

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

August 6, 2002



Uganda
James Musenze John Utege



Pastor Enderlein
(Beverly)
52yrs Goodby
to years
world
is

- Conference
Issue
- ✓ Report
 - ✓ Editorial
 - ✓ Election Res.
 - ✓ WMF
 - ✓ Pictures
 - ✓ Our President
 - ✓ J. Gallucci
 - ✓ J. Mundt
 - ✓ Tr.



Good crowd
shot

→ Mexico →
Raul Hernandez Milton Flores Pr. Ken Moland



Alan + Lisa Arneson
Kid C. Arneson

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

August 6, 2002
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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Still waters

“**B**y the shores of Gitche Gumee ...” To me, “Hiawatha” was just a poem I had to read in English class. That changed about 10 years ago, shortly after I got married. I needed a break; the northern Wisconsin day was beautiful.

“Let’s drop everything and take a drive up to Lake Superior,” I said to my bride, Sharon. And we went! Since that day our love affair with Gitche Gumee (Lake Superior) has grown. We have spent many days off these past 10 years receiving the “ministry” of that great inland ocean. Our children skip rocks from the unending supply of perfect skipping stones. We have walked the trails and peaked over deadly rock ledges to see and hear thundering waterfalls. We have tightly gripped our toddler’s hand to gingerly ascend the spiral stairs of the Split Rock lighthouse.

Magnetically, we often return to an obscure state rest stop. The unadorned little Flood Bay Wayside is tucked into a natural cove somewhere between Two Harbors and the famous Betty’s Pies. It has no stunning view of the lake but there is a large rocky beach made up of driftwood and billions of perfect skipping stones that the sun warms nicely along the ever-cool shoreline. As we fill our ice cream buckets with sauna rocks and agates or lie on the warm stony shore and watch the puffy clouds amble along, the ever-sloshing waves sing a peaceful lullaby to my soul.

Recently, we made an “emergency visit” to Flood Bay. I needed perspective and God gave it to me. As I sat on ancient rocks, worn by the waves for thousands of years and opened up the eternal Word of God, the Holy Spirit was able to speak to

my quieted heart. I got the “word” I needed to preach another sermon. I think this is what David means in Psalm 23 when he says, “He restoreth my soul.”

Everywhere I have lived God has led me to those green pastures and still waters where my soul gets refreshed. In Badger, Minn., it was my Bible and my little red Volkswagen parked at the edge of the great marsh near the Canadian border. In Cumberland, Wis., it was the far corner of the ski trail at the bottom of Corkscrew Run on cold Saturday afternoons in January. In Naknek, Alaska, it was lying on the soft, minty tundra on the sunny side of a bush, sheltered from the biting north wind.

We all need to find those quiet places out in God’s creation where we can momentarily be unmolested by the assault of man-made conveniences (leave your cell phone at home, please). With the testimony of creation, the truth of the Word and the gentle ministry of the Holy Spirit our souls get restored. Without such breaks our souls mummify. I hope you are taking time to head out to lonely places to pray and rest. Jesus did. The best spots are usually free and the benefits are priceless. “Let him that is athirst come” (Revelations 22:17).

— *Pastor Tom Olson*
St. Paul’s Lutheran
Cloquet, Minn.



SOUND BITES

Biblical facts will not mean anything to a student who sees truth as relative. To reach students, we must start earlier than we have in the past, we must be intentional in every effort, and we must bring Biblical facts through a sincere, caring relationship. Although relationships have always been important in youth ministry, now it becomes essential.

— *Pastor Kevin Olson*
AFLC Youth Ministries Director

The goal of missions rightly understood has always been to work itself out of a job through the establishment of a strong indigenous national church that would assume the responsibility for the work and its continuing development.

— *Pastor Eugene Enderlein*
AFLC World Missions Director

My vision for AFLC Evangelism is that the Word and the Holy Spirit can ignite every AFLC congregation to have a renewed excitement for being used by God for the salvation of souls. It is very easy to sit back and let a few people do the work of evangelism when the Bible through the Great Commission is calling all believers to be involved with “making disciples.”

— *Pastor Jim Rasmussen*
*AFLC Director of Evangelism/
Evangelist*

One of the unique features of the AFLC is polity. ... We are radically congregational, “an experiment in extreme ecclesiastical democracy,” which is reflected in the fact that our conferences do not operate with a system of delegates. Our congregations acknowledge no authority among themselves, except the highest authority of all, the Word and the Spirit of God.

— *Pastor Robert Lee*
AFLC President

40 Annual Conference

AFLC congregants enjoy Texas hospitality

— *Pastor Craig Johnson*
Editor

The national and international scope of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations was reflected in the location and theme of the 40th Annual Conference of the AFLC held June 12-16 in El Campo, Texas. The conference met for the first time in Texas under the theme: "Exalted Among the Nations," taken from Psalm 46:10. Conference attendance was lower than normal with 277 people from across the United States registering for the business sessions. Representatives from Mexico, Brazil and Uganda also were in attendance.

New positions assumed

The conference began with a worship service on Wednesday evening, June 12. Pastor Del Palmer of Shakopee, Minn., who recently began serving as part-time director of AFLC World Missions, brought the message. He declared, "When we bring Jesus to the world, God is exalted." In regards to his new position, he confessed, "I know I can't do this. I'm in over my head." But he expressed confidence in God's ability to work. "When we take God at His Word, He will be faithful."

Pastor Palmer was installed in his new position during the Thursday evening service. That same evening a reception was held expressing appreciation to Pastor Eugene Enderlein for his 23 years of service as World Missions director.

Also installed in a new position during conference was Jon Galland. Galland, formerly of Everett, Wash., will assume the position this summer of AFLC director



Pastor Del Palmer, Shakopee, Minn., is installed as director of World Missions during the Annual Conference in El Campo, Texas. Members of the World Mission Board as well as AFLC President Robert Lee (right) pray for Palmer and his work in the part-time position.

of Development. His office will be at the AFLC headquarters office in Plymouth, Minn.

During the business sessions of the conference it was resolved to encourage the AFLC Coordinating Committee to create a part-time position of assistant to the president.

New congregations welcomed

Six congregations new to the AFLC were placed on the congregational roster during the previous year. They were: St. Ansgar's Lutheran, Salinas, Calif.; Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn.; Faith Lutheran, Mineral Point, Wis.; St. James Lutheran, Garden City, Kan.; Lutheran Church of the Cross, Laguna Woods, Calif.; and Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn. One con-

40 Conference Report



TOP LEFT: Pastor Connely Dyrud, Campo Mourao, Brazil, thanks Pastor Eugene Enderlein for his 23 years of service as World Missions director. **ABOVE:** Pastor Clyde Grier (center), El Campo, helps serve cake during a reception for Enderlein. **LEFT:** Members of AFLC congregations throughout the United States spent time in prayer during the Annual Conference. **BELOW:** Charlotte Oswood and Fern Bohling worked behind the scenes.



gregation left the AFLC roster during the past year: First Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif.

The Coordinating Committee announced the creation of a new status of membership in the AFLC available to congregations. A congregation may become an associate member: a transitional, temporary type of status subject to periodic review. Lutheran Church of the Cross is considered an associate member congregation.

On the subject of congregations belonging to the AFLC, much discussion was held regarding a resolution that, in its final form, stated: "Whereas, according to the Rules for Work, the AFLC consists of congregations that in their constitutions unreservedly subscribe to the ancient ecumenical symbols, Luther's Small Catechism, the unaltered Augsburg Confession, Fundamental Principles of the AFLC, and the Rules for Work of the AFLC,

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Conference Report



CONFERENCE, from page 5

and whereas, the AFLC Coordinating Committee is entrusted with maintaining the congregational roster of the AFLC; be it resolved that we affirm the authority of the Coordinating Committee to refuse the application of congregations that do not unreservedly subscribe as stated above." After much discussion regarding the authority of the Coordinating Committee, the freedom of the local congregation and the nature and uniqueness of the AFLC, the resolution passed.

New ways of operating

AFLC Home Missions for many years has operated a Church Extension Fund. The fund has taken monies, which have been invested by congregations and individuals, and loaned them mostly to congregations involved in building projects. The amount of money congregations are in need of when entering a building project and the costs and time involved in operating the fund have increased in recent years. For this reason, at the encouragement of the Home Missions department, the conference passed a resolution expressing its support of the phasing out of the Church Extension Fund.

The director of the Free Lutheran Association of



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Luke and Andrew Quanbeck hang out near the dunk tank hoping to cool off in Texas' hot summer day. **AFTER A WEEK** of Vacation Bible School at Faith Lutheran in El Campo, the kids were given a water day, complete with dunk tank, water slide and a surprise drenching of adult supervisors. **JOHN AND MICHELLE BRENNAN**, from First Lutheran in Oklahoma City, Okla., will move to Minneapolis this fall, where John is enrolled at Free Lutheran Seminary. **DEBBIE GILES**, missionary to Mexico, led a workshop at Wednesday's WMF convention.

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Conference Report



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: DANNY AND MARCELLA GILES, formerly of Mexico and now living in Minneapolis, took part in Saturday night's youth service. PASTOR DAVID JOHNSON (at right) meets with a small group for prayer. CAROL DIETSCH and PAM OLSON, Shakopee, Minn., take time to chat during a coffee break.

Pilot Supporters, Lavon Bohling, reported on the continued development of a resource pool of people interested in doing short-term mission work. "New names continue to be added. Persons interested in this work will have the opportunity to participate in future work/mission trips both in this country as well as internationally." Bohling told of teams that were organized during the past year to assist in construction projects in Oklahoma and Brazil.

During the conference a resolution was proposed and passed to change the number of issues each year of *The Lutheran Ambassador* magazine. Instead of 16 issues a year it will become a monthly publication of 12 issues each year.

In the report of the Christian Academic Education

Board, it was expressed that people with needs and questions regarding education have been finding support through other means and have not been coming to the board. Thus, a resolution was passed stating, "Whereas, the need for the Christian Academic Education Board has diminished, be it resolved that the conference dissolve the Christian Academic Education Board."

In the discussion about youth ministries the chairman of the Youth Board, Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck, reported on the challenges that have been faced as the department during the year 2002 became independent and unsubsidized by the General Fund. Youth Ministries

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Conference Report



CONFERENCE, from page 7

Director, Pastor Kevin Olson, was offered a 1/4 time teaching position at AFLBS, which has helped with expenses.

New projects

The Commission on Evangelism and its director, Pastor Jim Rasmussen, announced new events that are being planned. Preparation work is being done for an evangelism seminar for pastors the Tuesday before next year's annual conference. Also in the preparation stages are four "Passing on the Baton of Evangelism" workshops, designed to encourage

a passion for evangelism in the next generation. A similar workshop was held February 2002 in Sioux Falls, S.D. AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee addressed the need for this type of passion in his report as he stated, "The AFLC should be growing not only through the addition of new congregations, but also because our congregations are growing ... and that this growth is not merely the recycling of saints from other churches, but the winning of lost souls for Christ and His Kingdom!"

A number of men from the Central and East African countries of Uganda, Tanzania and Congo have expressed interest in receiving training at the Free Lutheran Seminary. Some have been able to come, but in a desire to train more, consideration is being given to the possibility of a training center and school in Africa.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
PASTOR GABRIEL MERCADO, Mexico, sang at conference.
DR. ROBERT KOHL, Brookings, S.D., chatted with Pastor David and Mary Barnhardt, Melbourne, Fla., at coffee break.
PASTOR LLOYD QUANBECK and his family, dressed in red, white and blue, sang during Saturday's youth service.

Pastor Enderlein, in his final report as World Missions director, said, "Some discussions have already taken place with the AFLC School Board and school leadership about carrying on a joint ministry, in which both departments would be involved. Please pray for the World Missions Committee, School Board and department heads as the future of this outreach ministry develops."

The Director of Parish Education, Marian Christopherson, reported on various projects the department is working on. One is the publication of a book called, *Free and Living Congregations: The Dream That Did Not Die*, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the AFLC. The book will be featured at a 40th anniversary celebration planned for Oct. 26-27 in Thief River Falls, Minn.

Meeting at the Annual Conference, members of the Schools Corporation approved the addition of a mission aviation track to the Ministry Training Institute. The

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Conference Report



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM:
THE BAILEY FAMILY of singers, specializing in an Appalachian sound, sang gospel songs at the Friday night lay service.
PASTOR DOUG LUTZ, Highlands Ranch, Colo., led a time of devotions before the business meeting was opened.
PLAYING AT THE opening service was a bell choir from a local congregation.

new track, which will first focus on a ground school, will be added this fall and will be led by Pastor Paul Nash and Lavon Bohling, both licensed pilots with the AFLC's FLAPS Department. The new track will be added to MTI's current curriculum, which includes a cross cultural training track and a youth ministry track.

Information was shared at various times during the conference regarding the Vision 2004 project at the AFLC Schools. During their meeting the Schools Corporation reaffirmed the plan for the student center to be the next building constructed on campus. They also set the goal, which the conference in a resolution adopted as well, to raise \$2 million in cash and pledges by March 1, 2003, so that the student center could be constructed and available for use in the fall of 2003.

Invitations for the next three annual conferences were extended. The 2003 conference will be in Brook-



ings, S.D.; 2004 at the ARC in Osceola, Wis.; and 2005 at Estes Park, Colo.



Election

Committee No. 1 2003 Conference

Pastor Ken Hart, Greenbush, Minn.
George Hupp Jr., Ottawa, Ill.
Bruce Wolla, Minot, N.D.
Mark Sivertson, Sioux Falls, S.D.
Jerome Nikunen, Bertrand, Neb.

Committee No. 2 2003 Conference

Jon Dryburgh, Grand Forks, N.D.
Kermit Nash, Plymouth, Minn.
Lyle Westrom, Crookston, Minn.
Ralph Peterson, Portland, N.D.
Pastor Joel Rolf, Valley City, N.D.

Committee No. 3 2003 Conference

Rodney Kirchhoff, Deshler, Neb.
Doug Niesen, Cloquet, Minn.
Pastor Richard Gunderson, Cambridge, Minn.
Ron Jorgenson, Beulah, N.D.
Dave Fugleburg, Lakeville, Minn.

Committee No. 4 2003 Conference

Gayle Kruse, Mankato, Minn.
Karen Dalager, Grand Forks, N.D.
Pastor Earl Korhonen, Cumberland, Wis.
Bill Mitchell, Sioux Falls, S.D.
Sue Ann Berntson, Valley City, N.D.

Committee No. 5 2003 Conference

Willis Kettelhut, Deshler, Neb.
David Ford, Ashby, Minn.
Al Twedt, Portland, N.D.
Pastor Tom Olson, Cloquet, Minn.
Pastor Harvey Jackson, Hatton, N.D.

Schools Corporation (5-year terms)

Dr. Dan Mundfrom, Greeley, Colo.
Pastor Mark Olson, Tioga, N.D.
James Rolf, Brandon, Minn.
Jon Presteng, Grafton, N.D.
Pastor Todd Erickson, Lakeville, Minn.
Pastor Dana Coyle, Ottawa, Ill.
Kent Quanbeck, McVile, N.D.
Pastor Martin Horn, Fosston, Minn.
Matthew Olson, Minneapolis, Minn.
Darrell Haugen, Binford, N.D.



Results

Nominating Committee

Gene Finstrom, Buxton, N.D.
Wayne Deubner, Brockton, Mont.
Solveig, Hjermstad, Bruce, S.D.
Pastor Frank Cherney, Duluth, Minn.
Pastor Terry Olson, Thief River Falls, Minn.
Ray Stromstad, Beltrami, Minn.
Mary Christenson, Fergus Falls, Minn.
Willis Kettelhut, Deshler, Neb.
Eric Westlake, Osceola, Wis.
Paul Strand, Wanamingo, Minn.
Pastor Tom Schierkolk, Eben Junction, Mich.
Pastor Gerald Peterson, Oklahoma City, Okla.
Kenneth Graham, Camarillo, Calif.
Tracy Snipstead, Kalispell, Mont.
Art Wilson, Mt. Lebanon, Pa.
Robert Christian, Newark, Ill.

Vice President

Pastor Elden Nelson, Kandiyohi, Minn. (I)

Secretary

Pastor Brian Davidson, Minneapolis (I)

Board of Trustees

Larry Behne (I)

Coordinating Committee

Wayne Floan, Plymouth, Minn.
Matt Olson, Minneapolis

Commission on Evangelism

Dwight Kiefert, Valley City, N.D.

Parish Education Board

Fern Bohling, Golden Valley, Minn.

Youth Board

Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck, Minot, N.D. (I)

Colloquy Committee

Pastor Peter Franz, Maple Grove, Minn.
Pastor Walter Johnson, Shakopee, Minn.
Pastor James Molstre, Bethel Park, Pa.
Pastor Stephen Mundfrom, Arlington, S.D.
Pastor Terry Olson, Thief River Falls, Minn.



ABOVE: Pastor Frank Cherney, Duluth, Minn., collects ballots during elections at the Annual Conference.

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP: Pastor Larry Haagenson, Loveland, Colo., makes his selections for a committee.

OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM: A group of volunteers met behind the scenes to count ballots.

Stewardship Board

Arnold Johnson, Larimore, N.D. (I)

Board of Pensions

Gerald Kuster, Grand Forks, ND.

Budget Analysis Committee

Tim Berntson, Buffalo, N.D. (I)

Elections to the World Missions Committee, the Home Missions Committee, the FLAPS Board, the Missions Corporation and the ARC Corporation cannot be finalized until the corporations meet in the fall, due to a lack of a quorum at the conference. A tentative meeting date has been set for all-boards week starting Sept. 24.

The Christian Academic Education Board was dissolved at the annual conference.

* (I) stands for incumbents

Raising the banner

“Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people.”

Build up, build up the highway!
Remove the stones. Raise a banner
for the nations” (Isaiah 62:10).

Covered by these words of God,
the 40th annual convention of the
WMF was celebrated June 12-13.

is our prayer that our Holy Father
would build up the highway, remove
the stones and us raise Christ's
banner for the nations.

Not enough words of thanks can be expressed for volunteers — the members of Faith Free Lutheran Church, El Campo, Texas; Pastor Clyde Grier; Diana David; Lloyd Nelson; the special men and women who manned the registration desk; the hospitality and kitchen committees headed by Betty Sanders; the ushers. We are reminded of Tabitha, who was “full of good works and charitable deeds” (Acts 9:36); and of Paul’s words to the Colossians (3:23-24): “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance, for you serve the Lord Christ.”

Our Lord was praised with much singing throughout the convention and conference. We are deeply grateful to Pastor Rodger and Helene Olson, who led our singing. We were all blessed with joy-filled music from Mexico brought to us by our missionaries, Pastor Dan and Debbie Giles and Pastor Todd and Barb Schierkolk. At the Mission Festival service, the Spanish-speaking choir of El Campo's Baptist church praised the Lord with song, as did AFLBS' Ambassadors. Not to be outdone, the sextet of the National WMF Board praised God by sharing the hymn "Seekers of Your Heart" during the offertory.

Sharon Voldam, Pam Grier,
Pastor Todd Schierkolk and Pastor
Dan Giles shared God's Word with
us. Lori Crowell introduced the

2003 women's Bible study, which she co-authored with Mary Christenson and Jeannie Brandt.

Barbara Elmquist, 2nd vice president, presided over the WMF luncheon. She planned an enjoyable event and praised our Lord by sharing and singing a song she composed. Vicki Johnson, Osceola, Wis., blessed all those in attendance by portraying Martha, one of Jesus' friends.

We would not have been so blessed during the afternoon of the convention had we not heard from our study leaders. Debbie Giles spoke on the “Art of Intimate Communion with God.” Faith Nelson, Women’s Outreach coordinator, shared ideas relevant to assisting women in “Fulfilling the Great Commission.” Mary Pollestad, former 1st vice president, spoke on the topic of being good wives and great mothers.

Fern Bohling headed the Nominating Committee, and our women voted for a new 1st vice president and secretary. At the Mission Festival service, Pastor Robert Lee, president of the AFLC, prayerfully installed Jan Galland as 1st vice president and Elaine Kohl as secretary.

We closed the 2002 WMF convention with these words from Scripture, Psalm 34:1,3, “I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth ... Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.” I John 4:4: “Greater is he that is in you, than he who is in the world.” And Psalm 16:11: “In thy presence is fullness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

— *Erna Jochum*
Former 1st vice president
Bridgeville, Pa.



Pastor Rodger and Helene Olson, Camarillo, Calif., lead praise and worship.

Our Lord led the representatives of our WMFs through a thought-provoking meeting. Opinions were expressed with understanding and gentleness and accepted with kindness. The women passed the gates of this meeting with God's vision. With the Holy Spirit's help, the way was prayerfully prepared for all the people placed within our space. Surely, it



TOP LEFT: Vicki Johnson, Osceola, Wis., portrayed Martha in a monologue during the WMF luncheon. **TOP RIGHT:** Faith Nelson, Cheryl Skordahl and Barb Elmquist, members of the executive board, meet during the convention. **MIDDLE RIGHT:** Sherilynn Vinyard and Linda Retzliff, both from Pleasanton, Texas, sang their rendition of "Deep in the Heart of Texas." **RIGHT:** The women took part in three workshops during the convention. **ABOVE:** Pastor Todd and Barb Schierkolk and Pastor Dan and Deb Giles, all serving in Mexico, sang during the Mission Festival service.

Meet Jon Galland

The AFLC's director of Development

One of my favorite verses is Jeremiah 29:11, which states, "For I know the plans I have for you says the Lord ..." This verse has always been meaningful as it reminds me that God has a definite plan for my life. I know that I just need to trust in Christ and He will lead and guide me each day.

As I look back on my life, I always remember wanting to love and serve my Savior, Jesus Christ. One of the first verses I learned as a child was Romans 3:23, which says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." This verse told me that I am sinful and need God's forgiveness. I placed my trust in Jesus and He has been my guide and protector through life. I am thankful for His Word, which has provided joy, comfort and the assurance of my salvation. I praise Jesus for His wonderful blessings He has given to me.

The last six years, while in college and after graduation, I have had the opportunity to work for a nationwide financial services company. The education and experience I gained as a result of this employment was wonderful. I am thankful for the times the Lord has given me to witness to my managers, co-workers and through direct reports. With each year I knew the Lord had plans that were greater than the ever-increasing sales goals I was given by my employer. There is nothing wrong with trying to make a business profitable — the Lord tells us to do the best at whatever we do. Over the years I received several advancements, but I just knew the Lord was calling me to serve Him in another capacity. Was it as a pastor? Missionary? I just could not put my finger on it.

In April 2002 I received a letter of call to serve as the AFLC director of Development. I prayed and read God's Word so that I could discern His will. I enjoyed life in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. The comfortable and easy answer would have been to stay and continue with my current job. However, I had a real sense this was it. This was God's calling to serve Him. I had a real sense of peace when I accepted the letter of call to work with the AFLC Foundation. I plan to live in Shakopee, Minn., and attend Faith Lutheran Church.

The ministry of working with the AFLC Foundation will involve traveling to AFLC churches and district events. At these gatherings I will share the blessings and needs of each AFLC department and ministry. I am



ready to assist people with their estate in remembering the AFLC or their local congregation. When a gift is received, only the return on those funds will be dispersed to the respective area of ministry. The principal stays in the AFLC Foundation so that it will benefit the Lord's work year after year. Individuals are also able to give funds while they are still living through an annuity or charitable remainder trust. These vehicles may save the individual money on their taxes while providing a steady source of income. Please contact me at (763) 545-5631 with any questions you may have about the AFLC Foundation. Please remember the AFLC, the AFLC Foundation and myself in your prayers. I look forward to visiting your local AFLC congregation. May God Bless!

The youngest of three children, Jon is the son of Pastor Les and Jan Galland. He was born in Everett, Wash., and moved to Thief River Falls, Minn., when he was 5 years old. When he was 12, his family moved to Eden Prairie, where his parents served at King of Glory Lutheran. He attended Medicine Lake Academy and graduated from Fourth Baptist Christian School in Minneapolis. His family returned to Calvary Lutheran in Everett in 1996. While there, he graduated with a degree in political science from Seattle Pacific University.

Press on to the goal

A special conference was held in October 1962 at Thief River Falls, Minn., and the above title was the theme, based on Philip-
 ians 3:1-16. The merger of our former church family had been sealed, and some of us could not in good conscience participate. Now it was time to move forward. The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations was born at this conference, as plans were laid for a new fellowship to be established on the old fundamental principles of free and living congregations.

The messages at the conference developed the theme: Press On Unto Salvation, Press On to Sanctification, Press On In Service, and Press On Looking to Jesus. Attendance surpassed expectations, and the sessions had to be moved from the sanctuary of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, the host congregation, to a nearby school auditorium.

Forty years have passed since this first conference, and it is time to celebrate. A special anniversary weekend is planned for October 26-27 in Thief River Falls, and you are encouraged to mark your calendars and attend if possible. One of the highlights will be the official introduction of a new AFLC Parish Education book on our heritage and history, and a presentation of a copy to Mildred Strand, wife of the late AFLC President John Strand, in

whose memory the volume has been dedicated.

Further information about this 40th anniversary celebration will be forthcoming. I want to especially encourage those who were present in 1962 to attend, as there will be a special recognition of these pioneers. It is good to look back, but there will also be a challenge to look forward and "Press On" in anticipation that the Lord will continue to lead and bless as we look to Him to repentance and faith. Anniversaries are a great time to remember and reflect, but an even better time to recommit ourselves to the concerns that moved our pioneer members to press on in the face of obstacles that seemed insurmountable.

It is hard to know where we are going if we don't know where we've been.

— Pastor Robert L. Lee



Parish Ed works on new volume of AFLC heritage

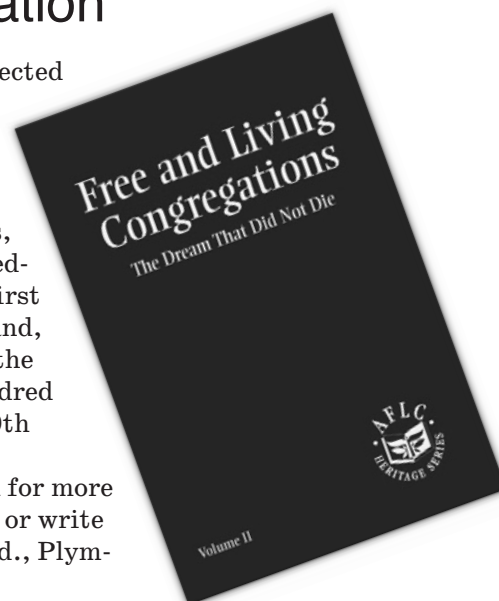
Book will be introduced at 40th celebration

The second volume in the AFLC Heritage Series — *Free and Living Congregations: The Dream that Did Not Die* — celebrates the 40th anniversary of the AFLC in 2002 and tells about:

- the roots of the Lutheran Free Church
- the concept of free and living congregations
- recollections from the early years of the AFLC
- the history of the AFLC
- the biblical basis of the congregation
- the role of pastors and lay people in the congregation
- the purpose and meaning of the Annual Conference

The book also includes selected writings by John P. Strand, the first AFLC president. Plans are to introduce this book at the 40th anniversary gathering in Thief River Falls, October 26-27. The book is dedicated to the memory of our first AFLC president, John P. Strand, and a special presentation of the book will be made to Mrs. Mildred (John) Strand at the AFLC 40th anniversary celebration.

Contact Parish Education for more information: (763) 545-5631, or write to 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.



Drawing people to Jesus

Chalk artist uses her skills for an evangelism ministry

Gospel Chalk Artist Christie Ballmann and her brother, Matthew, presented a chalk talk at the Annual Conference in El Campo, Texas.



I still remember the first chalk drawing I saw as if it were yesterday. For 25 minutes I sat enamored while the most beautiful picture I had ever seen of mountains, trees, and a shimmering lake emerged before my eyes. I was in suspense the entire time. At the end, when the artist turned on a black light, a glowing cross appeared. I was astounded. Ten years later I still remember the story the artist told, about 40 soldiers who were martyred for their bold faith in Jesus Christ.

My name is Christie Ballmann, from Word of Truth Free Lutheran Church, in Cleburne, Texas. Six years ago God led me on my first tottering steps as a Gospel Chalk Artist (GCA). How true is Scripture when it says in Isaiah 55:9, “My ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.” I am continually amazed to see how God has allowed this ministry to abound exceedingly above what I ever could ask or think.

Why is Gospel Chalk Art so effective? Educational researchers have found that people remember approximately 20 percent of what they hear, 30 percent of what they see and 50 percent when they both see AND hear something. Just think, TV advertisers pay millions of dollars to show their ad for 30 seconds because they know the impact of both seeing and hearing.

Gospel Chalk Art harnesses this cognitive response to communicate Jesus. People of all ages, all

nationalities and all interests are fascinated by chalk presentations. Not only can a GCA share a spoken message about Jesus, but the artist can skillfully weave the message into a mental picture. Jesus is our model for this. He did not use chalk and paper, but He did create visual pictures that would remind and illustrate the message He wanted to share.

People often assume that GCAs must have natural artistic ability. Not so! I started out with zero talent. Praise God that in our weakness He is strong! He desires, above all, willing hands and an obedient heart. God allowed me to mentor under several godly and skilled artists at a Gospel Chalk Art school in Michigan called Eternity Arts. They taught me the two things absolutely essential for becoming a good GCA: practice, practice, practice, and a genuine calling from God to “stay in the battle” of wholehearted ministry.

Gospel Chalk Art is indeed a ministry — not Christian entertainment. I do not draw for money, nor do I sell my pictures. How can I sell what God has given me freely? The greatest encouraging word a GCA can receive after a drawing is NOT that the picture drawn was beautiful (although I do want to glorify God through excellent art), but that the story or Scripture shared during the drawing directed someone to trust Jesus or draw closer to Him and His precious promises.

Some of my most precious memories of chalk talks are those done in the county jail. Every month for two years our church would go and share with the prisoners testimonies of God's truth. We used chalk talks to illustrate salvation, overcoming temptation, freedom from bitterness and moral impurity and the joy of walking in obedience to Christ.

God continues to teach me so much with each experience and each picture.

My favorite place to do chalk drawings is on the mission field. As I write this article, I am in Taipei, Taiwan, serving as an English teacher with a Christian ministry all summer. I enjoy teaching English as a way to reach the hearts of the Chinese children here, but I am especially here this summer as a Gospel Chalk Artist. Our group has the opportunity to do several chalk drawings a week for each English camp and share the gospel openly during the "talk." While I draw, one of my teammates shares a message, and then a Chinese assistant translates. God has already worked mightily. Praise the Lord!

One of my prayers before every chalk talk is that God would, "teach my hands to war and my fingers to fight" (Psalms 144:1). Gospel chalk presentations often involve tremendous spiritual warfare. The enemy does not want the truth presented, and he does not want it presented in a way that can be remembered.

The Creator of the universe is the Master Artist. His creative masterpieces are new every morning. I count myself incredibly blessed to be part of this unique ministry. God can use a multitude of ways to share His truth; chalk art is just one way. The most important thing is that each of us is sharing somehow.

"Therefore seeing as we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not" (II Corinthians 4:1).

— *Christie Ballmann*
Word of Truth Free Lutheran
Cleburne, Texas



Just where did the phrase 'separation of church and state' come from?

To the Editor:

Separation of church and state — we hear that phrase often from judges and in the media. It is the standard that was used recently to rule that the pledge to our flag is unconstitutional for children in California schools to recite. Why? Because it says, "One nation under God," which violates separation of church and state.

What is the historic truth and context of that phrase? President Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Danbury, Conn., Baptists assuring them that there is no state church in America and that they would have equal religious freedom as any other denomination. Even today some of the European countries have one denomination as the state church. This would not be true in America.

For the first time in 175 years, the Supreme Court took that phrase out of context and applied it to *Everson v. Board of Education* in 1947. It was then applied in the 1962 case of *Engle v. Vitale* to ban prayer in public schools. In the 1963 decision of *Abington v. Schempp*, the Court removed Bible reading from public education. Since then we have seen a decisive moral decline in America. Godless evolution has replaced creationism even though the Declaration of Independence says, "... all men are created equal ... Creator."

Notice the word Jefferson used — church, referring to a denomination — has now been expanded by the court to include anything about God, prayer, the Bible or religion. The First Amendment protects religious freedom from government control. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ..." Regrettably, the courts have stepped in to make decisions and laws that have had serious effect on our children. Thankfully, President Bush and the joint Congress has spoken loudly against the two California federal judges.

Perhaps you think "separation of church and state" is in our constitution. It is not, but rather was in the former USSR constitution. After 70 years of godless communism, the Russian people were drained of morals, values and meaning to life and left hopelessly empty. Thus we saw the Iron Curtain collapse without war. Why is America following that example in educating our children? Russia is doing a turnaround as I was there last summer showing the JESUS video in the public schools.

As President Bush has said, our freedom comes from God. God is our refuge and strength, our meaning for life and eternal hope. It is time to change some thinking and get back to the truth. Along with Jesus Christ, our churches are proclaiming, "God Bless America," "His truth is marching on" and "one nation under God." The truth set America free in 1776 and is still true today.

— *Pastor Mel Meyer*
St. John Evangelical Lutheran
Milford, Ill.



Maranatha Free Lutheran dedicates new building

On May 5, members of Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn., dedicated a new church building to the Lord. Pastor Robert Lee, president of the AFLC, spoke at the service, where a group of new members were also received into the congregation.

The congregation was formed nearly 15 years ago when 31 members broke off from a congregation which had just voted to belong to the ELCA. The group first met in a garage, and later at St. Paul's Free Lutheran in Fargo, N.D., and a Congregational church in town. The

congregation voted to join the AFLC in 1987 and began renting a commercial building in town, which they later bought with some property.

After years of renovations and additions, the congregation began planning for a new building in 1998. A groundbreaking ceremony was held in September 2000. The first worship service in the new building was Nov. 18, 2001. The congregation started from the old building singing, "The Church's One Foundation," into the new building.

First two AFLBS classes reunite



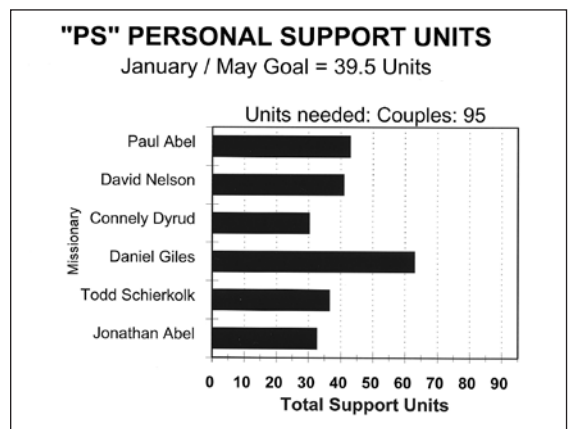
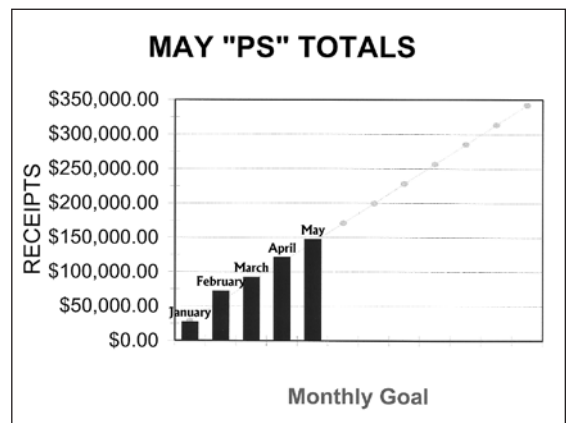
A reunion of the first two classes of AFLBS was June 29 at the home of Ralph and Phyllis (Nelson) Peterson in Portland, N.D. Approximately two dozen former students and spouses attended.

Above: Class of 1967-68 pictured are (from left to right) Pastor Tim Skramstad, Grace (Berge) Larson, Patti (Voiss) Falk, Steve Berg, Eileen (Eversvik) Chamberlain, Cheryl (Kallunki) Hartsoch, Arley Hartsoch and Carolyn (Jenson) Rasmussen.



Right: Class of 1966-67 pictured are (from left to right) Ralph Peterson, Anita (Haugen) Booth, Louie Falk and Pastor Richard Anderson.

Missionary Support





Pastor Don Richmond, director of EEMN, leads a workshop on evangelism at the Youth Leadership Training Conference.

Youth Ministries hosts training conference

More than 150 students from congregations across the United States gathered July 15-19 at the ARC in Osceola, Wis., for the AFLC Youth Ministries' Youth Leadership Training Conference. A total of 215 pastors, youth leaders, staff and volunteers were a part of the conference, with a theme of "Foundations for Life." Workshop topics included how to plan, give devotions and study the Bible; conversational evangelism and your testimony; planning youth group meetings and preparing for worship; and backyard Bible clubs. After morning sessions, the youths led a area-wide vacation Bible school in the afternoons, focusing on the skills they had learned in the morning.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Consider giving to the work of AFLC evangelism

To the congregations of the AFLC, who are loved by God and called to be saints, grace and peace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ!

Most of you do not know me, but I have the privilege of pastoring Redeemer Free Lutheran Church in Ontonagon, Mich., on the shores of beautiful Lake Superior.

I have a burden, and because we are brothers and sisters in the Lord I am sharing it with you. In the Scriptures, (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:45-49) God tells us to go! Share the good news! Make disciples!

We have an outstanding Commission on Evangelism in the AFLC. They work very hard to help all of us to fulfill the Great Commission. While God always provides when He sends out, He does it through His people. There are more than 200 congregations in the AFLC. After praying for the Lord's guidance, if each of us sent a specified amount monthly to the Commission on Evangelism, they could effectively do what God has called them to do.

As of July, our small congregation has committed to send \$100 monthly to this good work.

Pastors and board members, God would have you do something. I encourage you to pray and seek the Lord's will for what you should do. Now it is up to you to seek His will as to how much.

Whenever we step out of our own small circle to fulfill the need of others for God's glory, He always touches our need. God Bless you.

— **Pastor John J. Voss**
Redeemer Free Lutheran
Ontonagon, Mich.

Parish Education presents printing needs for four projects

Parish Education Director Marian Christopherson presented these printing needs at the Annual Conference:

Grade 3 Sunday school curriculum: Gifts received for new Sunday school curriculum will cover the first two quarters of grade 3 materials (scheduled for printing in the fall of 2002). An additional \$10,000 will be needed to complete grade 3.

Preschool Sunday school curriculum: Approximately \$45,000 will be needed to print the preschool curriculum, scheduled for printing in 2003.

Galatians – Justified by Faith: This third book in the Ambassador

Bible Study Series is being prepared for printing. Approximately \$4,000 will be needed.

Baptism and Spiritual Life – by Iver Olson: Our stock of this book (regularly used as a text for classes at the Bible school and seminary) has been depleted and would cost about \$3,000 to reprint.

Materials will be printed as the Lord provides the funds needed for each project. Please continue to pray that the work might be done according to the will of God and that our publications would faithfully proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Members of **Redeemer Free Lutheran**, Canton, S.D., voted in April to move off from the Home Mission church roster. Pastor Thomas Gilman serves the church.

Members of the Coordinating committee:

- Accepted **Faith Lutheran**, Bertrandt, Neb., onto the congregational roster
- Accepted **Pastor James Vineyard**, Pleasanton, Texas, and **Pastor Louis Balderach**, Weslaco, Texas, onto the clergy roster after two years on the fellowship roster
- Accepted **Pastor Gerald Gettis** onto the U.S. clergy roster after serving with the AFLC in Canada
- Reinstated **Pastor Clyde Grier**, El Campo, Texas, and **Pastor James Gerdeen**, Lakewood, Colo., onto the clergy roster.

Pastor Tim and Renata Hinrichs, AFLC missionaries on loan to East European Mission Network in Poland, are on a short furlough this summer. They are traveling to Minnesota, Nebraska, California, Washington, Oregon and Pennsylvania.

Etta Swanson, 75, of Canton, S.D., died July 2. Swanson was the mother of Pastor Warren and Marlys Swanson, Tucson, Ariz., and the mother-in-law of Pastor Lloyd and Jean Quanbeck, Minot, N.D.

Members of **Body of Christ Lutheran** and **Living Faith Lutheran**, both in Tucson, Ariz., are in the process of merging the congregations as Abiding Savior Lutheran. The congregants plan to sell the building now owned by Living Faith and look for property on the east side of Tucson. On July 14, Body of Christ celebrated its 10-year anniversary and Living Faith celebrated its 20-year anniversary.

AFLC Home Missions Director Pastor Paul Nash installed **Pastor Jerome Nikunen** July 21 as pastor at Faith Lutheran, Bertrandt, Neb.

AFLBS/AFLTS get grants

AFLTS and AFLBS recently received a combined total of \$17,285 from Aid Association for Lutherans/Lutheran Brotherhood's Member Gift-Matching/Member Matching Gift programs. The total reflects AAL/LB's matched portion of contributions received from members in the first quarter of 2002. Annual gifts of \$25-100 made by AAL/LB members to participating Lutheran

institutions, such as Lutheran schools, colleges or seminaries, are matched dollar-for-dollar by AAL/LB.

The seminary received a total of \$7,380 and the Bible school received \$9,905. Of the combined total, \$13,605 is designated toward Vision 2004.

A new, single matching program is being designed for 2003.

Fire destroys village in India

The first week in July, a fire ravaged the village of Kotipalli, India. This is an area where the AFLC has had a significant influence and is supporting a pastor. Pastor Aluri Paul is seen in the photograph standing in what is left of his home. There were 60 houses gutted in the fire. The people lost their belongings and are in need of clothing, rice, cooking vessels and thatched materials for temporary shelter. The fire was a result of heavy, hot winds.

The World Missions Committee



immediately forwarded funds to help alleviate some of their suffering. We will be applying to World Relief for matching funds for this project. Would you consider helping with the need at this time? Send gifts to the AFLC World Missions Office marked "India Fire Relief."

Pederson takes on new mission

Wayne Pederson, graduate of the Free Lutheran Seminary and recent president and chief operating officer of the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB), has taken a new position as chief operating officer of the Mission America Coalition. Pederson will lead the organization's ministry team and take responsibility for strategic planning, networking and operations.

Dr. Paul Cedar, chairman of Mission America, said that in addition to extraordinary ministry credentials, Pederson's personal integrity and strength of character make him a good choice for the position.

Mission America is a coalition of

450 national Christian leaders dedicating to mobilizing the church for prayer and evangelism. It includes the leaders of more than 80 denominations (with 210,000 local churches) and over 350 Christian ministries. Its most visible program is the "Lighthouse Movement."

Pederson's tenure with NRB came to an abrupt end due to controversy over the role of political activism in the Christian community. While supporting political action as part of the Christian life, Pederson believes that evangelism and discipleship should be the primary focus of the church.

Remembrance services give opportunity for outreach

As a part of a nationwide event, AFLC congregations are invited to participate in a September 11 remembrance service to share in the healing presence of God and redeeming love of Jesus Christ.

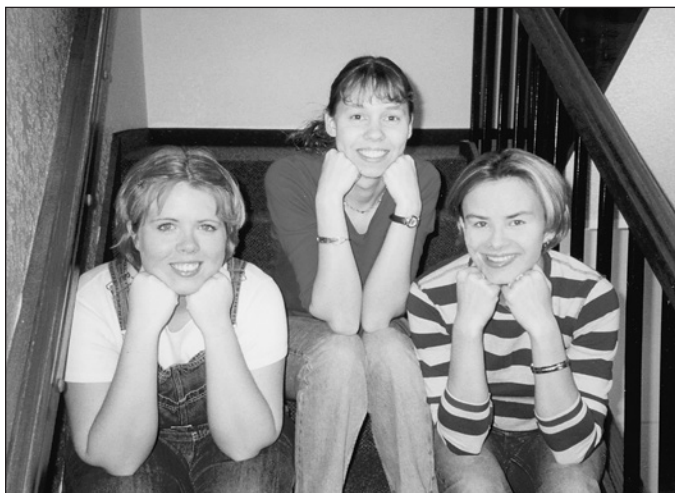
Services throughout the United States will remember those who perished, honor the firefighters, police and military personnel who protect our nation and proclaim the gospel to all who attend.

Mission America Coalition partners are helping to provide resources so that churches will be prepared to invite, greet and engage those who come with the relevant Word of God. Congregations can download a free pastor/church kit with bulletin inserts, sample letter to church members, suggested program outline, sample invitation, commitment card, article for church paper, etc. The kit with videos for promotion

and for use in the service is also available for a fee.

Many churches will distribute *Fallen but not Forgotten*, a booklet produced by Campus Crusade for Christ that includes a personal invitation to the service. The booklets can be used to invite the community to a local service.

For more information, visit www.911remembrance.com or www.cityreaching.com.



Three women have agreed to a one-year commitment through the Home Missions Department to serve as parish workers at Good Shepherd Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif. Kristen Agrimson, Katie Nelson and Dominika Leheny, all of Plymouth, Minn., will begin their short-term missionary work in August. The three have raised their own support and will work with the Sunday school, youths and Bible study.



Members of Lutheran Church of Hope, Loveland, Colo., took part in a groundbreaking ceremony May 19 for a new church building. The first stages of the construction process are under way, however, church members await a building permit from city officials before beginning the building project. Pastor Larry Haagenson asks for prayer that the project may progress, that resources will be provided and that no interference will be met.

Giles given opportunity to visit Lutherans in Spain

World Missions fund set up to help pay for trip planned for this summer

AFLC missionary Dan Giles, while meeting with the World Missions Committee during the Annual Conference in El Campo, Texas, told members how two Lutheran pastors in Spain found the AFLC Mexico Website in Spanish. Over the past six years, the Spanish pastors — the only Lutheran pastors in Spain — have repeatedly invited Pastor Giles to come to Spain to meet with them and help them organize free Lutheran churches in their country. One of the men in his last letter asked, “How do I affiliate with the AFLC?” These two men have carried on their work alone for many years and say they feel like they are the only Lutherans in the world.

Members of the World Missions Committee asked Pastor Giles to let the people of the AFLC know about this need and invite anyone whose heart God might touch to pray for these men and for their churches. If the Lord moves you to do so, Giles also invites you to send offerings to AFLC World Missions to cover airfare and traveling expenses so that he can travel to Spain to visit the two pastors as soon as possible — preferably as soon as August of this year.

For more information, contact the World Missions Department at (763) 545-5631 or write to 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.

ARC hosts prayer retreat at end of August

The ARC will host a prayer retreat August 30-31 in Osceola, Wis. There will be a time for praise and testimony to God's goodness. There will also be specific hours spent in prayer led by various people: prayers for repentance, for the church and its mission, the nation, for marriages and families, and for youths and schools. For more information, contact the ARC at (715) 294-2877 or email thearc@cornernet.com.

Death: Pastor Alvin Larson

Pastor Alvin Larson, 84, of Detroit Lakes, Minn., died June 26 at Emmanuel Nursing Home, Detroit Lakes.



Born May 31, 1918, in Badger, Iowa, he was the son of Gustave and Annette Warland Larson. He drove truck for his family's company. He married Emma Pahnke May 22, 1942, in Badger. They moved to Dexter, Minn., in 1952, where they farmed. In 1966, they moved to Laredo, Texas, to work as missionaries with Latin American Missions. They moved to White Earth, Minn., in 1968 to continue missionary work with the Indian Mission. From 1975 to 1997, he served as pastor in various churches in Minnesota and Iowa. He served as visitation pastor for Faith Lutheran Church, Detroit Lakes. He was director of Hauge Foreign Missions from 1979 to 1989.

Surviving are his wife; three sons, A. David (Joanne) Larson, Santa Ana, Calif., James (Ruth) Larson, El Cajon, Calif., and Pastor Paul (Dawn) Larson, Detroit Lakes; two daughters, Marlene Unverzagt, Detroit Lakes, and Mary (Pastor Don) Greven, Newark, Ill.; three brothers, Irving (Gloria) Larson, Badger, Duane (Barbara) Larson, Goldfield, Iowa, and Howard (Lynda) Larson, Papillion, Neb.; two sisters, Alenor (Bud) Askelson and Ellen Jane Lembergs, both of Badger; 14 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

The service was July 1 at Faith Free Lutheran, Detroit Lakes. Burial was in Elbow Lake (Minn.) Lutheran Cemetery.

AFLC Memorials

June 2002

Department given to ...

In memory of...

Vision 2004

*Alvhild Nelson
Gerald Knudsvig(2)
Erling Skarderud
Roy Finstad
Myrtle Espe
Ron Dotzenrod
Ruth Clark*

Home Missions

*Mary Boetcher
Audrey Homan
Myrtle Johnson
Gerald Knudsvig*

AFLBS

*Alfred Hjersjo
Nora Rokke
Myrtle Johnson
Gerald Knudsvig
Arnold Haugen
Eleanor Ose*

AFLTS

*Lena Monserud
Myrtle Christianson*

Myrtle Johnson

Parish Education

Gerald Knudsvig

World Missions

*Marth and Ragnald
Softing*

Myrtle Johnson

Irene Gilbertson

Ahlvild Nelson

Gerald Knudsvig

Betty Brown

Pastor Carl Hort

Evangelism

Arthur, Orpha Larson

Myrtle Johnson

Pastor Carl Hort

MTI

Leonard Tyvoll

In honor of...

Vision 2004

Mr., Mrs. Cliff Eastvold

Ruda Hanson

Home Missions

Pastor Vince Will

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (6 months) – January 1 - June 31, 2002

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN JUNE	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$268,060.00	\$16,782.30	\$117,177.13	44
Seminary	118,938.00	7,878.85	73,364.93	62
Bible School	217,227.00	21,217.26	148,004.80	68
Home Missions.	278,872.00	23,249.44	107,652.44	39
World Missions.	199,994.00	13,726.36	110,761.27	55
Personal Support	288,000.00	26,714.09	180,852.98	63
Youth Ministries	55,413.00	6,042.44	23,566.21	43
Parish Education	71,687.00	6,995.98	32,354.12	45
Church Extension	23,093.00	999.82	14,377.01	62
TOTALS	\$1,521,284.00	\$123,606.54	\$808,110.89	53
TOTALS 2001	\$1,119,759.00	\$99,758.36	\$591,806.00	53
Goal 50%				

The Evangelism Department received \$3,259.69 in June.

Believing in the congregation

Congregations organize and structure themselves in all kinds of ways. The names they give their organizations, when they have congregational meetings, how many deacons they have — those kinds of issues have limited importance. But the issue of who is in charge and who is the ultimate authority in the congregation matters a great deal.

Elder rule is one method of structuring a congregation. It can take various forms, but the basic principle is that the leadership of the congregation — the pastor or pastors and the elders or deacons — are the authority over the congregation. Their positions do not come up to the congregation for re-election. They, and not the congregation, have the final decision-making authority. They are depended upon to keep the congregation believing and doing the right things.

Many large congregations are structured this way. They appear to have reached many people for Christ and do much in service to the Lord.

The elder rule model of organizing a congregation would seem to be more efficient than a congregational, democratic method of operating where the authority rests with the congregation. But, while it is the method used by many large, growing congregations — and it is an efficient way of operating — it is not compatible with our Fundamental Principles and our understanding of the nature of free congregations.

“According to the Word of God, the congregation is the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth,” so states the first Fundamental Principle of the AFLC. We believe what we do about church structure and polity because of what the Bible teaches and the example given in the New Testament church.

In Acts 6, when a dispute arose over the distribution of food, the apostles gathered all the disciples (the congregation) and told them to “choose seven men from among you ... This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose ...” (v. 3, 5). The congregation made the decision, not the apostles.

In Acts 13:1-3 the first missionaries, Paul and Barnabas, are called and sent out while the congregation is worshipping, not while a small leadership group is meeting. In Acts 14:23 it tells of Paul and Barnabas appointing elders in each congregation. The word used for appointing literally means to raise one’s hand — that is, to vote by the raising of hands. One translation of the verse is: “Paul and Barnabas had elders elected.”

The word picture drawn is of the congregation voting and Paul and Barnabas, in prayer, committing those elected to the Lord.

The same word for voting by the raising of hands is used in II Corinthians 8:19 when it states that Titus “was chosen by the churches” for a particular area of service.

In the New Testament, the decision-making authority rested with the congregation. That is why Fundamental Principle 5 states, “The congregation directs its own affairs, subject to the authority of the Word and Spirit of God, and acknowledges no other ecclesiastical authority or government above itself.” The most common application of that principle is in regards to the relationship between the congregation and the denomination. No denominational official can tell the congregation what they must do. It is just as valid and necessary, however, to apply that principle to the relationship between the congregation and their pastor and

elders or deacons. No pastor or board should be telling the congregation what they must do.

We who lead congregations must never forget we are servants of the congregation. We respect the congregation. We look to the congregation for wisdom. We humbly remember the old adage that “heresy often shows up in the pulpit before it does in the pew.” We trust that God is leading the congregation.

We submit to the congregation, recognizing, honoring and treating it as “the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth.”

This does not mean every little decision should go before the congregation. Leaders are supposed to lead. Congregations expect them to and give them the responsibility and freedom to make some decisions.

The issue isn’t about what decisions are made. We cherish the congregation’s freedom in areas such as worship style, music, what they do with their money, what type of building they meet in and all the many other areas of congregational life. The issue is how the decisions are made and who is making them. That is the right and responsibility of the congregation — a responsibility they are shirking if they attempt to turn over authority to some select group.

The free Lutheran movement began because of a vision of free and living congregations, directing their own affairs, subject to the Word and Spirit of God. May we continue to hold to and be inspired by that vision today.

— *Pastor Craig Johnson*

**No pastor or board
should be telling
the congregation
what they must do.**

BUILDING THE BASE

The art of recovery

In the 2002 U.S. Open golf tournament held earlier this summer, tournament leader Tiger Woods bogeyed each of the first two holes in his final round. As he began to falter, his challengers (Phil Mickelson and Sergio Garcia) were given an opening to make a charge in the hopes of catching Woods and winning the prestigious tournament. However, Tiger quickly recovered from his poor start by making a string of pars along with a couple of birdies. He was never really challenged again and won by three strokes.

Woods, like most accomplished golfers, has learned the art of recovery. Even these experienced players will hit a bad shot — although less frequently than golfers like me. Being successful at golf is more than hitting perfect shots; it is being able to recover from the bad ones before they multiply and ruin the round.

Naturally, any recovery includes making a good swing — the physical aspect of scoring well. But perhaps even more importantly, it involves recovering from the mental perspective.

Golf is a game of the mind, requiring intense concentration and positive thinking. A bad shot often disturbs this concentration and invokes negative thoughts about the next one. Unless the golfer is able to conquer these doubts and regain his

or her concentration, the round will rapidly deteriorate with one poor shot after another. Without going into the gory details, I can honestly say, “I’ve been there.”

The troubles we experience, like a duffed shot in golf, bring great frustration and the temptation to give up living as Christians.

Let me draw a spiritual application from these golfing adventures. Every Christian will experience personal failure in spiritual life. We fall into sin, make careless mistakes and find ourselves in trouble. We are still sinners who carry around our old sinful natures that we were born with. The troubles we experience, like a duffed shot in golf, bring great frustration and the temptation to give up living as Christians. Sometimes we feel like throwing in the towel, or we let these sins multiply until life becomes a mess. But the key to spiritual growth and progress as a believer is in the art of recovery.

God offers forgiveness to all who realize their sin and confess it honestly. He can take our mistakes and use them for good. He can help us to recover and move on.

In golf, the art of recovery is centered on being able to put the past aside, start anew and focus on the next shot as if it were the first one of the day. In the Christian life, the art of recovery is much the same. When we focus on the cross of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness he provided through his sacrificial death, we can put the past behind us. We can start every day anew and focus on the next moment as if it were the first one of our spiritual journey.

What’s remarkable about the spiritual realm is, unlike golf where your bad shots still count, your past sins do not count against you. God promises to blot out our sins, and remember them no more (Isaiah 43:25). The spiritual art of recovery, then, is even more possible for the ordinary Christian than the golfer’s recovery is for professionals like Tiger Woods.



— *Pastor John Mundfrom
Spencer Creek
Lutheran
Eugene, Ore.*