

AFLC schools

*“Choose my instruction
instead of silver, knowledge
rather than choice gold,
for wisdom is more
precious than rubies, and
nothing you desire can
compare with her.”
Proverbs 8:10-11*



In God's

time

BY PASTOR HERB HOFF

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."

~ Ecclesiastes 3:1

With these words King Solomon, in the Book of Ecclesiastes, writes about the timing that God has for so many of the different things that enter our lives. Birth and death, killing and healing, weeping and laughing, mourning and dancing, seeking and losing.

Many of these are received with joy and excited anticipation, others with disappointment, even sadness and fear.

Part of the secret for receiving, with a certain amount of peace, these things that enter our lives is to realize that God knows what we are going through and what is happening to us, and He is even allowing these things to impact us for good.

An important thing for us to remember is that we are always entering new seasons in our lives. Always there is something new and different coming our way.

And if we are believers in the promises of God and trusting in the gracious ministry of our Lord Jesus, these things are coming our way for our good and for God's glory.

German theologian Helmut Thielicke wrote it so well with these words:



There is nothing, no circumstance, no trouble, no testing that can ever touch me until first of all it has gone past God, then past Christ, right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with a great purpose, which I may not understand at the moment. But as I refuse to become panicky, as I lift my eyes to Him and accept that it is

coming from the throne of God for some great purpose of blessing to my own heart, no sorrow will ever disturb me, no trial will ever disarm me, no circumstance will cause me to fret, and I shall rest in the joy of what my Lord is! That is the rest of victory!

There are new seasons headed our way. Things coming toward us that we will not expect, and even things that our fearful hearts might cause us to dread.

Believer in Jesus, fear not! God has not lost His power, and He has not forgotten you.

May we allow ourselves to be filled with a peace that comes from the Prince of Peace, knowing that the unexpected surprises that come our way are coming both for our good and for His glory. Our loving Savior has promised, "My peace I leave with you." May that peace of Jesus rule our hearts in these days.

Hoff serves St. Ansgars Free Lutheran, Salinas, Calif.

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Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil.

— C.S. Lewis

[If Christianity is really true, then it involves the whole man, including his intellect and creativeness. Christianity is not just “dogmatically” true or “doctrinally” true. Rather, it is true to what is there, true in the whole area of the whole man in all of life.]

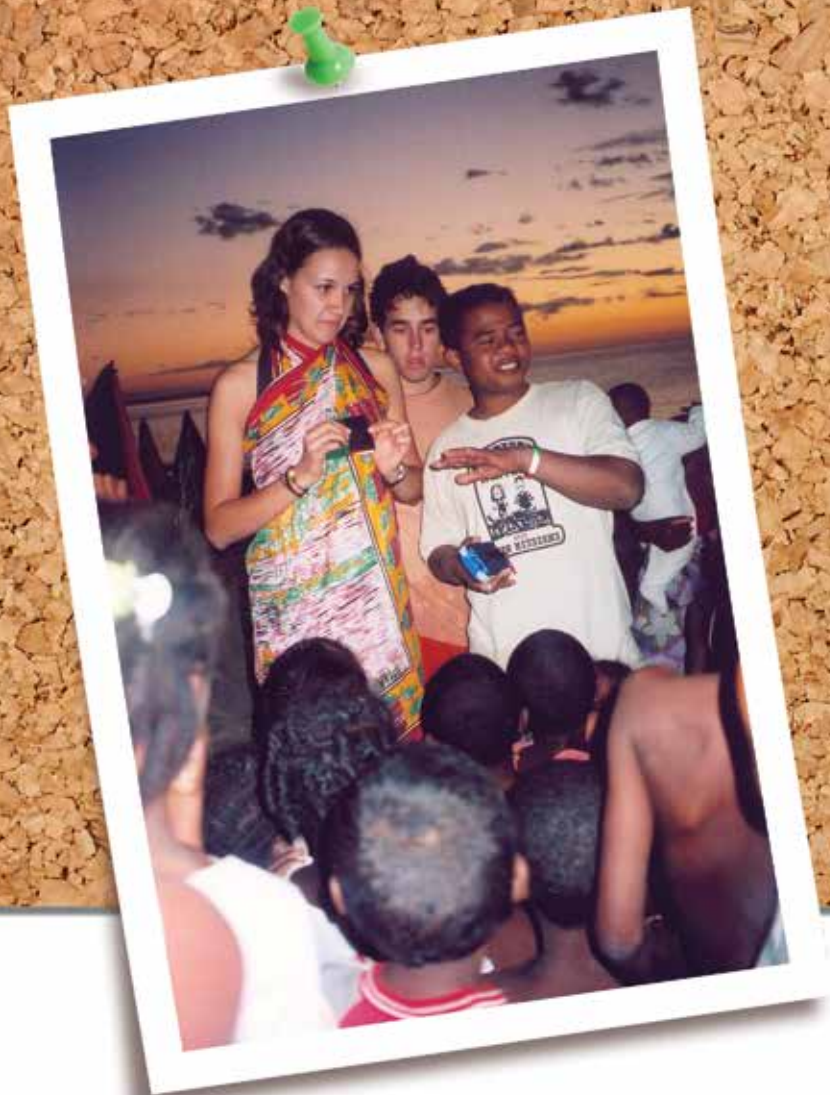
— Francis Schaeffer

The first priority of my life is to be holy, and the second goal of my life is to be a scholar.

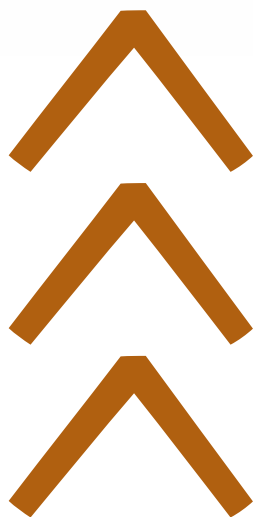
— John Wesley

Nothing can be rightly known, if God be not known; nor is any study well managed, nor to any great purpose, if God is not studied. We know little of the creature, till we know it as it stands related to the Creator.

— Richard Baxter



*Finding
a place
in her*



By Hannah Dyrud

Heart



T

his past summer I spent two months in which the only constant from day-to-day was the pair of eight-inch work boots that I had on my feet. I spent my summer with the Teen Missions International Madagascar team. I felt the Lord tugging on my heart to go on a mission trip for a while, and in November of 2007 I started to seriously consider it.

The country and people of Madagascar have a special place in my heart. My grandparents, Rev. Amos and Ovidie Dyrud, were missionaries there for about 20 years. I have heard countless stories of my dad, two aunts, and an uncle growing up at the boarding school for the missionary kids, and of my grandparents out in the field. My dad worked in a hospital in Madagascar

for two years right after my parents were married, so my oldest sister was born there. He took my family back for three months as he worked in a hospital again right after I was born. We have pictures, trinkets, games, decorative papers and tapestries from Madagascar all throughout our house. So even since childhood, Madagascar has always subconsciously been on my mind.

In August of 2003, my family went back to Madagascar for three weeks. We took a road trip from the capital city, Antananarivo, south to Fort Dauphin, where my dad grew up at the boarding school, and then flew back to the capital. It was then, seeing all the places where my grandparents lived and worked, visiting the hospitals in which my dad worked and my sister was born, meeting the people whom my dad grew up with and worked with years later, and just seeing the countryside and its

people, that I fell in love with Madagascar.

Naturally, then, when I first thought about going on a mission trip, I wanted to go to Madagascar. But I knew I wouldn't be able to arrange a trip there by myself with only one remaining American contact there. So I looked into Teen Missions International, an organization that my oldest sister went on a trip to Egypt with nine years ago. When I saw that they had a team going to Madagascar, I knew that it was the one I was supposed to be on! I sent out support letters at the end of January, and the Lord provided the more than \$5,000 I needed to raise well before my deadline.

I left on June 20 and spent the first two weeks away from home at The Lord's Boot Camp in Merritt Island, Fla. We lived in

See HEART, page 22



I remember my first college-level biology class at North Hennepin Community College, Brooklyn Park, Minn., back in the fall of 2000. I sat listening to my biology teacher as he told us that according to the scientific evidence it is irrefutable that everything that we see in the world today is a result of evolution. Some of my classmates discounted our professor's statements, joking that they never realized they were related to pine trees. Others accepted it all as truth. But I remember thinking how sad it is that such lies are purported as truth. I had many classes like this biology class while at North Hennepin and then at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis that discredited the Word of God as inaccurate, fallible and little more than a bunch of legends.

I began to wonder, while still at North Hennepin, how I could help to counter the lies that are fed to college students every day at public universities and even some private Christian colleges across the United States and the world. During this time I became involved in Campus Crusade for Christ. I saw how an organization like this, that strategically targets college students, was a tool that God was using to help teach those who would listen that there is more to the Bible than just stories and legend. I began to wonder if God had introduced me to Campus Crusade because that was the way He intended to use me to reach those being lied to by the world. I soon found out that this was not the case when He called me to go to seminary.

As I have gone through seminary at AFLTS I have not lost the passion to teach

the truth of the Word of God to college students. I even had the opportunity to lead the college-age Bible study at Vision of Glory, an AFLC church in Plymouth, Minn. As I interacted with the college students who attended the Bible study I was able to answer many of their questions about evolution and the reliability of the Word of God, but I also began to realize that there was more to their questions and doubts than just hearing lies in their classes at college.

What I found could be summed up in this quote from R.C. Sproul, "We are probably living in the most anti-intellectual period in the history of the Church."

I have to agree. Through conversations with many college students I find that much of their Christian walk is based upon experiencing something wonderful or spiritual while at a conference or a youth convention. Many of them base their beliefs on what they feel to be true rather than studying God's Word to see what it says to be true. When their beliefs are based upon feelings, it is no wonder that their faith is shaken when they face professors hurling intellectual statements at them. How can students expect to stand up to an intellectual statement with an emotional feeling that can change in an instant?

Romans 12:2 tells us, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and ap-

prove what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." This verse reminds us that our faith is more than just blindly accepting something and that we do not grow in faith by having a more spiritually emotional experience than what we had before. It tells us that we grow in faith as we no longer look to the world for wisdom, but to something higher, the Word of God. It tells us that as we study His Word our minds will be renewed and transformed so that we can know what truth is and begin to understand what God's Word calls us to do, believe, and teach. It calls us, not to rationalize everything or rely on emotions, but to use the intellect that God has given us to study His Word.

As I am coming to the end of my time in seminary many have asked me if I still feel a call to work with college students. I have to answer yes to that question, but not exclusively. I have come to realize that it is not just the college students who are listening to the lies of the world and basing their beliefs on what they feel, but it is the people in the pews as well. God has equipped me through the study of His Word and apologetics while in seminary to refute the lies of the world and teach the truth found only in the Bible. This truth needs to be shared with everyone from the youngest child to the most seasoned, and everyone in between. So for now I am not sensing a call to minister only to college students. Instead, I sense a call to minister to a congregation in which college students are a part of that ministry.

Forness, an AFLTS student from Colfax, N.D., is currently serving his internship at Emmanuel Free Lutheran, Williston, N.D. He will graduate in May.

*When the
world lies,
God offers*

TRUTH

By Seth Forness



Looking Back

By Micah Hjermstad

When I started my seminary training in the fall of 2006, I remember an overwhelming sense of inadequacy. I saw qualities in pastors that I was lacking; I saw my sinfulness and presumed that God could not use me for such a task; and I saw the knowledge that

was needed and my shortcomings in that area.

However, God in His infinite wisdom and grace has taught me over the last few years that I do not have to possess every quality that every pastor has, and it is wrong for me to limit God's power and ability to use me. I had to learn the same principle that applies to every Christian in any occupation. First, God chooses to give salvation despite my sinful nature. Second, God provides the ability to perform the tasks He gives me despite my weakness.

These truths provide tremendous comfort. The Apostle Paul says in II Corinthians 12:9, "And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.'"

Thankfully, God has been teaching me to trust in Him and rest in His leading for my life. While I trust that He will continue to lead, God has already blessed me with different opportunities for ministry during the summer months of my seminary training. In the summers of 2006 and 2007, I worked for an inner-city mission in St. Louis, Mo. I still marvel that God chose to send someone with a rural South Dakota upbringing to minister to people in urban St. Louis. I lived on 80 acres of lake property that was owned by the mission for the purpose of giving inner-city youths a summer camp experience away from their normal environment. I took care of the grounds there and sometimes drove into the city to work with the homeless shelter and the long-term men's rehabilitation program. But most of my work was with the summer camps for children.

In 2007, I had the privilege of writing the curriculum for our summer camps. After spending some time with these children, it was obvious that they needed more than another summer of hearing the same fun Bible stories. While there is value in those stories, I consistently received blank stares when I asked what those stories meant to them personally. Instead, I set up the curriculum so that it introduced to them how to read the actual Bible rather than a

simple Bible story book. In addition, we taught them about prayer, and we wrote a simple devotional book for them to use when they went home.

I will never forget the expressions of joy on their little faces when they received their very own Bibles, and it was overwhelming to see them excited to learn how to look up verses in their Bibles and read the Word of God. This experience further impressed upon me the need for absolute dependence upon the Word of God in ministry. It is the Word of God alone that has the power to transform lives. That was a valuable lesson to learn as I prepare for future ministry.

Last summer, I decided not to go to St. Louis again. I originally had plans for what I wanted in the summer, but God had better plans for me, and eventually I found myself working in the Binford and McVile, N.D., churches. With Pastor Lynn Kinneberg on sabbatical, I spent the summer writing sermons and preaching, doing some visitation work, and helping with the district Bible camps. This experience was invaluable as it gave me a small taste of parish ministry. One thing that I appreciated about the summer was that it gave me a deeper appreciation for the preaching of the Word.

God's Word is food that nourishes our faith and keeps it alive and growing. All Christians are called to present ourselves to God as approved workmen "handling accurately the Word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). This Word has the power to save, and it is God's desire that we faithfully preach His Word and not our own.

I look back on my summer experiences in seminary with tremendous gratefulness. I am grateful to the people in Binford and McVile for showing me love and patience and grace, and I am especially grateful to God for providing for me in so many ways over the last few years. He has blessed me with experiences that have strengthened my faith and have helped to prepare me for whatever ministry He has in mind. In the end, God has been diligent in teaching me to trust in Him and His will and not my own strength. Even though my inadequacies remain, trusting in God's promises brings rest and comfort and the desire to gladly serve Him with thankfulness for all that He has done.

Hjermstad, Grace Lutheran, Bruce, S.D., is currently in his third year at AFLTS.



By Daniel Hurner

A

little more than a year and a half ago, I stepped foot into a building that was filled with couches, chairs, a pool table and a coffee table with a broken leg. I was a volunteer youth minister at Solid Rock Free Lutheran Church in Anoka, Minn. Since the Bible school requires a Christian Service Credit due once every year, I figured that helping out at a church with their youth ministry would be the easiest way to get it. I came in not knowing anything about the people I would meet, the experiences that I would soon have or how God would change my outlook on youth ministry.

I have to laugh at myself every time I remember the first couple of months there. I remember coming through the door on

Wednesday nights thinking, “Come to me when you have problems because I’m cool and I have the answers because I go to Bible school.” This attitude was disbanded rather quickly when I realized that I didn’t have the answer for every question that came up.

I decided it would be better to help out where I was needed. This gave me an opportunity to build friendships with the youths. Slowly my perspective on youth work changed. Somewhere in the beginning of November I found myself looking forward to Wednesday nights more than before. Youth work had become a joy of being able to serve instead of a requirement for a credit.

As Bible school continued, I found out that some of the things that I had been learning in class could be applied to youth ministry. There are things, however, that you can only learn by experience that you will never learn in a classroom. To start, I



Training on the **Job**

had always known that it was important to memorize Scripture, but now I realized how important it actually was. I learned that the goal of youth workers was to make and train disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). I learned how it's good to prepare in advance for Bible studies. And I also learned that people's attention spans often ran out before I could finish what I thought was an excellent and necessary point in a Bible study. The phrase "short and sweet" became an unofficial theme from then on.

My favorite Bible verse became II Corinthians 12:10 during this time and is even now. It's encouraging to know that the same God who used the weak people whom I read about in the Bible uses people now in similar ways. I also realized that when it seemed like I was at the end of my rope, that's when God made Himself more obvious to me. Like John the Baptist said in John 3:30, Jesus must increase and I must

decrease. My friend pointed out that when I decrease, people see more of Jesus than me, and that's what my goal should be. Every day is a challenge because I like to be the center of attention, which is kind of an easy place to attain in youth ministry. I'm not perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but having Christ at the center of my life is what I continually strive for.

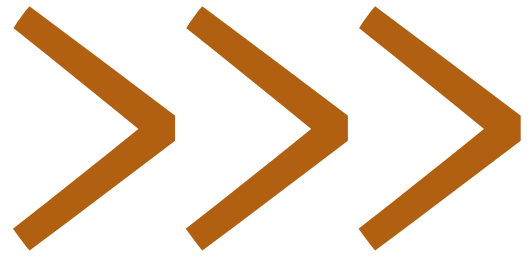
Recently, some friends twisted my arm and forced me to come to Nashville, Tenn., for a youth workers convention. (They didn't have to twist too hard.) It was exciting to see more than 5,000 people from different denominations come for seminars, sessions and worship. One of the speakers, Mark Yaconelli, offered a challenge to us: don't only disciple *to* the youth, but disciple *with* the youth. This, he said, would prepare them for their future in the church body by letting them get hands-on experience in their areas of strength. We were warned

that there is a good possibility of failure when students lead for the first couple of times—my own experience can testify to that! Although it may be painful for both the teacher and the student right away, it will prove beneficial in the long-run as students learn more of what to do and not to do in the future as they lead.

As this year continues, I've been re-discovering a lot of what I had learned last year. Christ set the bar high as He trained His disciples for their ministry. He is my ultimate role model for discipling teenagers as they prepare for their roles in the church. I have no doubt that there are a lot more things I need to learn the hard way, but I feel that God's call in my life lies somewhere in youth ministry, and I'm excited to see what He has planned for me next.

Hurner, a senior at AFLBS, is a member of Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn.

AFLC schools Press on



By Lyle Guhl

I am impressed with Paul's words in Philippians 3:13-14: "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

That is what the AFLC Schools are doing, pressing forward to teach, train and live out the gospel of Jesus Christ. The schools have been sharing Christ with young people for many years. Each year, as students complete their studies on campus, most return for the next year while graduates are sent out into the world and churches to make a difference for Jesus. It is a great joy to see the spiritual growth that takes place in the hearts and lives of students as they study and apply God's Word in their lives. Just as the students need to grow in the Lord, there is also a need for the campus to grow—to make the campus more safe, functional and as up-to-date as the Lord leads.

This year we have approximately 130 Bible school students and 26 full-time seminary students (seven of which are interns) and two part-time students. The dormitories have been here for a number of years, which means they require maintenance and repairs on an ongoing basis. A year ago we had a big project to repair the stucco on the outside of the dormitories. This year we did major bathroom repair and extensive

painting of rooms, hallways and other areas. After late spring hail storms, we also had some heating and air conditioning repairs in Heritage Hall.

The chapel received an enormous amount of remodeling with the addition of the pipe organ given to the schools. The organ needed a major upgrade in wiring and other parts due to use and also because it had been in storage for several years. The building also suffered from water getting into the basement area from large rain storms. To correct this condition, tiling was done around the chapel, and the parking lot was resurfaced.

We praise the Lord for how He has provided generous gifts for the seminary housing buildings through the years so that each of the three buildings has been built without debt. The third seminary student housing building was completed in January 2007. Each of these buildings has four apartments and all are currently occupied with seminary student families.

There are always ongoing needs on campus. One of the greatest needs we have is for prayer that God would have His way and will in each heart and life. We realize that without prayer very little is accomplished of eternal value. As we serve the Lord here as staff we also seek to be good stewards of every gift that God provides. Our maintenance staff works diligently to provide a safe and clean learning environment as well as maintaining the school vans and grounds. The chapel needs the tile floor replaced and improved lighting. Would you

pray with us that God will provide?

Your prayers and financial gifts have helped to make these things happen. To note just a few gifts from individuals and congregations: one congregation gave a \$600,000 gift, part of it to help toward the mortgage on Heritage Hall and some for debt retirement. A family is building a \$50,000 scholarship for seminarians. Approximately one and a half years ago we started a program called Heritage 400, a simple plan to remove the debt on Heritage Hall within four years. The purpose is to find 400 people to agree to pledge \$1,000, or \$250 per year for a period of four years. We received pledges in the amount of \$102,684; there is a current remaining balance of pledges due of \$39,764. The outstanding mortgage balance is \$203,856 as of Dec. 1, 2008. So there is still a need for prayer that these funds will come in to pay off the debt.

A giving challenge of \$2,000 to each congregation and its members would retire the mortgage as well as pay off the \$250,000 internal borrowing for the chapel project.

We praise God for all of the prayers and financial sacrifices made to accomplish the work that has been done to make the campus more usable and in the best repair.

Philippians 4:19 reminds us: "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

Guhl, a member of Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn., is the business manager for the AFLC schools.

HERITAGE HALL



Gates of Heaven

By Pastor Tim Hinrichs

Here in Europe, gates are everywhere. Each of our gardens is entered by a gate. Some cities still have their ancient gates that served to guard the residents. Today they are simply beautiful decorations.

Gates are very rare where I come from in the United States. No cities have ancient gates. In most towns, gardens don't even have a fence, much less a gate. The only place you can find gates are in very rich estates where the rich protect their homes. Or you may find gates in stadiums where a ticket is needed to get inside. Of course there are prison gates, which may be the most important of all. Gates are meant to both protect from danger and also to provide access to certain people from outside.

Jesus said: "I am the gate to the sheepfold," in John 10. It is such a beautiful analogy reminding us that there is only one way into God's house, into God's kingdom and that is through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. Trust in Jesus Christ is the only gate into eternal fellowship with God. Nowhere in the Bible does it mention any other gate or way of access to God.

To this day, Jerusalem is famous for its many gates. To get inside the old city, normally, one must walk (or drive) through one of these gates. So also today, the tendency is to think that there are many gates into God's city. But Jesus contradicts this picture of many gates when He says that He is the gate. Yes, there are many gates. All but one lead to eternal destruction.

We live in a time when this gate of heaven is under great attack. In ancient times a city gate had to be defended the most because it was attacked more than any other place. Once the gate fell, the city fell. Remember the foolish decision to open the gates of Troy to the Greek's Trojan Horse and the resulting fall of the city? We laugh and scoff at those foolish people. And yet, there are Trojan Horses at our gates today in the form of inter-religious dialogue and cooperation.

Many today are being convinced that those who genuinely practice their faith will also enter into peace with God who is over all. We are being convinced to pray together with other faiths and tolerate their teachings, even within the walls of the church. And all of this is in the name of peace. But in reality they are a Trojan Horse come to invade, steal and destroy.

Jesus identifies these people as thieves and robbers; their goal is only to steal and destroy (John 10:8, 10). People will be led astray from the true gate—from Jesus Christ—and be "stolen" from the kingdom by false teaching. Will we stand up for the truth of the one gate of heaven? We must stand strong on the truth of God's Word and fight the fight of faith.

The gate of heaven, faith in Jesus, is not just a defense but also a place of entry for many from outside. Isaiah wrote of the kingdom of Christ: "Your gates will always stand open, they will never be shut, day or night, so that men may bring you the wealth of the nations—their kings led in triumphal procession" (Isaiah 60:11). There is an open invitation to come to the city of God. The King wants new residents from all over the world. "Enter the gates!" He says.

In a way, every believer is a gate to heaven. Although some unbelievers can come to God without the intervention of Christians through reading the Scriptures, normally

people are led to Christ through the witness of another.

Jesus did walk this earth, telling people to trust in Him and showing them the way to the kingdom of God. But then He sent His followers to go into all the world and make disciples. He gave them the ministry of evangelism. He has chosen us to be his ambassadors, "as though God were making his appeal through us" (II Corinthians 5:20). Each believer is to share with the lost how to find the way to God's Kingdom. Through our words and actions people are to be drawn to Jesus. We lead the way to the Savior.

So now we must ask the question of ourselves: Do my words and actions clearly show the way to the gate of heaven—to Jesus Christ, the Savior? It seems that often we function instead as a wall protecting our relationship with God rather than being a gate for providing others access to Him. We are afraid of letting people in. Why? It is something personal. The general thought is that faith is a private matter between God and the believer. Unfortunately, that mindset is one of the main reasons the Church doesn't grow. Our faith is to be public, open, and obvious for all to see. We don't have anything to hide. Jesus said we are to be a city on a hill or a lamp in a room. The way people find Jesus is by seeing Him in His followers. This isn't artificial or prideful, but simply who we are—living for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Someday we will stand at the gates of heaven and rejoice that we will finally enter into eternal blessings. But the true gate is actually entered long before—here on earth through faith in Jesus Christ. May we guard our Church with that truth, but at the same time welcome the world to enter the gate of the sheepfold and find eternal blessing through our testimony of the Lord Jesus.

Hinrichs, an AFLC missionary, works with East European Mission Network in Poland.



Tough decisions

*Director of Youth Ministries
position cut to three-quarter time*

BY PASTOR WADE MOBLEY

Members of the AFLC Youth Board decided at their December meeting to temporarily reduce the position of Director of Youth Ministries from full-time to three-quarter time. While they regret the need to make this decision, board members believe this financial move will lead to long-term ministry stability and success.

Youth Board members have considered this action in the past, but have avoided doing so by relying on savings, using generous one-time gifts (including \$11,000 in 2008) and at times making severe cuts in ministry investment. Further spending cuts would hinder ministry, and year-to-year dependence on one-time gifts masks the actual need of the department, hindering long-term development.

Youth Board members remain encouraged not only by excellent

ministry, but also by excellent giving. General giving from individuals and congregations increased from \$58,000 in 2006 to \$76,000 in 2007 to more than \$90,000 in 2008. Despite this pace of giving and responsible management of expenses, 2009 projects a \$24,400 deficit with a full-time director. In January 2008, Youth Board members called for prayer across the AFLC regarding this situation. In April 2008, board members instituted the Gideon Plan, through which 300 giving units of \$10 per month would cover this deficit. Congregations and individuals have responded generously to the Gideon Plan, but only 151 giving units have been raised as of this writing.

"I am in full support of this step," said Pastor Jason Holt, director of Youth Ministries. "It may be difficult, but it is necessary for the longevity of this department pursuing Jesus' call for making disciples."

The only remaining option was a reduction of the director's position to three-quarter time. This move will allow the Youth Board to balance the budget, fully funding the director at three-quarter time salary while adequately funding essential ministry. Sustained giving through 2009, along with the continued progress of the Gideon Plan, will put AFLC Youth Ministries in a position to accomplish its goals for 2010, which includes re-extending a full-time call to the director of Youth Ministries, the complete funding of ministry for years to come, and establishing an emergency fund to cover future short-term operating deficits.

General giving from individuals and congregations in 2009 must top \$103,000 in order to accomplish these goals.

The mission of AFLC Youth Ministries continues: Win the lost, build new believers, equip those believers for ministry, and multiply maturing disciples of Jesus in the AFLC. For more information about AFLC Youth Ministries, or to become part of the Gideon Plan, please go the Web site, youth.aflc.org, or contact Naomi Andrews at (763) 545-5631.

Mobley, who serves Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., is a member of the AFLC Youth Board.





: why?

BY SAM MENGE

Are short-term mission trips worth all the trouble it takes?

Why would a parent send their child halfway around the world to places unknown and potentially dangerous? Why would you spend close to a year planning, preparing, and working in order to do this? Why would you spend thousands of dollars on this experience that only lasts a few weeks, if that? Is it worth it?

These are questions that I have been asked and have asked myself. My wife, Rachel, and I are the student missions coordinators at the AFLC Schools in Plymouth, Minn. Student missions is a ministry under the umbrella of the AFLC Youth Ministries department. It allows students to have the opportunity to travel the world serving God, preaching salvation, and experiencing what it is like to be a missionary. Each year new trips are planned, youths are trained, and lives are changed.

"Is it worth it?" The only way that I know how to answer this is with Jesus' words and a story. Jesus says in Matthew 25:40, "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'" Jesus is talking about feeding the hungry and thirsty, caring for the strangers and sick, and clothing the naked. He is not just talking about good works here but is showing us a picture of love. And that is what we are called to do, to take Jesus' love into the world.

I want to share a story with you that has made missions worth

it in my life. I was on my first mission trip as a high school student in 2003. We were in South Africa and had been there for almost two weeks. Out of everything that we did on this trip the least that we did was to provide hot dogs and chips at a couple of services. At one particular service an older man from our team named Ford was standing and watching everything that was happening. As he stood there a little boy no more than 5 years old walked up to Ford with dirty, torn clothes and one shoe.

With the greatest joy that you will ever see on a child's face the boy said to Ford, "I get to eat today."

Ford looked down at him, nearly in tears, and asked, "Did you eat yesterday?"

The little boy just lowered his head and walked away.

We never saw that boy again but I think that Ford would agree with me when I say that boy's life answered all of our questions. His life was worth it. That trip changed my life and brought me into mission work. Praise God! I'm getting to see how trips just like that change the lives of people around the world—and, often, in even greater ways, the lives of our youths. God is allowing our youths to carry the love of Christ into the world and to serve others as Christ served us.

Menge, a junior at AFLTS, is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Valley City, N.D.

Serve & protect

*Have you thanked
your local law
enforcement
officers lately?*

BY PASTOR RANDY NELSON



I remember when I was first approached to consider working as a police chaplain. I had just arrived in Lisbon, Ill., and a neighboring pastor was telling me about the program in our county. At that time, I had no real insight into the need, but I thought it would be a good opportunity, so I agreed. What I have come to find is that these noble men and women who pass us by every day, who do such an important job and on whom we count and from whom we expect so much, are often times the least supported in our society.

The evidence for this is clear. Statistics show that on average 150 police officers are killed in the line of duty each year. At least three times that number commit suicide. Statistics also show that those in law enforcement are far more likely to be divorced than the national average, as well as more likely to have drinking problems (according to the National Police Suicide Foundation), primarily due to the pressures of the job.

After eight years as a chaplain and having attended two police officers' funerals, I can tell you that the need is real and that there are opportunities to make a difference.

What can be done?

If you are a pastor, volunteer to be a police chaplain. The primary work of the police chaplain is to provide pastoral care and support to police officers and their families. Many times, because of shift work and other conflicts, these families are isolated, unsupported and not involved with a local congregation. Often a police chaplain is the only pastoral care they have access to.

Every one of us can support our local police department.

Every officer I know will tell you that people love firefighters but hate cops. Your local police officers deserve to know that you respect and appreciate the work that they do. This is as easy as acknowledging them in public and speaking well of them in front of others. I would also suggest writing a thank you letter to your local chief for their service and ask how you can support them, as well as a requesting a list of members so that you can pray for them. You will be amazed at the response you will receive.

Finally, reach out to policemen as people. Unfortunately, most in law enforcement have learned to be wary of those who want to be their friends and may not be involved in a lot of social settings. But that doesn't mean that they wouldn't like to have relationships with others who can see them as people. Building relationships as friends can provide a level of support that we often take for granted, but can also provide opportunities to share our own lives, how we have found strength through our faith in Jesus.

All people, not just police officers, need to know that our friendship and concern for them is genuine, but that does not mean that we should be afraid to share with them what we have found through our relationship with Jesus. And if we truly want to make a difference in the lives of others, reflecting the love of Christ is the best thing we can do.

Nelson serves Lisbon Bethlehem Lutheran, Newark, Ill.

Obey trust serve

BY DANIEL GILES

Field mission work. There is literally nothing else like it. You are the “tip of the spear” on the front line of the spiritual battle for souls and lives every day and night. There is no more exhausting, intriguing, exciting, and rewarding career in the fields of philanthropy and ministry. Therefore it is essential what kind of commitment is established prior to beginning such ministry, because this could in effect determine the outcome of many lives.

Being the son of a pastor and missionary in Mexico for more than 20 years, and having married in Mexico, I have had the privilege and opportunity to see the world in a much different fashion than those pursuing a certain lifestyle.

One thing is for sure. The mission field is a raging battlefield and the enemy is bent on war against every believer. He is determined to destroy us, but he will not prevail.

Jerez, Zacatecas, is a beautiful colonial town of about 50,000 people in the mountains of central Mexico. Unfortunately, there is an ugly and horrible underbelly within it all. Drug trafficking, prostitution, and kidnapping are the norm, especially among the younger generations. Jerez is known by the locals as the adult playground of Zacatecas, hence our challenge and battle.

The youth group of Jerez is small but steadily growing. We were only four to six in the group for a while during the summer of 2008, but thankfully we have had more coming recently to total 12. Each and every one of them is daily met by some rather challenging and difficult situations in their homes and in their lives in general. Some of these challenges are greater than one would expect for someone so young.

One example is Oscar Ortega. At just 14, Oscar has been

living by himself for a few years. His father, due to a rather extreme confrontation with the drug cartels here in Jerez, had to leave the country for his own safety and the safety of his son. His mom wants nothing to do with Oscar or his dad, and she lives in another city. Oscar is an only child. He receives money from his dad in the USA every other week for school, rent, and food. He is currently also one of the most faithful and few young men in the youth group. He lives in a town two and one-half hours away from Jerez and comes alone on a bus every weekend to participate in the youth group on Saturdays and church on Sundays, only to return again in time for school. Oscar and I are working on getting him confirmed within the next couple of months.

There are many other examples in the Jerez youth group, and it has been quite the challenge to minister to these young men and women. We want to give them solid biblical teaching, fervent prayer, and a sound Christ-like example to follow. That's not an easy feat when the whole town of Jerez teaches and represents the absolute opposite. Our core values in the youth group are: obey, trust, serve. We obey God's commandments and direction; trust and confide in God's promises, timing, and protection; and serve Almighty God for His glory and His Kingdom. Amen.

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (I Peter 2:9, our theme verse).

Giles is working as a part-time missionary assistant in Jerez, Mexico.

Parish Education seeks office assistant

The AFLC Department of Publications and Parish Education is seeking a permanent, part-time office assistant with some computer knowledge to work Monday-Friday afternoons (20 hours/week) beginning in February or March. Interested applicants should contact Executive Director Marian Christopherson at (763) 545-5631 for more information.

Upcoming retreats at ARC highlighted

SIDExSIDE (grades 7-12)

Sno Daze (grades 4-7)

February 6-8

Cost: \$90 (register by Jan. 28), or \$110. Please register as a church group if possible. Signed medical forms are required for all younger than age 18. Visit the ARC's Web site for more information (www.arc-aflc.org) or email arcregistration@centurytel.net.

Couples' Retreat

February 13-14

Cost: \$130

Stay an extra night (Feb. 14) with breakfast for an additional \$30.

Speakers are Pastor Leroy and Marcia Peterson with Phil and Robin Johnson leading the praise and worship time. Bring your spouse to this special weekend getaway.

Women's Retreat

March 27-29

Cost: \$85

Speaker is Faylin Myhre with the theme, "Pearls for a Princess."

Come and share this special weekend with us.

A \$25 deposit is required with registration for ARC retreats. Please register at least 10 days prior to the retreat to avoid a late fee of \$20.



Pastor LeRoy Petersen (center) was installed Nov. 23, 2008, at United Free Lutheran, Greenbush, Minn. Pastor David Johnson (left) from St. Paul's Lutheran in Cloquet, Minn., led the service. Pastor Richard Gunderson (right) preached the message and led the installation. Pastor Alvin Sather and Dr. Lyle Mattson (pictured, from left) read the Scriptures during the installation.

Annual Conference housing now available

Plans are under way at Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minn., for the AFLC Annual Conference, scheduled for June 16-19. Below you will find the housing availability list so you can get your reservations in early. The conference registration information will be published in the March issue of the *Lutheran Ambassador*, and will also be available online.

Hotels

Best Western

800-293-2216
\$75.99/double,
\$69.99/single,
\$99.99/suites

AmericInn

866-736-5452
\$79.90/standard,
\$99.90/suite

Comfort Inn

218-736-5787
\$89.99/standard

Days Inn

218-739-3311
\$90.99/double,
\$70.99/single

Super 8

218-739-3261

Resorts

WesLake Resort

Underwood, Minn.
13 cabins/ no camping
800-258-9056
218-826-6523
www.weslakeresort.com

Swan Lake Resort

Fergus Falls, Minn.
5 cabins/camping available
800-697-4626
218-736-4626
www.swanlakesort.com

Ten Mile Lake Resort

Dalton, Minn.
12 cabins/camping available
218-589-8845
www.tenmilelakeresort.com
schultz@prtcl.com

Bed & Breakfasts

Bakketopp Hus

Fergus Falls, Minn.
218-739-2915
ddn@prtcl.com

Prairie View Estates

Pelican Rapids, Minn.
218-863-4321
prairie@prtcl.com

Loghouse B&B

Vergas, Minn.
218-342-2318
www.loghousebb.com
loghouse@tekstar.com

Schools celebrate Christmas with weekend of concerts



The AFLC Schools hosted a weekend of concerts and a Scandinavian open house the weekend of Dec. 12-15. Friday's event featured a service with performances by several gospel teams from the Association Free Lutheran Bible School. Saturday evening featured a concert by the Wind Ensemble, Concert Choir, Proclaim Choir and Seminary Chorus, along with the open house. Two concerts were given on Sunday afternoon and evening. Pictured (top) is the Proclaim Choir, the Concert Choir (left) and Seminary Chorus (above), all led by Andrew Hanson.

HEART, from page 5

tents, got up at 5:30 a.m. to run the obstacle course each day, and took both classroom and hands-on classes to prepare us for the field. We learned things like block laying, steal tying, cement mixing, carpentry, and puppets, among many other things. All the team members took the same classes, whether you were a work or evangelism team. The goal of the classes was to make sure we would be useful on the field. The goal of the uncomfortable living conditions of boot camp—the work boots we had to wear, the bucket bathing and laundry, the tents, the bucket flushing toilets and no running water—was to prepare us for the worst on the mission fields.

To be completely honest, I hated boot camp at first, but I knew I had to get through it in order to make it to Madagascar. It was through this time at boot camp that God helped me realize that I could not do it in my own strength and that I needed to surrender everything to Him.

When we first arrived in Madagascar, we had a few very long bus and truck rides. As uncomfortable as they were, they allowed for a lot of time to think and reflect. Missions has become heavy on my heart and Madagascar has always been very close to my heart, so I was hoping that this summer God would use this trip to reveal to me whether I am supposed to be a missionary to Madagascar or not. I pictured myself living in Madagascar with a family some day and falling in love with the countryside, but I never did get a clear answer.

My team's main work project was adding ceilings in the unfinished dorm rooms of the Bible Missions and Work Training Center that we stayed at in Mahajanga. We had four rooms to finish and we worked in pairs. The rest of the team worked on other various projects, including building a railing (and chiseling rocks into blocks to be used as the foundation of it), building a staircase, and painting "English curriculum" animals, shapes, letters, and numbers on the outside walls of the school. We also taught the classes that we had taken to teams of Malagasy teens as we ran a boot camp.

I was not assigned a teaching job, so I actually had very little interaction with the Malagasy kids. As I struggled with having a good attitude about this, it made me wonder if maybe it was God telling me that I'd be back someday and that I needed to let my teammates have their turn. But then maybe it was God's way of telling me that the Malagasy kids don't need me and that it's not His will for me to go back to Madagascar as a missionary. God has not revealed His specific plan for my future to me yet, and I am learning to be content with where He has me now.

Dyrud, a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn., is a senior at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School in Plymouth, Minn.

December 2008 memorials

AFLBS

Signe Swenson, Orland Olson, Joanne Jorgenson, Cody Anderson, Maynard Nesvic, James Hanson, Verna Pressnall, June Peterson, Christine Fox, Delbert Jones

AFLT

Guy & Thilda Flaten, Shirley Kargel, Signe Swenson, Zeldia Baker, Orland Olson, Roger Nelson

Evangelism

Helen Haas, Dorrice Brintnell, Jim Brintnell, Vernon Buck, Maurice McLoughlin, Gertrude Mork, Roger Nelson

General Fund

Earl Hartsoch, Guy & Thilda Flaten

Home Missions

Ray Lark, Arne Fladeland,

Ervin Larson, Doris Marsaa, Verna Nixon, Astrid Skjerve, Dorothy Durkee, Roger Nelson, Guy & Thilda Flaten

Parish Education

Norris Fugleberg, Guy & Thilda Flaten

World Missions

Orville & Clarice Ulland, Jerry Johnson, David Hult, Dorothy Durkee, Pastor Milo Gudim

Youth Ministries

Staff Sgt. William Haugan

In honor of ...

AFLBS

Bea Anderson

Evangelism

Pastor Rodger & Helene Olson

People and places

Pastor Stephen Mundfrom was installed at Grace Free Lutheran and Zion Free Lutheran, Valley City, N.D., on Nov. 16, 2008. Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC president, officiated at the services.

Members of **Discipleship Lutheran Fellowship**, Reading, Pa., celebrated the congregation's first anniversary on Dec. 7, 2008.

Members of **Bethlehem Lutheran**, Morris, Ill., hosted an AFLC Rally Day on Nov. 2. Departments represented at the rally were the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary, World Missions, Home Missions, Women's Missionary Federation, Parish Education and the Coordinating Committee.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- Dec. 31, 2008

FUND	TOTAL (subsidy)	REC'D IN DECEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$360,331	\$53,469	\$371,652	103
Evangelism	113,084	14,686	92,078	81
Youth Ministries	71,249	9,912	103,988	146
Parish Education	116,771	15,818	104,416	89
Seminary	220,252	41,166	219,803	100
Bible School	346,706	38,491	374,458	108
Home Missions	332,985	55,900	324,123	97
World Missions	288,948	38,188	313,579	109
Personal Support	457,495	73,517	494,144	108
TOTALS	\$2,307,821	\$341,146	\$2,398,239	104
TOTALS 2007	\$2,220,688	\$332,992	\$2,434,083	110

Goal 100%

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

Learning to THINK

I was traveling and stopped at a McDonalds. The order came to \$4 even. I gave the young man a \$20. He pushed some numbers on the machine and must have hit an extra zero because it told him to give me \$196 in change. I made some joke about how “that looks like a pretty good deal for me.” He wasn’t in a laughing mood. At least he

knew the number on the machine was wrong. The money drawer opened and he stared at the bills with a confused look on his face. He didn’t seem to know what to do so I finally said,

“You owe me \$16.” He started grabbing at bills but seemed a little flustered and unsure. I suggested he give me a ten, a five and a one. He did that and said thanks.

As I walked away I wondered if this young guy was going to end up being in charge of getting me my monthly check when I reach retirement age.

He was polite and nice. He appeared to be a hard worker and efficient. He probably does his job well, as long as the machine gives him the right information. When something wasn’t right with the machine, however, and he had to think on his feet, he was lost.

Our AFLC seminary and Bible school needs to train students how to think. In life we often get involved in situations where we don’t have a machine or a list that tells us exactly what to do. We need to, with God’s help, be able to think in a Christlike

manner. We need to take the truths of Scripture and apply them to what we are dealing with. The challenges are often not simple and require thought and discernment.

Over the years I’ve considered writing a list of things that were not covered in seminary. The list could get kind of long. When I was in seminary personal computer use was just beginning. We didn’t discuss when a local congregation should decide to do a Web site and how you should go about doing it. How to work with students who are spending extensive time surfing the Internet wasn’t a topic. Ways you can use PowerPoint while preaching didn’t come up in Homiletics class.

It is not that the education was incomplete. It is simply that opportunities and challenges have arisen that no one knew was coming 20 years ago. The students of today will face new challenges over the next 20 years, if Jesus does not return before then. They will also discover new ways of serving Christ and sharing the good news. To prepare them to make the best use of the new opportunities we must do more than give them a list of dos and don’ts. We must train them on how to apply the unchanging truths of Scripture to an ever-changing world.

Our congregations are in need of thinkers. Unfortunately, we often discourage them. The thinkers scare us. They come up with new ideas. They ask tough

questions. They wonder if we’re doing the work of Christ in the best way we can. Even if they occasionally make us uncomfortable they should be encouraged.

The apostle Paul was a thinker. If the Jews of a city wouldn’t listen he’d go to the Gentiles to share the good news (Acts 13:46). When he was in Athens with people who had little familiarity with the Old Testament, he shared the truths of Scripture in a different manner than when

The students of today will face new challenges over the next 20 years, if Jesus does not return before then. They will also discover new ways of serving Christ and sharing the good news.

he was speaking to a mainly Jewish audience (Acts 17:16-34).

New challenges continually arise, so we need to be life-long learners. We have to regularly ask God for wisdom, confident that He “gives generously to all” (James 1:5).

Our schools are not able to give students a chart with the answers for every situation that may arise. But we need not fear. God is prepared for whatever may come. We teach students to look to the Lord, apply His Word to their lives, think with the wisdom God gives and trust that in all situations, at all times, He is able.



Pastor Craig Johnson

building the base

The Incarnation

BY PASTOR ALAN ARNESON

The other night my oldest son had some things on his mind that were bothering him. Everyone had turned in for the night and he was still awake and had gotten up from his bed. Sensing what was troubling him, my wife got up and talked to him about it while she rubbed his back, and then she prayed for him.

Christ's incarnation is like that and much more. Jesus came not just to hang out with us because He had nothing better to do. No, He took on a human nature and became real to us. He knows what is on your mind, heart and soul. The purpose of His coming into the world was to save sinners (I Timothy 1:15) like you and me because He loves His creation.

The Bible portrays Jesus as both God and man. John states (John 1:1) that Christ who was one with God and was God from all eternity, became flesh and tabernacled among us (John 1:14). Paul likewise states that Christ, who was in the form of God, took upon Himself the likeness of men (Philippians 2:6-7) and he further states, "God was manifest in the flesh" (I Timothy 3:16). In Hebrews 1:3 the author writes that "He (Christ) is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature." Luke in greater detail, presents the historical fact of His incarnation, both His conception and His birth (Luke 1:26-38; 2:5-7).

There are in Christ two natures: both the divine and human. He is completely God as is God the Father, and He is completely human as we are. The Gospels give evidence from His life, works and miracles that He is true God. The Gospels also show His

human nature, complete with body and soul. Like other children, Jesus was hungry and thirsty, became tired and slept, was tempted and finally died a horrible death.

How this came to be can only be described as a mystery. He is true God and true man. He is only one person and not two persons. Christ is a divine person with a divine nature from all eternity. But from the time of His incarnation, His birth as a baby in Bethlehem, Jesus possessed both the human and divine natures.

Hebrews 4:15 tells us that the Son of God was tempted in every way and yet was without sin. How we respond to the temptation of sin determines the outcome. Christ was victorious over sin. He alone was without sin and was the perfect sacrifice that paid the price for your sins and mine. It was the shedding of the blood of the incarnate Christ that brought redemption to a lost world. If He were not man, He could not die; if He were not God, His death would not have had eternal value.

The other day my wife became a real confidant to our oldest son as she listened to him and heard what was on his heart. God knows our hearts all the more and has had, since the beginning of time, a plan for the salvation of a lost and condemned world. That did not begin with the crucifixion or resurrection, but with His Son's incarnation. Thank you Lord for dwelling among us to be our Savior from sin!

Arneson serves Calvary Free Lutheran, Fosston, Minn.