

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

AUGUST 2018

THAT YOU MAY

KNOW THE 2018 ANNUAL CONFERENCE • DICKINSON • ND





THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

AUGUST 2018
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ENCOURAGING WORD

WHAT DOES THAT MAKE ME?

BY CHRISTINA OSTHUS

Many topics I can choose to write about in this column have the potential to glorify me more than encourage others. One topic that precludes me from glorifying myself is the fact that for reasons and by means that I cannot understand, God considers me a glorious part of His creation. It is one thing to brag about my accomplishments—it is another to claim to be among God's most precious creations, above the animals, the mountains, and the stars. But such we are, to the extent that He repeatedly calls us His own children (1 John 3:1).

Psalms 104 has inspired many songs, including Fernando Ortega's *Creation Song*. Nearly every line of the chapter mentions a different thing He has made. This includes seven or eight specific types of animals, several specific types of plants, the sun and the moon, wind, fire, water, and mountains. The psalmist makes it clear that all these things are specifically created to fill the earth and glorify God (vv. 24-25), but also to benefit humans (vv. 14-15). Verse 31 directly connects the glory of God to His works, though He is intrinsically worthy and glorious from eternity past. We are participants in that glory, particularly as part of the body of Christ.

Theologically this point has long been a challenge to me. As a student at AFLBS, I overheard some students from Northwestern discussing a chapel speaker who critiqued the popular worship song *Above All*, which says that at the cross Jesus "took the fall and thought of me above all." The critique was that we believe the

Bible teaches that God sent Jesus to die to bring glory to Himself. I also have seen fellow Lutherans wince when listening to the last verse of Christina Rossetti's *In the Bleak Midwinter*: "What can I give Him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb. If I were a wise man, I would do my part, but what can I give Him ... but give Him my heart?"

I agree that taking ideas in these songs to extremes can lead us into theological errors. However, John 3:16 indicates beyond a shadow of a doubt that God gave up His Son out of His great love for us. And when we present our bodies as living sacrifices as Romans 12 commands, what can be said but that we give ourselves to Him? Revel in the fact that He has no need of us and that we are worth nothing apart from Him, but that He still desires us and delights in us (Zephaniah 3:17).

For further study, in addition to the Word of God, listen to *Everything Glorious* by David Crowder and read *Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die* by John Piper. The book by Piper is instructive and encouraging in that it explains many facets to Christ's work, including those I alluded to. The song by Crowder also connects God's glory to His work when the songwriter says, "You make everything glorious, and I am Yours. What does that make me?"

Osthus, a 2006 graduate of AFLBS, works in youth and family ministry on the Cheyenne River Reservation, Eagle Butte, S.D.

If the AFLC is to grow numerically it will have to come through the work done by Home Missions or AFLC congregations birthing churches themselves.

—Lyndon Korhonen

Taking a closer look at what is being taught in your congregation would be time well invested.

—Marian Christopherson

The work of AFLC World Missions is congregational from beginning to end. We work for and under the congregations, with the purpose of planting and building up congregations around the world.

—Del Palmer

Each congregation and each believing adult has a responsibility to ask the adolescents in their context if they know Jesus. Such a question, rooted in the compassion of Christ, can spark a chain reaction that impacts the Kingdom of God.

—Jason Holt

There is always going to be the tension of focusing on just “our ministry area” and balancing the needs of all the AFLC ministries and ultimately the needs of the congregation. But the duty of all is to build one another up in love.

—Budget Analysis Committee





THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

BY PASTOR ROBERT LEE



That You May Know” (I John 5:13) was the theme of the 56th Annual Conference of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC), meeting in the Ramada Grand Dakota Lodge, Dickinson, N.D., and hosted by Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church, Dickinson, and other area congregations. The last time the conference was held in Dickinson was in 1982, and at least seven congregations have been added to the district since then. It was good to enjoy the warm west river hospitality.

Efforts to streamline the conference schedule were evident again this year, with a four-day conference, business sessions only on Wednesday through Friday, and workshops offered in the afternoons at 4:15 p.m. The reading of reports was strictly limited to a certain amount of time, and an attempt was also made by AFLC President Lyndon Korhonen to limit speaking on each resolution to five minutes.

Each morning concluded with the traditional prayer time, led this year by Pastor Andy Coyle, Summerset, S.D. Also, every afternoon began with praise and worship in song led by Pastor Rodger Olson, Tioga, N.D.

Tuesday was a full day, with conference committees

in session preparing resolutions, and with the Women’s Missionary Federation conducting their annual meeting. The opening service was led by Pastor Jon Wellumson, Williston, N.D., with the message on the conference theme by Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck, Moorhead, Minn. A remembrance of departed pastors (Gerald Gettis, Lloyd Weiland, Les Galland, Steve Papillon, Al Monson, and Don Schrage) was led by Pastor Gary Jorgenson, and three seminary graduates were ordained: Matthew Nelson, Matthew Quanbeck, and Nicholas Schultz.

Wednesday’s business opened with the president’s report, which was essentially a somber one, with a significant portion devoted to the lack of inquiries from congregations interested in the AFLC and to our shortage of pastors. He called upon Home Missions and local congregations to “birth” new congregations, as well as for believers to “storm the gates of heaven” in prayer that God would provide more pastors.

Concern was also expressed over the aging of those in attendance at the conferences and the ratio of lay people to pastors. The AFLC no longer has as many farm families with somewhat more flexible schedules, and it may require a different format for our conferences in order to have the next



THIS PAGE

(Clockwise from top left)

Lavonne West, Columbia Falls, Mont., reacts to a report by the Women's Missionary Federation. West was elected as the next WMF president.

Programming for children and youth was held at Our Saviour's Lutheran, Dickinson, N.D.

Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt, LaCrosse, Wis., catches up with Matthew Abel, AFLC missionary commissioned to work in Paraguay.

Pastor Micah Hjermstad, secretary, gives conference attendees instructions on speaking while resolutions for Committee No. 1 were handed out.

Breaking from the business session, conference attendees had a chance to reconnect.

Pastor Tim Johnson, Pipestone, Minn., spoke on behalf of a resolution with recommendations from an appointed task force.

Jim Marcusen, Taylor, N.D., worked on Committee No. 5.

OPPOSITE PAGE

Rebecca Moan, Corcoran, Minn., meets in a small group for prayer.

Pastor Andy Coyle, Summerset, S.D., led the conference in prayer time.

generation actively involved. A quote from the executive director of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College—“If it doesn’t stem the decline, mainline Protestantism has just 23 Easters left”—moved President Korhonen to ask, “In 23 years, if the Lord tarries, will there be young people who have a vision for *Free and Living Congregations?*”

The president’s report also noted with thanksgiving the opportunities in 2017 to observe the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Gratitude was expressed to Thrivent for grants given to produce the PBS special, *Martin Luther: The Idea that Changed the World*, and to fund our AFLC Reformation conferences.

Voting for the two national officers who serve one-year terms resulted in the selection of a new vice-president: Pastor Terry Olson, Grafton, N.D., who was elected on a fourth ballot. Pastor Peter Franz, Maple Grove, Minn., who served as vice-president for several years, declined nomination. Re-elected for his second term as secretary was Pastor Micah Hjermstad, Fargo, N.D.

Members of the Budget Analysis Committee submitted a lengthy report, recommending changes which will enable them to more effectively serve the three corporations and the AFLC by improving the budgetary process. A five-point budgeting philosophy has been developed, as well as a template for each ministry, and the report concluded with several pages of quotations from past committee reports. “Balancing ministry goals with financial resources presents an ongoing challenge,” they reported.

Gifts from congregations and individuals which are not designated to a particular department were the subject of one financial resolution, which affirmed the 2008 resolution that such gifts to be distributed in thirds between the three corporations (Schools, Missions, and Coordinating Committee). Distribution of undesignated bequests, however, are left to the discretion of the Coordinating Committee. Donors were then strongly encouraged to designate where their gifts should be

directed. The difference between subsidy and budget in conference reports also created some discussion and led to several amended resolutions and a clarification.

A resolution approved by the 2017 conference resulted in the formation of a task force that met during the past months and was commissioned to develop a comprehensive pastoral retention program. Recommendations presented to the conference by the task force called for the creation of a Pastoral and Congregational Care Team, with a fund to provide for associated expenses. The seminary was encouraged to continue to develop classes “to help seminarians to face the challenging and practical realities of ministry and the impact those realities have upon their lives, wives, and families.” A fourth recommendation that the seminary return to a third-year internship program generated much debate and was not approved by the conference.

The Mission Festival service was held on Wednesday evening with Pastor Nate Jore, missionary to Uganda, as the speaker. Two special highlights were the commissioning of Michael Rokenbrodt and Famke Berger for service with the Jores in Uganda, and the installation of Pastor James L. Johnson, Camarillo, Calif., as the new Home Missions director. A reception was held after the service in honor of the newly commissioned missionaries and in appreciation of Dr. Kevin Olson’s service with the Ambassador Institute.





Both World Missions and Home Missions directors and committees gave their reports during the business meeting on Wednesday, each of which had significant announcements and plans for future growth.

WORLD MISSIONS

- Pastor Del Palmer, World Missions director, has announced his plan to retire. The committee hopes to call a new director by the end of the year.
- The Ambassador Institute was reorganized, and the position of department head was eliminated.
- Plans are developing for Matthew and Ednay Abel to work with a missionary from Brazil to plant congregations in the neighboring country of Paraguay. And after other doors for mission work had apparently closed for Pastor John and Hannah Lee, a decision was made by the committee to deploy them to Brazil.
- The current focus of the work in India is to provide more training for the workers.
- The goal for Mexico is to plant a new congregation in the city of Aguascalientes, where there was an AFLC congregation several years ago.
- Missionaries in Uganda are focusing on the planting and maturing of congregations. Two new workers have been added: Famke Berger, the wife of Micah Berger, was officially commissioned as an AFLC missionary, and Michael Rokenbrodt, Wadena, Minn., was commissioned as a “seasonal” missionary.

HOME MISSIONS

- Pastor Paul Nash announced his retirement as director, and Pastor James L. Johnson, Camarillo, Calif., has been called by the committee to fill the position.
- Fifteen congregations are listed as Home Mission churches, with five of them (two of which are called “gatherings”) receiving subsidy. A third “gathering” meets in Honolulu, Hawaii.

- The Alaska mission continues to be a fruitful extension of Home Mission activity.
- A leadership retreat for Home Mission workers was held for the fifth year in Mesa, Ariz.
- The 2017 budget was exceeded at 102 percent, due to a large individual gift, allowing the committee to begin 2018 with a considerable surplus.

There was some discussion about a proposed resolution that called for the conference and the Missions Corporation to consider the best path for the future administration and support of the Alaska Mission. A member of the Home Missions Committee proposed an amendment that placed the responsibility for considering this path with his committee, to be supported by the conference and corporation. The amendment was approved.

The Missions Corporation considered several resolutions during their annual meeting, all of which were approved. The first requested the Home Missions and World Missions committees and their directors provide one-, two-, and five-year goals and strategies to accomplish said goals, with progress updates to be sent to the corporation members in written form on an annual basis at least 60 days prior to the corporation meeting at the annual conference.

The second created an ad hoc committee to examine the by-laws, structure, and operation of the Missions Corporation and to prepare suggestions for possible revision of the by-laws for the next annual meeting. Five members were elected from the corporation, and the two committees were invited to appoint ex-officio members to the committee. Another resolution provided appropriate expenses for the committee, to be equally shared by the two departments.

Finally, sincere appreciation was expressed to Pastor Paul Nash for his many years of service as Home Missions director.



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A group of girls headed outside for vacation Bible school activities.

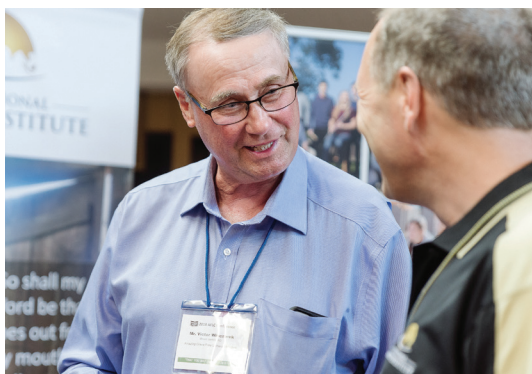
Judy Rehmer, Stover, Mo., and Nancy Staudinger, Tamarack, Minn., listen to a discussion as they meet with other members of the Nominating Committee.

Victor Wiecezorek, Mount Vernon, S.D., talks with Dr. Kevin Olson, Crystal, Minn., about the International Orality Institute.

Gary Erickson, Dalton, Minn., listens to a report from the Nominating Committee.

OPPOSITE PAGE

Pastor Tom Olson, Farmington, Minn., turns around to chat with Pastor Ron Staudinger, Tamarack, Minn.





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(Clockwise from top left)

Bryce Timmerman, a member of the AFLBS Timothy summer team, led outdoor activities for a group of kids at VBS.

Suzanne Tietjan, Wetmore, Mich., found a comfortable seat on the floor during the business session.

Pastor Rodger Olson, Tioga, N.D., led a time of worship following lunch each day.

Pastor David Johnson, Boyertown, Pa., worked on Committee No. 5 prior to the conference opening.

Pastor Ken Hart, Fairbury, Neb., addressed the conference as the chairman of the Nominating Committee.

OPPOSITE PAGE

Pastor Matthew and Natalie Ballmann, Sioux Falls, S.D., gave a brief update on a mission they will take on to plant a new congregation in the San Antonio, Texas, area.

A significant amount of time was spent in prayer for various AFLC ministries and people.





AFLC Schools look forward to the construction of a gymnasium on the campus, and more than \$2 million has already been raised toward that goal. A resolution was approved to “encourage significant giving and enthusiastic support” of this project. A resolution was also considered by the Schools Corporation during their annual meeting to amend the bylaws by calling for any current member to serve for at least one year prior to election to the Board of Trustees. A reception was held during the coffee break on Wednesday afternoon in honor of Pastor Joel Rolf for his 12 years of service as Bible school dean. He resigned effective in June.

Reports from Parish Education and Youth Ministries point to continuing progress in both areas of our common work. A new Parish Education project nearing completion is Volume V of the Heritage Series, a collection of writings by Dr. Francis Monseth, and gratitude was expressed to the WMF for providing about half of the funding. Other works in progress are a Bible study by Dr. Monseth on the Means of Grace, a collection of devotional writings by Professor Georg Sverdrup, new confirmation material, and a history of the AFLC. Youth Ministries is looking ahead to the FLY Convention next summer at the YMCA of the Rockies, and specifically requested prayer for a ten percent increase in youth attendance.

Thursday evening featured the laymen’s service, led by Brian Pederson, New Town, N.D., and the message was preached by James Marcusen, Taylor, N.D. The pastors and wives met for their banquet in the Benedictine abbey at Richardton, N.D., which may hold the record for the most unique setting for this gathering. Pastor Ron Dazell, a local pastor, was the speaker, and the AFLBS Ambassadors provided special music. The golden anniversary of the ordination of two pastors, Jerome Nikunen and Robert L. Lee, was recognized.

During Friday’s business meeting, one of the resolutions approved concerning evangelism generated

considerable
positive
discussion:

*Be it resolved,
that the Annual
Conference encourages
congregations to pray, plan,
prepare and then invite Lutheran
evangelists, pastors, and gospel-centered
teachers (Ephesians 4:11) for special evangelistic
services aimed at reaching lost souls for salvation
through Christ Jesus while encouraging the saved in
their walk with the Lord.*

A similar resolution was approved last year, and Pastor Al Monson was remembered for his strong support of it. The Commission on Evangelism is also seeking 250 “Soul-Mate” partners to commit themselves to monthly prayer and financial support.

A closing afterglow service was held on Friday evening at Our Saviour’s Lutheran, led by Korhonen who also brought the message, and Holy Communion was served.

A prayerful emphasis certainly permeated this year’s conference. Instead of adopting resolution after resolution with each report mentioning specific prayer requests, the reports included lists of prayer concerns and time was taken to pray for them when they were read.

The 2019 Annual Conference is scheduled to meet on June 11-19 at Spruce Lake Retreat Center in Canadensis, Pa., with the theme, “As for Me and My House” (Joshua 24:15).

Lee, Crystal, Minn., is the editor of The Lutheran Ambassador.

WHY DON'T WE USE DELEGATES?





BY LOIELL DYRUD

In 1909, Sven Oftedal, one of the cofounders of the Lutheran Free Church (fore-runner of the AFLC), sent a greeting to the annual conference while he was vacationing in Greece. Having retired from his teaching position at Augsburg Seminary, he could do more traveling, but his heart was with the annual conference gathering that year in Montevideo, Minn. What is of special interest is his explanation of how the annual conference functions. According to Oftedal, it operates differently from all other Norwegian Lutheran church bodies of his day:

It consists of an annual meeting made up of members chosen not by the mechanical principle of secular society's majority rule [delegates], but led by a spiritually inspired voluntarism principle of a living congregation. The annual conference of the Free Church is the great spiritual driving wheel, the annually renewed source of spiritual power, from which, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, congregations and individual Christians are inspired to the self-sacrifice and unity of purpose necessary for the accomplishment of the Free Church's tasks.¹

Among the Lutheran Free Church tasks Oftedal is referring to are the corporations and boards which are charged with the responsibility for carrying on the work. Nevertheless, it is important to note that it is the spiritual and devotional aspects that he considers the true purpose and power of the conference.

From the founders' point of view, there was good reason for not having a delegate system. The main purpose of the annual conference in the LFC was not the business sessions, though they were important. Rather it was to be a spiritual event, a time of spiritual renewal under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. To illustrate this point, Oftedal used a vivid metaphor—the conference is “the great spiritual driving wheel.” In other words, he compares the conference to the huge drive wheel of a locomotive, the power source that moves the train. Thus, the intent of the conference is to be a uniting, motivating, spiritual force energizing those in attendance for the work that lies ahead in the upcoming year. Limiting attendance to elected delegates would curtail the spontaneous attendance or “voluntarism” of those who want to take part and share in this experience.

From the beginning, the founders held the laity in high regard. Even today, most members of AFLC congregations recognize that we are a church body with a strong lay-led tradition. So prevalent was this concept that cofounder Georg Sverdrup, though a seminary graduate himself, chose never to be ordained. In fact, he often

began his sermons with the phrase: “We lay people ...”² This lay emphasis still continues today as each national board and committee of the AFLC must have a majority of its members from the laity.

Though it was generally assumed that pastors would attend the annual conferences, what could be done to encourage the laity and make the conference more accessible for them? Because the majority of the laity in the LFC at the end of the 19th century were Upper Midwest farmers, the annual conference was set to begin the second Wednesday in June. Norwegians called this time “*haaballen*,” the time between seeding and haying. It was a time when life on the farm slowed down, horses rested, farmers took a break from their labors, and many chose to attend the annual conference. In addition, conferences moved around the Upper Midwest, even to relatively small communities to accommodate the laity as much as possible. It is encouraging to see AFLC President Lyndon Korhonen address in his recent annual report the need to find ways to encourage more laity to attend our annual conferences today.

Through the years, however, the issue of introducing a delegate system has been raised as a way to encourage greater attendance at the conference. If a congregation wants to send members to the conference, pay their expenses, and call them “delegates,” this could be done. A congregation certainly has the freedom to call them anything it wants to, but keep in mind, they would not be considered “delegates” at the annual conference. Instead, they would be entitled to enjoy the same blessings everyone else experiences at the conference—no more, no less. They, along with everyone else, would be listed as “registered members of the conference” or “registrants.”

By not having a delegate system, we are still different from most other Lutheran church bodies because from the beginning our conferences were organized with a different purpose. In the AFLC, anyone can attend, anyone that is registered can vote, and everyone can experience the joy of being part of that “great spiritual driving wheel” that Oftedal called the annual conference so long ago.

Dyrud, a member of Our Saviour's Lutheran, Thief River Falls, Minn., is a founding member of the Georg Sverdrup Society. Pictured is Pastor David Jore, St. Paul, Minn.

¹ Sven Oftedal, “Greetings to the Annual Meeting From Professor Oftedal,” trans. Larry J. Walker in *The Sverdrup Journal* 10 (2013): 104.

² Andreas Helland, *Georg Sverdrup: The Man and His Message 1848-1907* (Minneapolis: The Messenger Press, 1947), 193.

2018 ELECTION RESULTS

OFFICERS

Vice President

One-year term
Pastor Terry Olson, Grafton, N.D.

Secretary

One-year term
Pastor Micah Hjermstad, Fargo, N.D.

BOARDS & COMMITTEES

World Missions

- Pastor, five-year term
Craig Johnson, Astoria, Ore.
- Layman, five-year term
Paul Handsaker, Radcliffe, Iowa

Home Missions Committee

- Layman, five-year term
Tom Caouette, Brainerd, Minn.
- Layman, five-year term
Glenn Mork, Buffalo, Minn.

FLAPS Board of Managers

- Layman, five-year term
Shane Voxland, McIntosh, Minn.

Bay Broadcasting

- Layman, three-year term
Paul Christenson, Fergus Falls, Minn.

Schools Board of Trustees

- Pastor, four-year term
Pastor Todd Erickson, Roseau, Minn.
- Layman, five-year term
Dean Nelson, Vergas, Minn.

COLLOQUY

One-year terms

Pastor Karl Anderson, McIntosh, Minn.
Pastor Dan Antal, Grand Forks, N.D.
Pastor Kirk Flaa, Sioux Falls, S.D.
Pastor George Lautner, Larimore, N.D.
Pastor David Tilney, Cloquet, Minn.

Coordinating Committee

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

Benefits Board

- Layman, five-year term
James Rolf, Moorhead, Minn.

Board of Publications & Parish Ed.

- Layman, five-year term
Suzanne Tietjen, Wetmore, Mich.

Budget Analysis Committee

- Layman, three-year term
Cory Buck, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Commission on Evangelism

- Layman, five-year term
Kevin Hoops, Byron, Neb.

Youth Board

- Layman, five-year term
Andrew Benson, Janesville, Wis.

ARC Board

- Layman, five-year term
X

X No quorum by ARC Corporation

CORPORATIONS

Five-year terms, unless noted

Mission Corporation

Pastor John Abel, Hitterdal, Minn.
Pastor Mark Antal, Park River, N.D.
Duane Burchill, Valley City, N.D.
Pastor Brian Davidson, Dickinson, N.D.
Pastor Connely Dyrud, Maple Grove, Minn.
Pastor Eugene Enderlein, Plymouth, Minn.
Dean Feistner, Madison, S.D.
Christie Friestad, Crystal, Minn.
Tom Fugleberg, Badger, Minn.
Pastor Jarrod Hylden, Beresford, S.D.
Pastor Les Johnson, Wilson, Wis.
Pastor George Lautner, Larimore, N.D.
Pastor Jerry Nelson, LaCrosse, Wis.
Pastor Tom Olson, Farmington, Minn.
Rod Scheel, Fergus Falls, Minn.
Cheryl Skordahl, Rogers, Minn.
Pastor Kent Sperry, Beulah, N.D.
David Strand, Kindred, N.D.
Kristin Tanner, Sioux Falls, S.D.
Pastor Tom Tuura, Stover, Mo.
Tom Caouette, Brainerd, Minn., four-year term
Pastor Gary Haug, Brooklyn Park, Minn.,
three-year term
Shane Voxland, McIntosh, Minn., three-year term

Schools Corporation

Don Balmer, Thief River Falls, Minn.
Arne Berge, Binford, N.D.
Licensed Pastor Bill Buck, Sinai, S.D.
Pastor Todd Erickson, Roseau, Minn.
Pastor Jason Gudim, Golden Valley, Minn.
Steve Jankord, Fort Mill, S.D.
Pastor Paul Kneeland, Dayton, Minn.
Dr. Nathan Olson, Savage, Minn.
Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck, Moorhead, Minn.
Pastor Cal Willard, Everett, Wash.

ARC Corporation

No quorum



LEFT: Seth Moan and Dean Nelson collect ballots from the conference floor.

BELOW: Pastor Barry Nelson counts ballots while conference business continues.



NOMINATING COMMITTEE

One-year terms

Central Tri State

Bonnie Handsaker, Radcliffe, Iowa

Eastern

Steve Deysher, Fleetwood, Pa.

Eastern North Dakota

David Strand, Kindred, N.D.

Illinois

Jim Thompson, Janesville, Wis.

Lake Superior

Nancy Staudinger, Tamarack, Minn.

Minneapolis

Chad Friestad, Crystal, Minn.

Nebraska/Kansas/Colorado

Pastor Matthew Quanbeck, Laurel, Neb.

North Central Minnesota

Angie Berg, Bemidji, Minn.

Northern Michigan

Bob Davidson, Felch, Mich.

Northwestern Minnesota

Joel Mattson, Newfolden, Minn.

Pacific Northwest

Pastor Cal Willard, Everett, Wash.

South Central

Judy Rehmer, Stover, Mo.

South Dakota

Pastor Mike Brandt, Rapid City, S.D.

Southwest Central Minnesota

Jeanette Berntson, Ulen, Minn.

Southwestern

Mark Gustafson, Apache Junction, Ariz.

Western ND/Eastern Montana

Nancy Rice, Williston, N.D.

2019 COMMITTEES

One-year terms

Committee No. 1

Frank Dutcher, Boyertown, Pa.

Pastor Les Johnson, Wilson, Wis.

Pastor Brandon Marschner, Culbertson, Mt.

Glenn Moser, Barto, Pa.

Susan Hughes, Bethel Park, Pa.

Committee No. 2

Pastor Mark Richardson, Faith, S.D.

Joanne Salvetti, Bethel Park, Pa.

Pastor Ryan Tonneson, Glyndon, Minn.

Gary Yerger, Leesport, Pa.

David Olson, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Committee No. 3

Steve Deysher, Fleetwood, Pa.

Bill Fish, Everett, Wash.

Pastor Michael Flechsig, Blackduck, Minn.

Dr. Nathan Olson, Savage, Minn.

Scott Olson, Minneapolis, Minn.

Committee No. 4

Amy Dalager, Argyle, Minn.

Pastor Rick Long, Arlington, Wash.

Rebecca Moan, Corcoran, Minn.

Pastor Adam Osier, Finleyville, Pa.

Bruce Stoudt, Bechtelsville, Pa.

Committee No. 5

Ed Cafoncelli, Reading, Pa.

Angie Lombardo, Yorkville, Ill.

Pastor Tom Olson, Lakeville, Minn.

Jean Sheldon, Ray, N.D.

Pastor David Tilney, Cloquet, Minn.





REJOICE IN HOPE

BY JOYANN DAHL

One hundred eighty three women attended the Women's Missionary Federation Day on June 12, 2018, in Dickinson, N.D., under the theme, "Rejoice in Hope." Lynn Wellumson, national WMF president, and Norma Hirning, local WMF president, opened with prayer and a welcome. Joyce Erickson, the 2018 Bible Study author of *A Study on Hope*, shared in devotions.

The 2018 AFLBS Ambassador team led the group in several praise and worship songs, including the theme song, "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less." Tami Demo, second vice president, led a fun game with prizes.

Workshops during the day included Cris Finstom, "Forgive—Do I have to?" Michele Mobley, "Hospitality Unmasked," and Christie Friestad demonstrated a chalk talk using the theme, "The Generous Table: Serving From A Satisfied Heart." Margaret Lee also shared a brief update on The Net ministry in Alaska.

A beautiful memorial service was led by Debby Strand, while WMF board members placed flowers on a wire cross during the reading of the names of those who had passed on to glory.

A humorous skit by Kim Callahan as "Hailey Bailey" demonstrated "hop fitness," encouraging the women to stretch, move, and laugh.

Following lunch, the volunteer WMF choir directed by Karen Pederson practiced and sang, "O Zion Haste."

President Lynn Wellumson opened the national WMF annual business meeting and announced the morning offering of \$4,477. The president's 2017 WMF Day minutes and treasurer's reports were approved as presented.

By ballot election, Lavonne West (Columbia Falls, Mont.) was elected to the position of president, and Deanna Larson (Ortonville, Minn.) was elected to the

position of communication secretary. A yearly budget of \$156,850 was approved for 2019. A proposed amendment to the constitution to clarify Article V, Section 5 was passed and becomes a recommended amendment to be acted upon at next year's business meeting. Members of the national WMF Board thank members of the 2018 Resolution Committee and the Nominating Committee for their dedication. The WMF day closed with small group prayer time and a brief Advisory Committee meeting.

WMF Breakfast

Barb Strand led the program at the WMF breakfast the following morning. The board members led praise and worship songs and presented a skit, "To Tell The Truth," created by Lynn Wellumson on the life of the biblical character Hannah. Matthew Abel shared about the potential of mission work and church planting in Paraguay to which he and his wife, Ednay, have been called.

Mission Festival Service

The mission festival service began Wednesday evening with a welcome from Lynn Wellumson. The women's choir, directed by Karen Pederson, joined with the congregation in singing, "O Zion Haste." Our speaker for the evening was Pastor Nate Jore, AFLC missionary to Uganda. There was a commissioning service for Michael Rokenbrodt and Famke Berger, who also serve in Uganda, as well as the installation of the new Home Missions director, Pastor James L. Johnson. A thank you was extended to Dr. Kevin Olson for his years of work with the Ambassador Institute. The offering total for the evening was \$6,891.

Plan to join us next year at WMF Day held on June 11, 2019, at Spruce Lake Retreat Center in Canadensis, Pa.

Dahl, a member of Our Saviour's Lutheran, Thief River Falls, Minn., is the recording secretary for the WMF.

AFLTS hosts Summer Institute of Theology

With the theme “Teaching and Teachers,” the Free Lutheran Seminary will host the Summer Institute of Theology Aug. 6-10 on the campus of the AFLC Schools, Plymouth, Minn.

Morning plenary sessions will include “The Pastor As Teacher,” with Dr. Ken Schurb, former theology professor at Concordia College, Ann Arbor, Mich., and adjunct professor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. The second plenary session, “Second John,” will be led by AFLC Pastor Martin Horn, Crystal, Minn., chairman of the Georg Sverdrup Society board.

Afternoon electives will include “History and Aims of the AFLC,” taught by Pastor Robert Lee, AFLC Schools faculty; “Making the Most of Adult Christian Education in the Congregation,” taught by Dr. James Molstre, AFLTS dean; “Simple Excellence in Children’s Christian Education,” taught by Marian Christopherson, director AFLC Parish Education; “Effective Confirmation Instruction,” taught by Pastor Brett Boe, AFLC pastor and adjunct instructor; “Teaching Scripture Orally,” taught by Dr. Kevin Olson, director of the International Orality Institute.



For more information, visit:
aflts.org/SIT

Stonestreet to keynote Friends of the Schools banquet

The AFLC Schools will host the third annual Friends of the Schools Banquet on Nov. 8, with special guest John Stonestreet as the keynote speaker. Pastor Wade Mobley, president of the Schools, will also give a ministry update.



Stonestreet is the president of the Chuck Colson Center for Christian Worldview. His passion is to illuminate a biblical

worldview for today’s culture. Along with Eric Metaxas, he is the cohost of *Breakpoint*, a Christian worldview radio program, and he also appears each week on *The World and Everything In It* radio program/podcast.



For more information, visit:
aflts.org/banquet



Pastor Jim Johnson, center, along with his wife, Linda, was installed as the next director of AFLC Home Missions during the Mission Festival Service at the AFLC Annual Conference.

Johnson next Home Missions director

Members of the Home Missions Committee, following the historical procedures of the past, extended a call to Pastor James L. Johnson to step in as the third Home Missions director. Pastor Paul Nash, current director, announced his intention in April to step aside.

Pastor Johnson, who has served

Good Shepherd Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif., for 12 years, will be starting part-time in September and starting fulltime in November. The Home Missions Committee is requesting prayer for the Johnsons and for the ongoing continuation of starting free and living AFLC congregations.



Recent graduates of the Free Lutheran Seminary were ordained at the opening service of the Annual Conference. Pictured are Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, president of the AFLC, Matthew Nelson (kneeling), Matthew Quanbeck, Nick Schultz (behind).



W

hile I was home on furlough I learned something new. Actually, I learned the

same new thing twice. I guess it is something God wanted me to know! What I learned was what *peace* means. More correctly, what *shalom* means, the Hebrew word we translate as peace.

I, maybe like you, always thought of peace as being the absence of negatives. Inner peace means the absence of anger, worry, or anguish. Peace between people means the absence of accentuated conflicts. International peace, or intercultural peace means that the people groups involved are not in conflict, are without embargoes or restrictions.

But *shalom* is much more than the absence of a negative—it is the complete presence of the good. Inner peace is not just being free of fear, but being full of faith, hope, and joy. Interpersonal peace goes beyond getting along with someone; it goes so far as empathizing and rejoicing with each other. Not just with your best friend, but with that friend or relative who gets on your last nerve. Imagine a broken relationship. Forgiveness takes place and you find that you can now run into the other person without trying to avoid being

WHAT IS REAL PEACE?

BY JONNI SLIVER

noticed, and you can sit next to them at a table and chat without being angry. This is peace, right? Wrong. Peace isn't the absence of rancor, it is the presence of true welcome. It is seeing your brother or sister and having your heart give that little jump for joy. It is complete restoration. Complete healing.

This new concept of peace is precious to me because I have so many precious children in my life who need deep, deep peace. Bea (17) and Agnes (12) arrived while I was away. Ten years ago, the girls had spent a long time in a shelter similar to the Miriam Home in another city until they were adopted. Their new family moved to Campo Mourão for work, but after a few years the father lost his job, couldn't find another, and became depressed. That was when he began molesting the girls. After a time one of the girls told her teacher. The girls were removed from their home and the police would have taken the father in to custody except he wasn't home. Somehow, he heard that the police were looking for him and he went into hiding on a farm the family liked to visit. When the police finally found

him, he had committed suicide. Now their mother and brother blame the girls for all their suffering. These girls lost their first family, were betrayed by their new father, and were now accused and abandoned by the only other family they know.

The solution the world has to offer is to numb their senses—boys, alcohol, or things—whatever the agent, use enough to numb the pain, and so you have peace. But Jesus offers a different answer. His peace—*shalom*—not as the world gives. His peace doesn't numb the pain, it heals and restores the heart. Where there is true peace there is hope, there is a future. I am so glad God brought Bea and Agnes to us. We have the opportunity to share God's peace, grace, forgiveness, and hope with them and introduce them to the one Father who will never disappoint.

Praise the Lord for His complete, healing, restoring peace.

Sliver is an AFLC missionary serving at the Miriam Home in Campo Mourão, Brazil.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Pastor LeRoy Petersen announced his retirement effective July. Petersen has served United Free Lutheran, Greenbush, Minn., since 2008. Along with his wife, Marcia, they plan to move to Moscow Mills, Mo.

Members of the Coordinating Committee for the AFLC Canada accepted **Foothills Bible Fellowship** of Black Diamond, Alberta, as a mission fellowship. Also accepted into membership were five congregations which were part of the **East Kootenay Lutheran Parish** in British Columbia: Mount Zion Lutheran, Cranbrook; Immanuel Lutheran, Elkford; Trinity Lutheran, Fernie; Holy Cross Lutheran, Kimberley; and Saint Peter's Lutheran, Invermere.

Pastor Joel Rolf was awarded a doctorate of ministry from Knox Theological Seminary, Fort Lauderdale, Fla., on May 18. The title of his project was "Christ-Focused, Grace-Empowered Ministry as Advocated in II Timothy 2:1-10." Rolf stepped down as dean of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School in June after serving for 12 years.

Mark Olson, Winsted, Minn., has accepted a call to serve as assistant pastor and youth director at Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Cokato, Minn. Olson was recently accepted onto the lay pastor roster by members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee.

Alex Monseth, Rogers, Minn., has accepted a call to serve as youth worker at Good Shepherd Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif.

Pastor Ryan Tonneson, Mesa, Ariz., has accepted a call to serve as associate pastor of youth, family, and young adults at Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn. Tonneson had been serving as pastor of The Gathering in Mesa.

Seth Larson, Lisbon, Ill., accepted a call to serve as the youth worker at Prince of Peace Lutheran, Beulah, N.D.

The fall **All Boards** will be held Sept. 17-18 on the campus of the AFLC, Plymouth, Minn. Boards and committees will meet Sept. 17, followed by an evening installation service. Devotions and departmental updates will be given on Sept. 18.

The **Pastors and Wives Retreat** will be held Sept. 18-20 at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis. AFLC pastors and faculty will speak on the theme of "Managing Pastoral Stress." For more information, visit the AFLC web site at aflc.org.



Michael Rokenbrodt, center, was commissioned by the World Missions Committee at the AFLC Annual Conference. Rokenbrodt serves as a seasonal missionary in Uganda.

Missionaries commissioned at conference

Michael Rokenbrodt and Famke Berger (not present) were commissioned at the Mission Festival service at the Annual Conference in Dickinson, N.D. Rokenbrodt will be a seasonal missionary, meaning he will be on the mission field from January to May, teaching pastors and church leaders with other Ugandan missionaries. During the remaining part of the year, he will be employed at Luther Island Bible Camp and doing deputation.

Berger is serving in Uganda alongside her husband, Micah Berger. A native of the Netherlands, she has an adopted daughter, Naomi. Berger had been ministering to the children of Uganda for several years before meeting and marrying Micah.

Pillmans return from mission service in Ecuador

Justo and Patricia Pillman and their family have recently returned to Minnesota after faithfully serving as missionaries in Cuenca, Ecuador, for more than six years. They have served a local congregation, been involved in youth ministry, and helped local home school families. Many of the goals they had when they first went to Ecuador have been met, and they believe the ministry they have been involved with can now be turned over to Ecuadorians. The AFLC World Missions Committee has accepted their request to return to the United States. The Pillmans



will continue to be connected to AFLC World Missions as missionary candidates awaiting future assignment. Members of the World Missions Committee and the Pillmans will continue to pray for direction regarding future missionary service.

"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, his love endures forever"
(Psalm 107:1).

W

hen I was affiliated with the U.S. Army, I worked closely with the military chaplains

and other personnel preparing service members for both their deployment and return from missions in foreign lands. The service members could be away for up to 12 months, and many experienced multiple deployments. We have all seen the media reports of joyful reunions of families and service members when they come home. However, before they could go home for good, the service members needed to be instructed on a variety of topics pertaining to their benefits, rights, and integrating with their family. My job was helping them with the latter—how to successfully re-integrate with their families.

Perhaps you are familiar with Don Moan's song *Give Thanks*. The first line is, "Give thanks with a grateful heart." At the core of the song is the message that it is only because God has given Jesus Christ, His Son, that we can experience the benefits God has to offer—"because of what the Lord has done for us." Paul, writing to the

LET'S PLAY TAG

BY PASTOR JERRY NELSON

church in Corinth, states, "I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus" (I Corinthians 1:4). God is so gracious to us that we ought to, in turn, be gracious to others, leading to an attitude of thankfulness and gratitude.

Seeing the news clips of returning service members has generated a national attitude of thankfulness and gratitude toward those who serve in the Armed Forces. My message to the re-integrating service members was to strengthen their familial bonds by playing TAG with their family members. I reminded them that just as a nation is thankful, appreciative, and grateful (TAG) for their service, they too could express the same attitudes toward their family members who filled in the gaps while they were deployed.

All of us can strengthen our bonds toward God when we express an attitude of thankfulness, appreciation, and gratefulness for what He has done for us. And, like Paul, we can also strengthen our bond with each other when we express these same attitudes which "encourage one another and build each other up ..." (I Thessalonians 5:11). Remember to engage in TAG with both our heavenly Father and our loved ones.

i

2018 Chaplain's Fall Seminar

The AFLC Institutional, and Police & Fire Chaplains would like to invite you to attend their fall seminar, Oct. 15-17. They will be continuing the theme of Critical Incident Stress Management with this year's focus on "Assisting Individuals in Crisis." The seminar will cover a number of related topics including, but not limited to, basic crisis communication techniques; common crisis reactions; suicide intervention; and stress management. This 13-hour course will be held at the ARC in Osceola, Wis., and is open to both pastors and lay people. For more information contact either Pastor John Benson 320 360-9652, or pastor Jerry Nelson 608-780-6685.

Nelson serves as the Spiritual Care, Marriage and Family Pastor at Christ is Lord Free Lutheran, Onalaska, Wis.



Pastor Allan Monson

Pastor Allan Monson, 71, of Mesa, Ariz., died June 9. Born May 19, 1947, in Fargo, N.D., he was the son of Luther and Adeline Monson. He married Connie Holm in 1969.

He grew up in rural Perley, Minn., where he attended Hendrum High School. He accepted Jesus as his savior while in high school. He attended California Lutheran Bible School, where God called him into ministry. He was ordained through the Independent Lutheran Seminary in 1971. He served the following congregations: First English Lutheran, Sacred Heart, Minn.; Hauge and Emmanuel Lutheran, Kenyon, Minn.; Zion and St. Olaf Lutheran, Tioga, N.D.; Granite Free Lutheran, St. Cloud, Minn.; Our Saviour's Free Lutheran, Dickinson, N.D.; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran, Lakeville, Minn.; and Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz. He was passionately involved in the Desert Manna Food Pantry, a ministry of Calvary Free Lutheran.

Surviving are his wife, Connie, Mesa; three children, Nathan (Cheryl) Monson, Mesa, Kirsten (Ken) Nelson, Lakeville, Minn., Allison (Lee) Lofton, Austin, Texas, and Erin (Royal) Harris, Mesa; one sister, MaryJane (Gilberto) Vasconez, Mesa; and eight grandchildren.

A memorial service was held June 13 at Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz., with Pastor Dan Giles officiating. The service was held June 16 at Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn., with Pastor Paul Nash officiating.



Robert Luis Dietsche

Robert Luis Dietsche, 89, of Osceola, Wis., died June 9, 2018. Born July 26, 1928, he was the son of Herman and Margaret Dietsche. He married Carol Bendiksen Nov. 24, 1950. She preceded him in death.

He grew up near Sand Creek, Wis., and graduated from Colfax High School in 1946. He served in the National Guard as a sergeant from 1948 to 1956. After marriage, they lived in Sand Creek, where he worked at the Farmer's Store and repaired radios. He started Bob's Radio Service in 1948, expanding to three stores in Wisconsin. He obtained a pilot's license in 1970, and purchased National Air Photos in 1971, taking aerial photos. They moved to Osceola, Wis., in 1979 and served as the first directors of the Association Retreat Center, serving until 1995. He continued to work there throughout his retirement. He was a member of Amery Free Lutheran, Amery, Wis. He also served on the AFLC Coordinating Committee, Home Missions Committee, Budget Analysis Committee, FLAPS Board of Managers and Stewardship Committee. He managed AFLC family camps in Alexandria and Lake Bronson, Minn. He was active in Gideons International and served as a Wisconsin state cabinet officer and new member chairman.

Surviving are one son, Cary (Rosalie) Dietsche, Elk River, Minn.; two daughters, Laurie (Pastor Paul) Nash, Brooklyn Park, Minn., and Christie (Dennis) Jacobsen, Minot, N.D., one sister, Barbara; 10 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

The service was held June 18 at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis., with Pastor Eric Christenson and Pastor Elden Nelson officiating. Burial was in Sand Creek Cemetery.

Change in Alumni Association bylaws approved

During its annual meeting at the Annual Conference in Dickinson, N.D., members of the AFLBS Alumni Association ratified a motion approved at the 2017 annual meeting, changing membership guidelines. Now, any person who has attended AFLBS for any amount of time is automatically a member of the association and may enjoy all rights of membership, including voting.

Previous to the June meeting, membership in the association was contingent on annual gifts of any amount of money given to the association by alumni or interested parties. Now, gifts are no longer required for members. However, a main goal of the alumni association is raising funds for AFLBS scholarships.

For more information on the association, visit aflbs.org/alumni.

JUNE MEMORIALS

AFLBS

Norma Aasness,
Ruth Claus, Pastor
Steve Papillon, John
Larson

AFLTS

Jim Steffen, Erik
Apland, M Kangas,
Ruth Horn, Pastor
Al Monson, Pastor
Steve Papillon,
Jeanette Larson

Development

Robert Dietsche

Evangelism

Robert Dietsche,
Pastor Al Monson,
Wayne Deubner

World Missions

Pastor Steve
Papillon

Home Missions

Robert Dietsche,
Karol Frecks, Pastor
Al Monson, Robert
& Carol Dietsche

Parish Education

Ruth Horn

Youth

Vernon Gebers

WMF

Darlene Miedema,
Joyce Vandyke,
Dee Bagetto, Doris
Sweeny, Ramona
Paul

... in honor of

AFLBS

Pastor Joel Rolf

Home Missions

Mabel Foster

AFLC BENEVOLENCES June 1-30, 2018

FUND	REC'D IN JUNE	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$28,105	\$230,633	\$217,859
Evangelism	6,566	52,275	64,927
Youth Ministries	13,298	72,554	56,170
Parish Education	9,286	112,732	72,048
Seminary	20,486	147,267	119,770
Bible School	42,717	299,218	299,948
Home Missions	28,920	206,585	226,708
World Missions	17,386	193,539	213,254
Personal Support	50,452	374,095	315,482
TOTALS	\$217,216	\$1,688,897	\$1,586,167

For additional financial information for each department, go to www.aflc.org/giving

CONFERENCE COMMENTS

The old generation among whom interest in church affairs was high is practically gone, and attendance is a problem with the younger generation.” You may be surprised to learn that these conference comments were made in the president’s report, not to our recent conference, but to the 1943 Annual Conference of the Lutheran Free Church (LFC), our predecessor church body. Almost 50 years had passed since the LFC was organized, and 50 years seems to be about the line when the danger of historical drift must be faced.



Pastor Robert Lee

The answer to conference attendance proposed (and eventually adopted) by the LFC was a delegate system. At first the resolution was to encourage each congregation to send one or more delegates, with

an assurance that non-delegates still could have speaking and voting privileges. The latter was dropped several years later. Did the new system increase attendance? The answer is yes. But the price that was paid was the development of a more synodical structure which was partly responsible for the 1963 merger, as well as for the confusion and conflicts faced by congregations that voted not to merge.

The registered attendance at our recent conference was 445, which is a respectable total. There are several issues, however, that should cause concern. First of all, only 122 congregations were represented (out of about 250). Second, the number of lay people registered was slightly less (216 to 217) than the number of pastors and wives.

The conference report of our president this year also noted a concern for conference attendance, mentioning specifically the age of the attendees, as well as the ratio of lay people to pastors. Suggested solutions include a possible weekend format with even shorter reports. We need to be flexible, he said, and the

Coordinating Committee would value our feedback.

It certainly should be clear from Loiell Dyrud’s article in this issue (pages 12-13), as well as from the past, that the adoption of a delegate system by the AFLC is not the answer. Yet it should be extremely troubling that over half of our congregations were not represented at the recent conference. Part of the problem may be the fact that not a small number of the congregations are currently served by a non-AFLC pastor; in fact, a cursory survey of the congregations represented at the conference this year reveals that, with two possible exceptions, all are served by AFLC pastors. This fact points out the important role that the pastor plays in promoting our church fellowship and encouraging participation in it.

The place of our church magazine in the life of the AFLC is also crucial. A recent study by the Coordinating Committee noted that about 40 percent of our pastors do not subscribe to *The Lutheran Ambassador*, and it would be quite likely that in these instances none of the members of their congregations do, either. (Your editor recalls an exception, when a dear older lady who was almost blind continued her subscription so that she could give the copies to her non-subscribing pastor.)

Here are some positive steps that may be taken: First, the adoption of a delegate system is not necessary for a congregation to secure lay representation at the annual conferences by providing funding for at least one lay person each year. Bring it up at a quarterly or annual meeting if this isn’t already your practice. Second, the adoption of a group subscription to *The Lutheran Ambassador* for your congregation (making sure that your pastor gets a copy) will help

to keep your membership connected and informed, encouraging their participation and prayer support on a national level. This might also address the apparent problem in recent years that the Nominating Committees are having in securing names for the various committees and offices.

The Free Lutheran movement in America began with a vision for the New Testament congregation that captured the heart and mind allegiance of our forbearers, and that vision was renewed in the 1962 formation of the AFLC. “It should be obvious, then,” the editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador* wrote in 1965, “that in a fellowship of free congregations the annual meeting or conference is next in importance to that of the local congregational program.” Independent congregations must be interdependent, for they need one another to accomplish what one congregation cannot do alone.

The Free Lutheran movement in America began with a vision for the New Testament congregation that captured the heart and mind allegiance of our forbearers ...

Next year’s conference will present a special challenge, because it will be farther removed in distance from the majority of our congregations than most conferences. Yet it will also present an opportunity for some of our easternmost congregations to be well represented for the first time. Please plan to attend, if possible. You are needed if our spiritual movement is to survive and thrive. Come and be blessed. Come and be a blessing.

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

Periodicals

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

something to share

THE SOUND OF JESUS' NAME

BY AILA FOLTZ

Mullan, Idaho, is a mining town in a northeastern valley of the ore-rich Rocky Mountains. Silver, lead, and zinc were in abundance. At its peak in 1940, 2,300 people, mostly miners and their families, called Mullan their home. In the early years it had a violent reputation. The long, dangerous hours of toil in the bowels of the earth and even inhumane treatment provided fertile ground for communist sympathies among the miners. They directed their anger and bitterness against the mining companies and their bosses.

The churches and clergy suffered from some of the fallout. Among the residents of Mullen there was a community of Finnish immigrants, many of whom were hostile to church and pastors. In fact, we had heard that a visiting Finnish pastor was murdered.

It was with trepidation that we arrived in Mullan in the summer of 1942. My father was on a missionary journey, sent by the Suomi Synod to reach out to Finnish families who had no ethnic church. It was wartime, and our windshield bore a sticker saying, "Is this trip really necessary?" Gas

was rationed, but the government allotted gas for church-sponsored travel. Tires were in short supply due to the takeover of Indonesian rubber plantations by the Japanese. As we headed west across the Dakotas and Montana, we would visit townspeople and ranchers whose addresses we had received from the Mission Board. At times we just stopped at a gas station and asked the attendant if he knew of any Finnish families in the area, whom we then contacted. Wherever possible, my father held worship services in borrowed churches or preached in living rooms or ranch kitchens.

Thus we crossed over from Montana to Idaho. We had been provided with the address of a Mullan family with whom we hoped to hold services. They welcomed us cordially, and our hosts invited other Finns in the community to their house to hear the Word of God in their mother tongue.

At the appointed time my father rose to speak to those assembled in the living room. There were five: our host and hostess, my mother, myself at 7 years of age, and a blind lady who proved to be a non-Finn.

Three more people joined us in the next two days, as well as the blind lady who listened attentively to the sermon. "Though I don't understand the Finnish language," she explained, "I hear the name of Jesus and feel in my spirit that God's Word is being preached."

My mother, on recalling this, said she was reminded of Jesus' words about the centurion: "I have not found such great faith even in Israel" (Luke 7:9).

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his
wounds, And drives away his fear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole
And calms the troubled breast;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary, rest.
(John Newton)

*Foltz, Plymouth, Minn., is the daughter of
Uuras Saarnivaara, former AFLTS instructor.*