enhanced by fellowship within the congregation. Through others of like mind, we are mutually nurtured by worship and sharing with one another through the Word, hymns and prayer, and by reaching out to the lost and less fortunate.

The prophet Nehemiah gives us an Old Testament picture of a congregation in action: “The people had a mind [or heart] to work” (Nehemiah 4:6c). If you read through Nehemiah, you will soon see that not every Israelite participated, and there were those who

wished to join the work who actually planned to destroy it. This, unfortunately, is also true today. So we must ask God to give us the gift of discernment and the wisdom to use it to protect and further His Kingdom.

In its infancy, and to the present, the AFLC has had the mind to work and has done so through local congregations in and under the authority of the Word of God. Through ups and downs the work has prospered, congregations were added and mission fields opened. A Bible school and seminary were established, as well as administration offices, on a beautiful campus on the shores of Medicine Lake in Minneapolis, Minn. Today you should see this remarkable campus, which has grown from one building to several, housing and servicing all aspects of the common work on behalf of AFLC congregations.

Most important, though, is the growth of congregations from 45 to more than 200. All of this is God’s doing, and it is marvelous and miraculous in our eyes and in the eyes of those who scoffed and sneered at this little flock and predicted its early demise, as in the book of Nehemiah.

Over the past 50 years we have learned that little is much when God is in it, and this will continue as long as we remember, “In the beginning God ...” (Genesis 1:1).

*Sundby, Outlook, Saskatchewan, Canada, is the past president of the AFLC-Canada. He is a member of Bethlehem Lutheran, Hawarden, Saskatchewan.*