

THE LUTHERAN 

FEBRUARY 2015

# AMBASSADOR



# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



# What is in a day?

BY LIZ TONNESON

**I**s the 23rd of February a memorable day for you? If it is, it could be because in 1836 the siege of the Alamo began. Or because George Frideric Handel was born in 1685. Or it could be because John Quincy Adams, sixth president of the United States, died of a stroke in 1848. Or it could be because you remember scientists announcing Dolly's successful cloning in 1997.

For me, it is not memorable for any of the above, but because on that day in 2013 a young man nervously got down on one knee, pulled out a bright shiny ring he was hoping he wouldn't drop, and asked me to marry him. The details from that day stand out in my mind—the cold air, the frozen river, the people hiking by us who had no idea that our lives had just changed. I said yes, of course, and the ring slipped easily onto my freezing finger. It's been two years now, and I still can't believe I got to marry this guy! How amazing is that?

But as much as I love that man of mine, and as wonderful as the memories are, there is another date that is even more important than my engagement day. February 23, 1455, is the traditional date for the publication of the Gutenberg Bible. Up until that time, Bibles had been laboriously copied out by hand and, as a result, cost so much money that only the very rich or churches could have their own. Gutenberg's invention of the printing press made it possible for Bibles to be printed in a fraction of the time, and



at much less expense. As a result, more Bibles were produced and more people were able to read about God's love for them and about His Son. And as a more far-reaching result, the Bible I have the privilege of reading every night is a descendant of the Gutenberg Bible.

God is so good to give us His words written down so that we can read them, memorize them, and read them again when we forget what they say. And it boggles my mind that there are still 180 million—yes, million—people who have no Bible in their language. They have yet to read, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,” in their mother tongue. Bible translation projects still need to begin for 1,800 languages

before the people who speak them will see the words, “that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life,” written in front of them in black and white ([wycliff.org](http://wycliff.org); John 3:16).

Tonight as I flip through the pages of my Bible (and maybe as you flip through yours), I think that I will have a new appreciation for it. God's Word, living and active, in my own two hands, written in words I can read and understand. Yes, we are blessed. May more nations and peoples experience this blessing.

*Tonneson, a former missionary kid in Ecuador, lives in Cloquet, Minn., where her husband, Ryan, is the seminary intern at St. Paul's Lutheran.*

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"The Christian church has a heritage of values, beliefs, life-style, and practices that center in the person of Christ. One task of parents and congregation is to transmit this inheritance and make the accumulated riches and insights of the Christian church available to young people."

—Merton P. Strommen

"Children are not to be allowed to grow up without care or control. They are to be instructed, disciplined, and admonished, so that they are brought to knowledge, self control, and obedience. This whole process of education is to be religious, and not only religious, but Christian. It is bring[ing] them up in the training and instruction of the Lord which is the appointed and the only effectual way of attaining the goal of education. Where this means is neglected or any other substituted for it, the result must be disastrous failure."

—Charles Hodge

"The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles, but to irrigate deserts."

—C.S. Lewis

"An educational system isn't worth a great deal if it teaches young people how to make a living but doesn't teach them how to make a life."

—Author unknown

"If I could relive my life, I would devote my entire ministry to reaching children for God!"

—Dwight L. Moody

“We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (Colossians 1:28).

I have often considered the above verse from Colossians 1:28 as a good treatise on Christian education. There are many others, too, but this is an excellent verse concerning the educational efforts of the congregation.

In Christian education, as in most everything else we do, we focus on a goal. The Apostle Paul’s goal, as stated in this verse, was to “present every man complete in Christ.” He was not interested in leaving believers as spiritual infants, rather, that they become spiritually mature. Paul declares in verse 29 that to this end He expended all his God-given strength. This goal and such labor should be at the heart of every congregation’s Christian education program.

Diligent preparation and passion, however, are not in themselves adequate means by which to reach the goal. The *content* of what we teach or proclaim is critical. What was the content of Paul’s proclamation according to Colossians 1:28? “We proclaim Him ...” The proclamation of Jesus through the Word of God was essential to Paul, and it should be in our congregations today, as well. As Romans 10:17 declares, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” In Romans 1:16 we see a specific reference to the importance of the good news of the gospel, “... it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes ...”

How does Paul “proclaim Him”? According to Colossians 1:28, proclaiming Him involves admonishing. This word basically means “to warn.” God’s Word is full of warnings regarding the consequences of sin, the greatest of which is eternal damnation. The Bible proclaims Jesus to people who are lost in sin and in need of admonition in regards to that sin.

Proclaiming Him also involves teaching, and when Jesus is the subject of teaching, the good news of the gospel will be dominant. The content of Christian educational materials, then, should properly divide law and gospel so that the student is taught to repent of sin and turn to Christ for forgiveness and new life. The content should properly present sinful man in his state of need and the sufficiency of the cross of Christ to meet man’s need when he turns to God in faith. This leads to Paul’s goal, which is to “present every man complete in Christ.”

Jesus is strangely absent from much of the proclamation that takes place in the Church today. Oh, Jesus might be in the teaching—but not the Jesus of the Bible. Whether it is from the pulpit, in a Sunday school classroom, or in popular Christian literature, Jesus is not proclaimed as the Word of God truly reveals Him.

Instead, many teach that mankind is basically good. Not only is the biblical concept of sin dismissed, but even the revealing of an individual’s failure is frowned upon as that which will interfere with his self-worth and limit his human potential. This kind of thinking has even found its way into some Christian educational curriculum, where Jesus is presented as one who comes to assure us that there is something good in us. The message of this material often gives direction for the student without the necessary accompanying power to achieve that desired direction. Pastor Robert Lee, in his September 2014 editorial wrote: “Lessons that seek to inspire good behavior, minus the cross of Christ, may be simple moralism. Discipleship instruction that takes Christ for granted may be religious legalism.”

It is essential that we rely on the power that comes through the proclamation of the Word. That Word calls for repentance of one’s sinful nature and actions, followed by a trust that looks to Jesus and the cross as our only source of acceptability before God and adequacy for living the Christian life. All teaching in our congregations should direct the student toward this end.

I read some time ago of a recommended approach to confirmation in the Lutheran church that consisted of taking the class on a weekend mission trip. After the students had experienced the joy of giving themselves in service to others, the weekend would conclude with the students guiding one another in reciting their confirmation vows. It was suggested that the traditional method of instruction from *Luther’s Small Catechism*, followed by some form of catechizing and a confirmation service in church, only lends to the notion of “graduation” from the Christian education ministry. This is unfortunate, because when we think of content as it relates to Christian education, *Luther’s Small Catechism* is a prime textbook next to the Bible itself.

May God guide us in our congregations and our efforts to proclaim Him—to proclaim Jesus clearly in the educational ministries of our congregations. May the fruit of our efforts to proclaim and teach Christ from the Word truly find many being presented complete in Christ.

*Johnson, who serves Christ the King Lutheran, Wilson, Wis., is a member of the Board of Publications and Parish Education.*

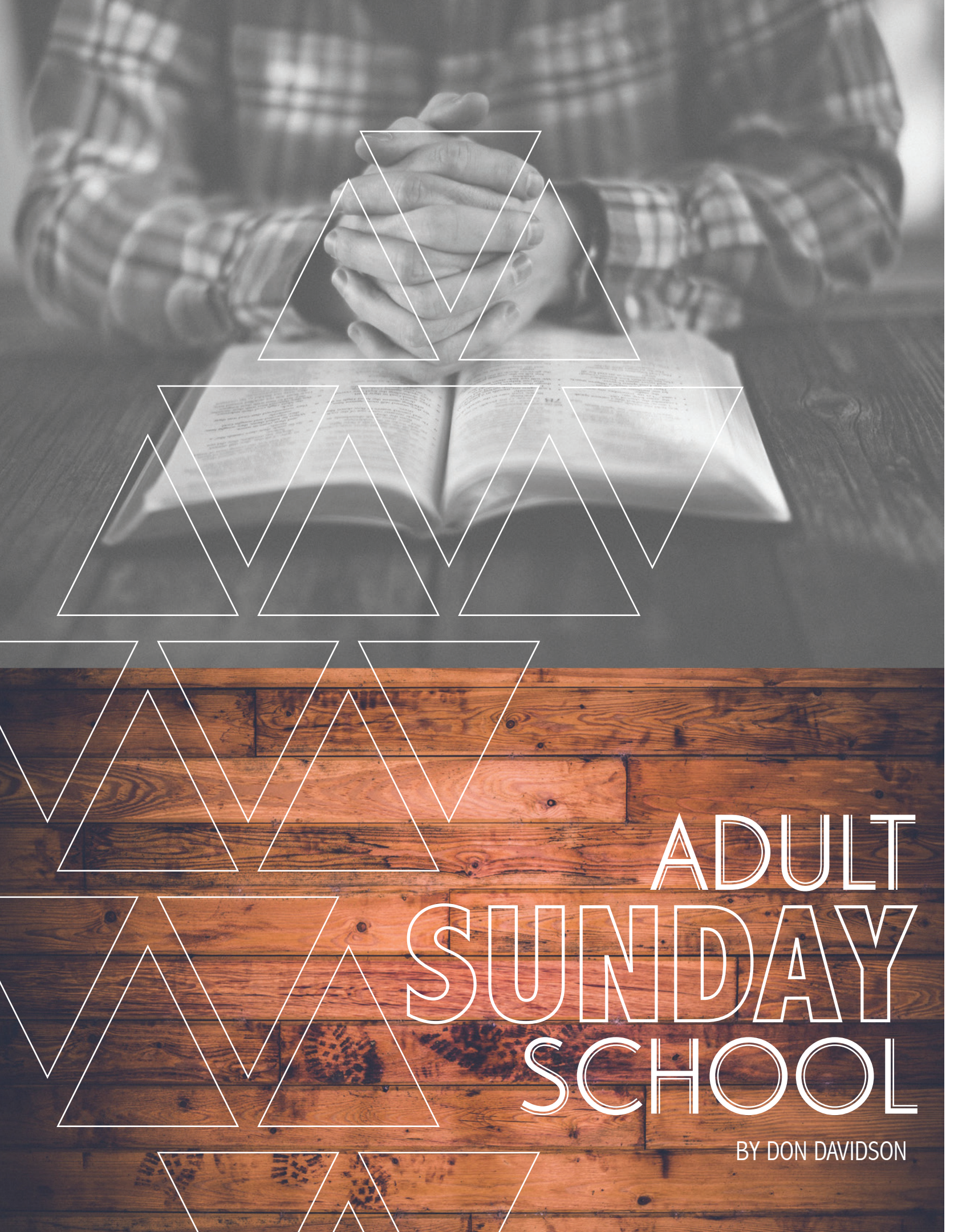




# CRITICAL CONTENT

BY PASTOR LES JOHNSON





# ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

BY DON DAVIDSON



I've attended Helmar Lutheran Church in rural Newark, Ill., for the last 48 years. The mission statement at Helmar says we are to be a "soul-winning, disciple-making, burden-bearing" church. I've found all three areas to be important aspects of congregational life, but have experienced a special emphasis in disciple making. And it all began with adult Sunday school.

When my wife and I started attending services there in 1967 I was a newly married, new Christian in my first job who had not been raised attending church. So I started my Christian life, married life, and teaching/coaching career all at the same time. I didn't understand the necessity of spiritual growth as a new Christian, but at the prodding of Joe Qualm, the adult Sunday school teacher at the time, we finally started attending his class. Through his mentorship, about five years later I started teaching an adult class and have continued in that position ever since.

In the last epistle the Apostle Paul wrote he stressed the importance of our spiritual growth, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). The word study means "to be diligent, be zealous." The emphasis is that the workman needs to be diligent in his labors so that he will not be ashamed when his work is inspected. As a young high school boys' basketball coach, that challenged me.

The Lord was gracious and used two events in my life to jump start or accelerate my spiritual growth. First, after 10 years teaching in the Yorkville public schools, the Lord called me in 1977 to Aurora Christian School during the third year of the school's existence. There I encountered a veteran math teacher, Gwen Walker, and an older Baptist pastor's wife, Kay Jordan, who was an English teacher. They oozed Christ! Through their example and testimony, I realized how very shallow my faith was and how lacking I was in even elementary biblical knowledge.

Second, in 1983, my wife Steph was diagnosed with melanoma on her back, the most deadly type of skin cancer. Our kids were ages 12, 10, and 9 at the time. I spent hours reading the Word, listening to Pastor Chuck Swindoll on Moody Radio, and praying for my wife. As I delved into the Word I also realized the truth of Paul's instruction to Timothy, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine [what is right], for reproof [what is not right], for correction [how to get right], for instruction in righteousness [how to stay right], that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16-17, my emphasis).

Earlier, Paul had called Timothy a "man of God" (I Timothy 6:11). I began to realize that by studying the Word of God, obeying it, and letting it control my life, God might be able to use me.

Two words stand out to me in II Timothy 3:16-17: "Perfect" means "complete, in fit shape, in fit condition," not sinless perfection, but it implies fit for use. "Furnished" means "equipped for service." The study of the Word equips us to live a life that pleases God and do the work He has called us to do. The purpose of Bible study is not just to understand the doctrines and defend the faith, but to also to equip God's people to do the work of God "... for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry ..." (Ephesians 4:12). Excellence in all areas should be a characteristic of every Christian's life.

I also began to understand that spiritual maturation is a life-long process. Paul says in Philippians 3:12, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me." Even Paul wasn't satisfied with his spiritual accomplishments. This attitude seems to be essential to growth. If an athlete thinks he has arrived, rests on his laurels, or gets a big head, he's in trouble. Sometimes we compare ourselves to other Christians, especially those who aren't making much spiritual headway, and we get complacent.

Through the process of spiritual growth, one of the most important lessons I have learned is that the Word of God becomes precious to us at our deepest point of suffering and need. Let me illustrate. My wife's cancer came back 24 years after her first diagnosis, and she went to be with the Lord about seven years ago. God became the "Father of mercies and the God of all comfort" (II Corinthians 1:3) for me. Lamentations 3:18 told of my grief, "And I said, 'My strength and my hope have perished from the LORD.'" I repeated Philippians 1:21 daily, "For to me, to live is Christ, to die is gain." Romans 8:18 gave me great comfort, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." The Word of God gave me comfort through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

After a few months, Psalm 16:11 started to lift me out of my despair, "You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

I started dating a beautiful Christian lady from my church, Sigrid Ostby, who had been a widow for 20 years. We dated for six weeks, got engaged, and were married three months later. The pastor who married us knew us both well and used Psalm 30:5b for his text, "Weeping may endure for night, But joy comes in the morning." We had both known the devastation of losing our spouse and now the Lord was bringing hope and restoring love again.

The opening prayer in the *Ambassador Hymnal* reflects the absolute necessity of knowing, growing, and obeying the Word: "... that through the preaching (teaching) of Your Word we may be taught to repent of our sins, to believe on Jesus in life and death, and to grow day by day in grace and holiness."

*Davidson is a member of Helmar Lutheran, Newark, Ill.*

became a student of the Word of God in 1962. That year I had a Sunday school teacher who was so passionate about the Bible that it would have been impossible not to have been impacted by him. I caught his passion and 52 years later, I am still an enthusiastic student of Scriptures and have been faithfully teaching in a congregational setting for the last 35 years.

In 1962 Christian education in the local congregation was important because there simply weren't many other options available. Sure, there were Christian high schools, but those that existed were usually Catholic. Even if Protestant parents were willing to send their child to one, they were usually last on a long waiting list.

Today, with more Christian schools, the question is often asked, "How important is it that local churches have a good Christian education program?" My answer would still be that it is very important for several reasons.

In spite of the increased number of private schools in the U.S., statistically they make up only 24 percent of all schools. In addition, only 10 percent of all students in the U.S. attend a private school.<sup>1</sup> For many children a private school education is not an option, either because of the location of the schools or the cost involved. As a result, many of our children are still attending public schools, where the curriculum may be humanistic. Some public schools are very good at subtly weaving a humanistic agenda into illustrations and application questions that often make it difficult for even a mature adult to catch, much less a teenager or a child.

Martin Luther said, "I am afraid that the schools will prove the very gates of hell, unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures and engraving them in the hearts of the youth." You will not find the public school system attempting to explain Holy Scripture at all, much less diligently laboring to engrave them on the hearts of our young people—quite the opposite. The local church must pick up this responsibility.

One might ask, "Isn't it enough that our children go to church every week and listen to the sermon?"

Our culture is becoming more and

more pluralistic and relativistic. I already mentioned that some public school systems can be very good at pushing a progressive agenda. Part of that agenda is to challenge the idea of truth. Everywhere you turn in our culture today, truth—if such a thing even exists—is being debated. Even if our students attend church every Sunday, and let's add in Wednesday evenings for good measure, maybe they get an hour or two of Bible-based preaching a week. Preaching, as good as it might be, can only do so much. If we want our students to be able to stand confidently on the truth of God's Word, they must be taught biblical principles, theology, and doctrine.

Unfortunately we have not been doing a very good job of this. A few years back a survey done by LifeWay Research looked into the reasons young people were leaving the Church. Interestingly they found that many who left the Church held to a strong belief in God. Eighty-six percent believed that God exists and created the world. When asked if they believed they were saved and would go to heaven upon death, 66 percent said yes, 14 percent said no, while 20 percent were not sure. However, when it came to the Bible, many of them felt that it was not a credible document. Forty percent thought the Bible contained errors, 30 percent did not know if it did, while only 30 percent said it didn't. And 24 percent believe it was not written by God, 18 percent believe it was not translated correctly, 15 percent believe the Bible contradicts itself, and another 18 percent believe evolution proves the Bible wrong.<sup>2</sup>

Belief in the Bible can be a major predictor of whether a young people will leave the Church and whether they will one day return.

Recently I was researching the religion of Islam for a class I was teaching at the time, "Faith of our Neighbors." During my research I watched a video of Dr. Nabeel Qureshi explaining why he had converted to Christianity. During his explanation he mentioned that truth matters to a Muslim. In fact, he pointed out that both Christianity and Islam are based on certain truths. He then talked about several encounters he had with Christians about their faith, and none of them were able to defend

the deity of Christ. He often challenged their faith in Christ using the Scriptures themselves. It wasn't until college, when he encountered a Christian who was confident enough in his knowledge of God's Word, that Qureshi was forced to take a hard look at the truth claims of Jesus and the Scriptures.<sup>3</sup>

We need to do a better job teaching these truth claims to our youths and helping them overcome questions and doubts they might have. If we don't do so, not only will our churches continue to lose members, but our young people may end up embracing something other than the truth.

Which brings me to my third point. Years ago if anyone wanted to share the gospel with a person from another culture and religious belief, they would have to travel hundreds if not thousands of miles away from home. This is no longer true. The world is coming to us. In my neighborhood alone we have followers of Islam, Buddha, and Shintoism. More and more we are encountering people of other religious belief systems in our neighborhoods. These are in addition to the agnostics and atheists who already live there. Then there are those groups who are very active like Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons. Opportunity to be a Christian witness is greater than ever. Jesus said, "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:38). Paul told Peter, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15). We need to prepare our young people to be ready to enter the harvest field with strength and confidence in the answers they have, to be bold witnesses to the truths found in God's Word.

*Korpi is a member of Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn.*

1. Council for American Private Education, [www.capenet.org/facts.html](http://www.capenet.org/facts.html)
2. Stetzer, E. (2007), "LifeWay Research Uncovers Reasons 18- to 22-Year-Olds Drop Out of Church."
3. "Why Muslim Dr. Nabeel Qureshi Converted to Christianity," [www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3lHueRXvho](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3lHueRXvho).





BY GARY KORPI

# TEACHING TRUTH





# EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY

BY MICHAEL OSTHUS



**P**art of Jesus' final commission before ascending into heaven was for the Church to make disciples by "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). I searched for the original meaning of this word online and found that sometimes, the obvious answer was the best one all along: "to teach ... to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them ... to impart instruction ... instill doctrine into one ...," etc. It was one of the last things Jesus said; it must be important. So, how is that going for you?

Throughout my life I have had many opportunities to pursue the commission of Jesus, but I have also struggled. At times, I am forced to acknowledge how infrequently I view my own church life as part of an educational community. Granted, that is not a church's only role, but even as a teacher I sometimes lose sight of that function in comparison to the other vital values, such as community with fellow believers. Despite my own inadequacies, what I can do is identify the things I have had the opportunity to observe, illuminate what God's pattern is, and speak out to support what I see that is good, and that which I desire to see more clearly.

First, where in the congregation do we expect to see education practiced? Every church will have some form of education taking place in the sermon, but is that the

primary source? Preaching and teaching are both vital to the ministry of the congregation, but they are different, and each has its own sphere. In the preaching of the sermon, we hear the Word of God magnified that we may be convicted of our sin and receive grace and hope in the working of the Holy Spirit. However, a teaching context will present an opportunity for discussion, questions, and reasoning together. Most congregations have a Sunday school period where specific topics may be addressed: points of doctrine, Bible history, theology, and more. It is a pity that this opportunity is not always used to its full potential. I confess that I have had days when I have caved in and decided to go home after a church service because I would rather stay at home an extra hour by myself. But why stop there? If education is based on relationships, how often do we invest in small group studies, or even one-on-one discipleship within the body?

Let us carry that on to another question: who are our educators? Our pastors are the overseers of the congregation, and according to the Apostle Paul's correspondence with Timothy (1 Timothy 3:2), teaching is the standalone skill that must exist as a requirement for this office (in contrast to prescriptions of temperament and behavior). Some would stop there, but what about our other overseers? Do not many of our churches have faithful, appointed deacons

and deaconesses or elders to whom we look up? How often do we seek them out as teachers? Granted, not everyone is gifted in teaching, but God can use anyone, from the senior citizen who is housebound to the high school freshman in youth group.

Then, how do we approach education in church? I have already mentioned some of my own failings, but surely there are more. How often have we as teachers skimmed through our lessons early on Sunday mornings? Prayerful investment in a Sunday school lesson should be very challenging, which can make it hard for our sinful nature give over the desire to squeak by. How often do we provide opportunities to train our Sunday school teachers or discipleship mentors to be more effective?

I have definitely raised more questions than I am capable of answering. I conclude instead with a statement: God is the one who created us to reason, discuss, ask questions, and learn. Education within a church body is a gift from God for the sake of knowing Him better and growing together as His body. We are all in some way to be teachers and students within that body under His headship. This great opportunity is right in our midst, a gracious blessing wherein we can worship and come to know our God, the greatest Teacher.

*Osthus, Tioga, N.D., is a public elementary school music teacher.*

“So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. ... And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:41, 47).

**I**t is breathtaking to read about the formation of the early church. The Acts of the Apostles reveals that God was establishing His Church. Hearts were embraced by the truth of Christ and the love of His people. Through the counsel of His Word and the power of His Spirit, He still is building His Church. Therefore, it continues to excite and encourage pastors and congregations alike when someone says, “I’d like to become a member of your church.”

Scripture reveals the New Testament church was one of order and unity. Following that example, present-day AFLC congregations have developed biblically based membership classes to assist in the orderly formation of free and living Lutheran congregations. Like the early church, Christ is effectively using these congregations to expand His Kingdom on earth.

Reviewing the type, number, and approach/design of membership classes is extremely important. Consider the following:

First, the type and number of classes to offer. There are good reasons to have different types of classes. Group classes provide a great way for new members to meet one another. Such gatherings often stimulate better times of discussion. However, when a potential member has unique spiritual questions or concerns, the individual class setting is preferred. In most cases, a custom-fit combination of individual and group classes will best serve the overall purposes.

The number of classes will depend on the amount of material necessary to cover your objectives. Too many classes can be overwhelming, while too few can limit your effectiveness. Usually one individual class and three or four group classes will prove adequate. Having material handouts for the

next class session will help attendees be better prepared to share in discussion.

Second, how you approach the class will help you meet your objectives.

One aspect involved is in how you welcome people. Allowing others to know you provides a welcoming atmosphere of personal friendship. The art of asking questions is an excellent way to build relationships. The initial meeting should include time for getting to know them, and helping them get to know you.

Knowing their family history, faith/church journey, and current life situation is the welcoming door to a great relationship. Allowing them to know your family history, faith journey, and ministry call (assuming the pastor is the class facilitator) makes the welcoming connection complete. The personal nature of this time makes an individual class the preferred setting.

A second aspect is through information. Passionately communicating the Church’s God-given mission and vision for a free and living congregation is essential. Question-and-answer times will assure better understanding.

### Our AFLC Roots

The AFLC has two excellent tools that every class presenter should utilize. *Roots of Freedom* and *Standing Fast in Freedom* afford a great synopsis of the AFLC’s pietistic heritage, congregational focus, organizational structure (association versus synod), evangelistic emphasis, and joint ministries. Knowing who we are and why we do what we do is critical.

### Our AFLC Convictions

The inerrant authority of the Bible in all matters of faith and practice is one of the hallmarks of our AFLC. The Declaration of Faith section in *Standing Fast in Freedom* offers an overview of our beliefs in regard

to: doctrine, Christian unity, church polity, practical life, and church life. A thorough discussion of these beliefs will help each member appreciate our Free Lutheran uniqueness in Word and sacrament. Two useful resources are Luther’s *Small Catechism* and Martin Anderson’s *The Adult Class Manual*.

### Your Practices

Free and living congregations, under the authority of God’s Word, have freedom to establish their own practices of worship, study, fellowship, service, and governance. Having lay leaders present these practices can serve a dual purpose. First, the unique identity of your congregation will be communicated. Second, interaction with lay leaders will forge meaningful relationships. Your church’s constitution should be given in advance of this class.

### Your Opportunities

It is vital for each person to know that his or her life has meaning and he or she has a purpose (Romans 12:4-6a). Staff members, lay leaders, and volunteers should present ministry opportunities afforded to each new member. This is also a good time to present God’s desire for every believer to faithfully give of his or her time, talents, and treasures (II Corinthians 9:6-9). Equipping every member for service in and outside the church walls helps everyone realize that the Great Commission is God’s mandate for every member of His Church.

As God continues to build His Church, membership classes that offer Christ’s heart-felt embrace of truth and love will prove to be spiritually beneficial for time and eternity.

*Brandt, Rapid City, S.D., ministers to pastors through *Shepherding the Shepherds*.*





# GROWING IN NUMBERS

BY PASTOR MICHAEL BRANDT





# UP FOR THE CHALLENGE

BY PASTOR JOHN KENT

**W**ho should we blame when our youths no longer want to be a part of the Church? We have been quick to blame our modern culture and the fact that “things aren’t what they used to be.” We look at drugs, television, music, and we say, “Those are the culprits that tear our kids from the Church.”

While these are certainly some of the factors, they aren’t the only ones. We must be willing to look at ourselves, as well.

If we don’t properly train our kids to know the depths of God and His Word, they will most certainly stumble and blunder their way to eternal damnation. We need to patiently teach our kids important doctrines like God’s holiness, God’s sovereignty, the sinful corruption of mankind, justification by faith alone, and the sanctification that we are to be growing in. Some would say these categories of study are either too lofty

or too lackluster to be discussed with our youths in any depth. Or the charge may be made that these topics just don’t apply to the lives of our kids. If this is true, then the fault is ours. We must not allow these important truths to lack the luster that they indeed have. Teach them at a level that our kids can understand, yes, but teach them nonetheless.

Let us not be frugal in giving the meat of God’s Word to our kids, fearing that they will choke on it. Perhaps it is just what they need to become healthy. The Psalmist says, “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth” (119:103). If this is true then we have nothing to fear in serving God’s Word regularly and heartily without apology. Here are four suggestions to consider as we look at our ministry to youths.

Doctrine is our friend. Our kids are able to handle more. They already wrestle

with life’s problems. We must hand them the rudder that will keep them from being tossed about in life’s stormy sea. Paul told his friend, Titus, what I think he would tell us, “You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1).

We speak for God’s Word. In our attempts to package the gospel we often resort to trying to compete with what the world offers. This is not our task and it is a fool’s errand, as well. Most churches lack the funds to put on a show that can compete with modern media. Yet we try to compete for the attention of our kids using all kinds of glitz and techniques. We must be fully persuaded that the gospel is our only product (1 Corinthians 2:2) and the One who draws men is God alone (John 6:44).

Time is of the essence. We have our young people for such a limited time each week. We must take care that we are not better at teaching pingpong than we are at





teaching providence or we will only wind up grooming mediocre basement athletes instead of mature men and women of God.

"What works?" is not a good question. We cannot allow our ministries to youth to be governed by pragmatism. We know, for instance, in a ridiculous example, that giving out \$100 bills at each youth meeting would probably draw a good crowd. We also know that just because that works does not make it the right way to do youth ministry.

Look not so much to what works according to a worldly standard of success, and instead focus on what God says needs to be done. "Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" (1 Corinthians 1:20). Step away from the trendy and move toward what is essential. God is the one who gives the increase, and even though a work may appear successful, "Unless the LORD builds the house, those who labor on it labor in vain" (Psalm 127:1).

*Kent serves Reformation Lutheran, El Cajon, Calif. This article is reprinted from the Aug. 25, 1998, issue of The Lutheran Ambassador.*

# WHAT NEXT?

BY EMILY VOGT

I am currently a junior in high school and have just started the chaotic process of finding a college to go to; it is not easy.

God has placed me in specific areas and relationships for a reason. The foundation of my faith was built at my home church, where I have a village of people covering me in prayer every day. I have a beautiful group of girls with whom I am able to do life on a regular basis. There is so much that God is revealing to me in my time before college: who I am as a person, what my future holds, etc.

In thinking about what college to attend, I am realizing that it will be extremely difficult to leave my church, to try to find a new group of people to belong to. Though I know God will help me in this process, I also know that any church I land in won't be the same village—and that is difficult for me to swallow. But being away from home is something that I have longed for since I was 10 years old.

On the other hand, if I decide to stay home and attend college in-state, I wonder if my spiritual life would be mostly static: I would be going to the same church, doing life with the same group of friends. Having the security of being with the people I am comfortable around, would my faith be stretched?


Should I go, or should I stay? It is a difficult decision, plus deciding between a Christian university and a liberal arts college.

Going to a Christian university would mean that I would learn how to be the light of world that Jesus told the crowds about (Matthew 5:14-16) while also training in my career choice. One other college I am looking at is a liberal arts college. I know just by the word "liberal" that it would be a tough place for me to fit in because of my views on some things in the world. Then again, God could use me to be a light there.

I have no idea where God is going to lead me. As I look back on my life, He has led me to some pretty crazy things already, changing my life forever. But I know this: I am held gently by His hand all the time (Isaiah 41). I know that He has given me a purpose in my career choice, and whatever college I decide to go to He will use me to further His kingdom. Wherever He calls me, I will go. Ultimately I know that I cannot live my adult life without Him. He has given me a firm foundation to stand on through the ministry of my home church. He will forever be the constant one.

*Vogt is a member of Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn.*





# WATERS IN THE WILDERNESS

FEBRUARY 11

“Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life” (John 6:27).

**N**o person can live without food. When God created man He also provided sustenance. He planted a garden in which there was an abundance of food and water. He also created in man a hunger and thirst so that man would eat and drink. The provision was there; all that man had to do was to help himself from God’s abundant provision. But when man fell into sin by disobeying God’s command, he was driven out of the garden and had to work hard for a living.

In our verse today we are told to work for the bread that abides unto eternal life. God wants us to work for this food, too. He discourages idleness. Not that we can by any effort on our part

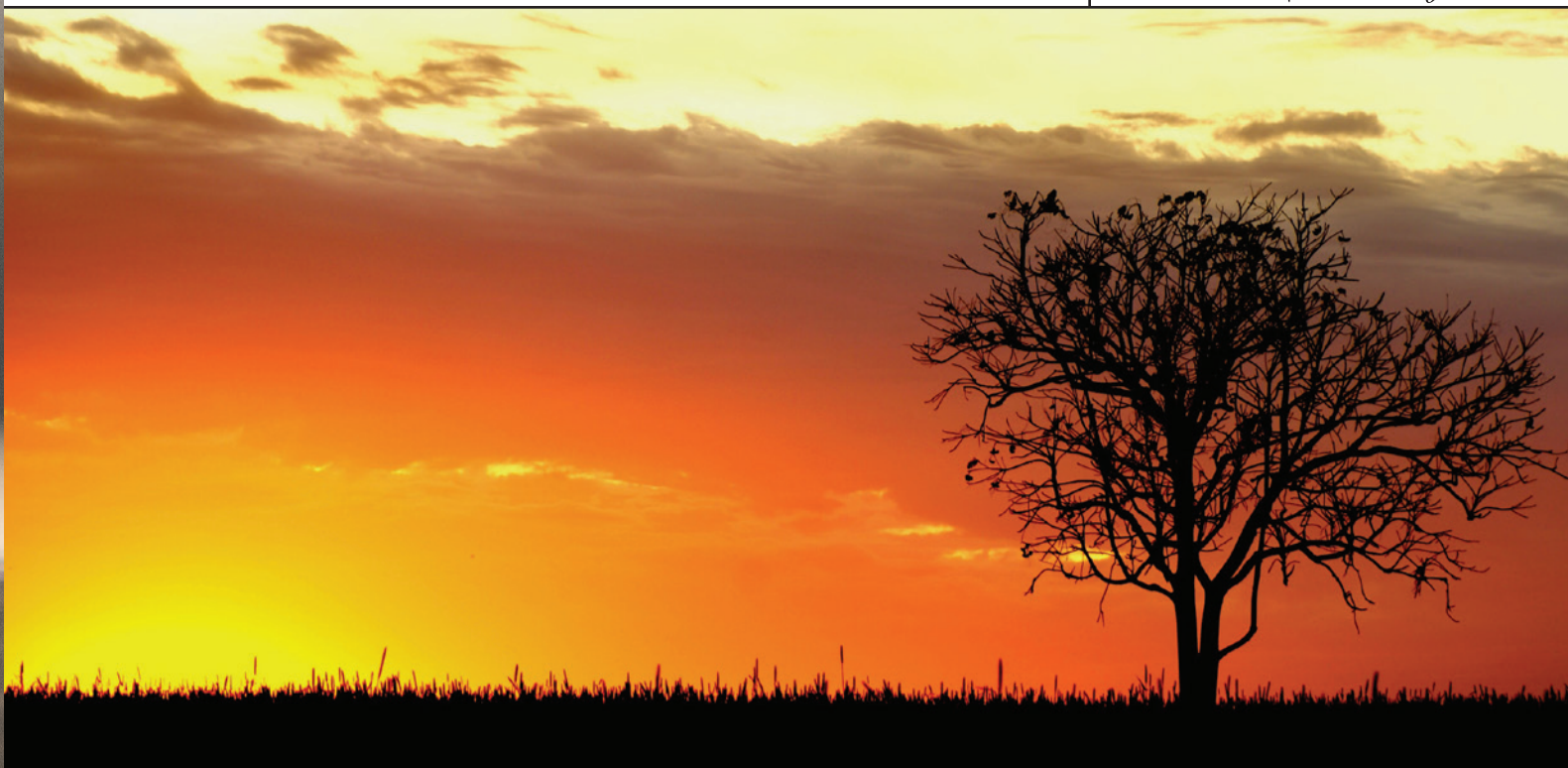
earn salvation, but we must put first things first; we must take time to feed our souls on God’s wonderful provision. We must read the Word, and that is work. We must believe what God tells us in His Word, and that is also work. “This is the work of God, that they believe on Him whom God hath sent” (John 6:29).

Jesus has identified Himself with the Word. He who feeds on the Word is actually feeding on Jesus Christ—who is the Bread of Life.

*Rev. Trygve F. Dahle, now deceased, was a pioneer AFLC pastor who served congregations in South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, and Saskatchewan. He retired in 1973 and lived in Spicer, Minn.*

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





# Compassionate care

BY PASTOR BRIAN PEARSON

I first became familiar with the work of hospice while serving in parish ministry, and seven years ago encountered it more personally as my parents spent their final days on earth under the compassionate care of hospice staff. I didn't know it then, but I would soon begin serving full-time as a chaplain with Lifepath Hospice in the Tampa, Fla., area.

When a patient is admitted to Lifepath, I call to offer a visit and have a simple mission: to help prepare them for death and eternity.

Some of my patients are filled with anxiety, fear, and anger that must be heard and addressed before we can discuss any hope for eternity. Others ask questions about God, death, forgiveness, and eternity that I do my best to answer, sharing the truth of God's Word. For patients unable to interact with me, I seek to provide a loving, Christ-like presence, sharing Scripture, prayer, and spiritual music. Then there are believers in Christ, comforted by the hope found in the promise of the gospel, who invite my support and fellowship in the Lord as they wait expectantly for God to take them home.

I view my patients and families as a unique congregation. They are black, white, Hispanic and Asian. They've ranged in age from 2 days old to 109 years old. They are young parents preparing to leave behind their children. They are teenagers facing the fact that they won't grow up and have a normal kid's life. They are a husband or wife soon to part with the love of his or her life. They are seniors waiting for their final day on earth to come.

One more notable visit was with a 72-year-old man born in

Puerto Rico and raised in New York City. When I called and offered a visit he replied, "You know I'm an atheist, right?"

I said, "Yes, I heard that but wondered if I could still come meet you and give you some small gifts to thank you for your service in the US Navy." (As chaplains we perform an Honor Pinning Ceremony, presenting a small flag, cap, pin, and certificate to our veteran patients.)

After assuring him this wasn't a spiritual ceremony, he welcomed my visit. I spent about an hour in his home, presenting the gifts and then talking about his life, job, and family. During this conversation he said he went to a Catholic parochial school as a boy and had "given up on religion" as a young man. I listened closely as he discussed this for a several minutes. When I prepared to leave, I asked if he'd like me to pray but he politely declined. When I asked if I could come for another visit, he paused and then said, "Sure, I guess you can stop by sometime to chew the fat."

That invitation led to multiple visits during which this self-described atheist's heart was touched by the Lord and His Word, and he accepted the gift of eternal life! I praise God for this experience and for the privilege of serving the Lord in helping prepare souls for eternity.

Thank you for praying for all of our AFLC chaplains as we share the love of Jesus with our very unique congregations.

*AFLC Chaplain Pearson serves with Lifepath Hospice in the Tampa, Fla., area.*



# Who is a Parish Builder?

BY RACHEL RUMOHR

**P**arish Builder: it's a title you may have heard often, are getting familiar with, or have not heard until now. Really, the title is a distinctive way of describing someone who is active in a church, although maybe in a more specific way than the average lay person. As a ministry of AFLC Home Missions, Parish Builders are typically sent to a church to help *build* its ministries and *train* church members in leading different ministries. With this in mind, every church will have different needs that will need to be met by Parish Builders, and each Parish Builder will have a different experience from another serving in a different congregation. But the center of it all must be Jesus.

Being a Parish Builder is not about being a special person, but it is about letting Jesus work in and through you. It's about the gospel of Jesus. God calls each of us to serve, and choosing to be a Parish Builder is just one way to do that. It is not the only

way to serve, for God calls us to do many things in our lives in different seasons.

Several years ago, God called my husband, Jordan, and me to be Parish Builders in Mesa, Ariz. Now a family of three, we were recently led by God to move to Minnesota, where, for the time being, Jordan works as an airplane mechanic. Many times God's will isn't expressed in an obvious "do this," but is more like a walk with Him where we keep Him as the focus of our lives. God's Word doesn't always tell us exactly what to do, rather, He asks us to be faithful in all that we do.

Being a Parish Builder has opened my eyes to all that goes on in church ministry. Whether those who help in parish ministry are members or Parish Builders, they need our prayer, support, and encouragement.

In many ways each member of a congregation is a Parish Builder. What is needed is active, unified commitment to Christ and His work within a congregation. Do the work that God has set before

your congregation. That means sharing the gospel with those in your community and reaching out to those who do not know Jesus and sharing His love and life with them. What is it that God has called you to do? Are you doing it? Consider how you can be active in your congregation and then get in there and do the work of Christ for His glory and honor.

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:23-25).

*Rumohr served as Parish Builder with her husband, Jordan, at Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz.*



# Celebrating two birthdays

BY PASTOR KEVIN OLSON

**Y**eshwan and Lilly Grace, two Indian children, were celebrating their birthdays with cake and candies in the traditional Christian Indian fashion. That includes songs, a devotional message, and sharing of the cake—a tradition where the birthday child gives a piece of the cake to each parent or special guest while they also receive a piece of cake and a bit of frosting is placed on the cheek. The room was full of friendly onlookers who waited in anticipation of the candies that would be passed around by the honored guests.

The birthday devotion came from John 3:1-8, a recounting of when Jesus met with Nicodemus to discuss a special kind of birthday. Nicodemus asked Jesus, “How can someone be born when they are old? Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.”

Jesus gave Nicodemus the answer he needed, even though it was not the answer to the question that he asked.

It was fitting to talk about two birthdays at the celebration, since there were two children. But the idea of a second birthday was a new concept for many people present. The first birthday marks the day of someone’s birth, the work of art that God has fashioned for nine months. It marks the birth of someone He has created with talents and purpose for His glory. The second birthday is a spiritual birthday, one that everyone can have but, unfortunately, many choose not to. It is the day when a person’s life is given to Jesus. For some it happens in baptism, for others it is when they trust Jesus with their lives and the Lord gives them spiritual gifts: eternal life and a relationship with Christ.

This was a new concept to these children. The students at St. Paul’s School come from a variety of backgrounds—some even from Hindu families. Many had not heard this story from the Bible. When the children were asked if they wanted a spiritual birthday, they didn’t have to think twice or understand how it was possible. They responded in faith, asking Jesus to be Lord of their lives, trusting that He had a plan for their lives. Thirty-five students raised their hands immediately, and Emmanuel led them in a prayer to welcome Jesus into their hearts. They prayed on their knees with a humble, confident faith. It was just that simple.

Like Nicodemus, we can complicate our faith by trying to understand and explain every minute detail. For these children, it was not complicated; it was just an invitation from Jesus. Our mission is this simple: to share or extend the invitation. It can be at a birthday party or during casual conversation with a friend. It can



be over coffee or while out on a walk. It is using the opportunities that the Lord puts before us. He is able to create a new spiritual child who is equally as beautiful as the baby that He fashioned for nine months. He is able to grow that same child into a mature Christ follower who, in turn, brings other spiritual babies into the world.

*Olson, Crystal, Minn., is the department head of the Ambassador Institute.*



# AFLC Schools host three-week J-term classes



ABOVE: Pastor Kevin Olson leads the Missions I & II class for both junior and senior Bible school students.  
TOP: Seniors Abigail Johnson, New Prague, Minn., and Ashley Rolf, McIntosh, Minn., look over a list of unreached peoples before praying.



ABOVE: Seth Moan, Corcoran, Minn., leads his table in prayer for an unreached people group during the Missions I & II class during AFLBS J-term.





ABOVE: Nate Haugen, a 2007 graduate of the Bible school, speaks to juniors during the Evangelism and Discipleship class offered during the three-week January interterm. Haugen spoke with a group from Outpost Ministries, which is based in the Twin Cities metro area.

## Nyman installed at Hagerstown, Md.

Pastor Kris and Paula Nyman have accepted God's calling to serve Christ Community Church in Hagerstown, Md. They arrived in Hagerstown on Nov. 14, 2014, and Pastor Kris was installed on Nov. 30 by Pastor Paul Nash, director of AFLC Home Missions. The date marked the ninth anniversary of Christ Community Church's first worship service, which took place the first Sunday of Advent in 2005. A soup and sandwich luncheon followed the worship service as part of the welcoming of Pastor Kris and Paula to their new church family. The congregation is very thankful to have the Nymans in the Hagerstown area to help them magnify God, grow together, and see the Lord change lives.



Pictured, from left, are Mike Gregory, Pastor Paul Nash, Rick Wilson, Mark Benz, Pastor Kris Nyman, Shake Fristoe, Paula Nyman, Kerry Henson, Don Wilson, Jody Koontz, and Josh Wilson.



## AFLC memorials: December

### AFLBS

Margaret Mundfrom  
Lori Rude  
Ruth Claus  
Bill Heylens  
Edwin & Mildred Mathison  
Knut & Gerda Knutson  
Dave VanHoveln  
Earl Hartsoch  
Elsie Griffith  
Grace Claus

### AFLTS

John Mundfrom  
Margaret Mundfrom (2)  
Bill Heylens  
Gilmer Doop  
Dave VanHoveln  
Chinon Stalions  
Earl Hartsoch  
Dr. Francis Monseth

### All Departments

Earl Hartsoch

### General Fund

Margaret Mundfrom  
Gordon & Carley Olson

### Home Missions

Roger Peterson  
Anna Dahle  
Kevin Gann

Margaret Mundfrom  
Darlene Davidson  
Gordon & Carley Olson  
Harvey Hoops

### FLAPS

Robert A. Olson

### Parish Education

Roger Peterson  
Margaret Mundfrom

### VISION

Margaret Mundfrom

### World Missions

Eloise Soterberg  
Gordon & Carley Olson

... in honor of

### AFLBS

Bob & Clarice Softing

### Evangelism

Dean Hobelmann

### HIS Fund

Pastor Michael & Coleen  
Brandt

### Home Missions

Pastor Dale Finstrom  
Bob & Clarice Softing

### World Missions

Bob & Clarice Softing

## People and places

**Pastor Lee Hoops** has announced his retirement from West Prairie Lutheran Church, Kindred, N.D.

**Pastor Scott Nocton**, Fridley, Minn., has accepted a call to serve Word of Life, Upsala, Minn. Formerly a pastor in the ELCA, he was approved for call to an AFLC congregation by the Coordinating Committee.

**Union Lake Lutheran**, rural Winger, Minn., held its final service on Labor Day weekend. Established in 1896, it was a charter congregation in both the Lutheran Free Church and AFLC. Union Lake has been served most recently by Licensed Pastor Don Edlund, who also serves Dovre congregation in Winger.

AFLC Youth Ministries added **Daniel Keinanen** to its staff in January. A veteran member of past FLY Committees, Keinanen will serve part-time for the direction and administration of the national youth gathering while continuing his full-time position as youth and worship pastor at Christ Is Lord Free Lutheran Church, Onalaska Wis.

The AFLC **Wilderness Bible Camp** located southwest of Detroit Lakes, Minn., is looking for a campground host(s) for the summer of 2015. Duties include: opening and closing the camp for the groups; cleaning; and grounds maintenance. If interested, please contact Matt Olson at 612-240-1156.

## 2015 Conference registration

We invite you to come to this year's annual conference June 16-19 at Warm Beach Christian Camp & Conference Center, Stanwood, Wash. The Pacific Northwest offers the grandeur of the Cascade and Olympic Mountain Ranges, highlighted by Mount Rainier and Mount Baker, and graced by the beauty of Puget Sound and the San Juan Islands. The conference site is 20 minutes from the nearest hotel or restaurants, so we encourage you to lodge and eat on site.

Because of the variety of housing and meal package options, the registration form is lengthy. It will not be printed in *The Lutheran Ambassador*, but it is available as a printable document at both [www.aflc.org](http://www.aflc.org) and [www.afchurch.org](http://www.afchurch.org). Registration must be done by phone to eliminate duplicates in lodging. We would suggest printing the registration form, working through it, then calling in your registration to (360) 502-3452. If you are unable to print the registration form, we would be happy to mail one to you.

Register early (by April 25) for best lodging selection and a 20 percent savings.

We pray and trust that the upcoming conference will be a special event for all who can take part. A limited number of scholarships are available to those who qualify, please inquire during registration. Let us know how we can serve you.

The conference will offer something for the whole family. We are planning a full morning and afternoon schedule for all children and youths. Because Warm Beach is a Christian campground facility, it offers a wide variety of activities for the young while adults are in session. See you in June in Washington.

~The Pacific Northwest District, 2015 Annual Conference Hosts



### Downloadable form

[www.aflc.org](http://www.aflc.org)  
[www.afchurch.org](http://www.afchurch.org)

### Call to register

360.502.3452

### AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2014

FUND	REC'D IN DECEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$56,813	\$368,446	\$364,489
Evangelism	19,322	144,025	133,975
Youth Ministries	16,424	132,322	105,159
Parish Education	25,508	145,181	163,662
Seminary	39,430	288,143	294,479
Bible School	54,830	492,524	505,643
Home Missions	81,164	534,085	469,961
World Missions	61,863	490,621	416,497
Personal Support	71,965	475,106	465,690
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$427,319</b>	<b>\$3,070,454</b>	<b>\$2,919,554</b>

Contact the individual departments for further information about specific financial needs.



# Mistaks<sup>e</sup>

There's a 1918 postage stamp with an upside down airplane on it, and this highly collectible mistake is worth something in the neighborhood of a million dollars. A very significant mistake (not that others were not significant) in the last issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador* will probably not make it a prize for collectors, and its main impact will be to embarrass the editors. "To err is human," as the first line of a famous quotation declares, and we trust that our readers will forgive us, as the quote also affirms.



Pastor Robert Lee

Many mistakes have been made in the ministry of Christian education within the local congregation, and this writer has been guilty of most of them. "Nowhere is educational reform more needed than in the church," Thom and Joani Schultz write, in a hard-hitting and insightful book whose title says it all: *Why Nobody Learns Much of Anything at Church: And How to Fix It* (Group Publishing, 1996).

The following are a couple of possible common mistakes in Christian education to consider, with suggestions on how they might be remedied.

## **Failure to provide training for our teachers.**

Consider this scenario: "Our hospital is desperately in need of someone to perform heart surgery, and a volunteer is needed. We'll provide you with a how-to manual, and you can start next week." Ridiculous, of course, but countless volunteers have been recruited to teach Sunday school, handed a teacher's manual and a list of students, and put to work immediately without any training. (This is what happened to your editor, by the way, when I was a junior in high school.) No, it's not heart surgery, but it is not wrong to suggest

that the spiritual nurturing of young men and women is eternally important and certainly deserves consecrated and equipped workers.

One way to address the need for training is mentoring. Plan ahead and prepare new teachers by partnering them with an experienced teacher, perhaps for at least half a year. Let them learn by observing the teacher in action, and then assign them to teach a lesson or two themselves with the mentoring teacher present.

Another way to address this need is continuing education for your teachers. A noted church educator once asked a group of Sunday school teachers how many years of experience they had ... or if they just had one year of experience, repeated over and over again. Minnesota has a church ministries association, offering annual conventions with workshops that provide training for almost every area of Christian education in the congregation; perhaps your state has a similar organization. Our AFLC parish education director, Marian Christopherson, has conducted training sessions in many of our congregations and districts. Most congregations have Sunday school teachers meetings, which could be used for more than business by including a special time for ongoing training.

## **Failure to rightly divide the Word of God.**

This concern is a broad one, including the danger of a moralistic approach to teaching with a focus on producing "good" boys and girls, teaching legalistic life lessons without gospel motivation. At times this mistaken approach majors in application, but lacks a scriptural foundation. It may even be the order in which the lesson is presented. One of my seminary professors warned against introducing an issue, asking students for their opinions, and

then trying to show what the Bible says about it. The danger in this approach, he suggested, is giving the impression that the Bible's teaching ranks with our opinions ... and sometimes putting people on the defensive, arguing for their opinions against the Bible instead of standing under its authority. Several years ago a long-time high school Bible teacher (in a congregation of another denomination) was shocked to learn how little of the stories of Holy Scripture were known by his students, due to a curriculum that was heavy on application.

*... it is not wrong to suggest that the spiritual nurturing of young men and women is eternally important ...*

The Word is rightly divided when both law and gospel are clearly taught. The late Dr. Iver Olson, AFLC seminary dean, told of his confirmation instruction and its impact on his life. Following the catechism, his pastor began with the Ten Commandments, and young Iver saw that he was guilty of all of them. How good it was for his soul to hear the lessons on the Creed ... God the Creator and Father provided through His Son Jesus Christ the answer to our sinfulness. Then the Third Article, on sanctification, truly falls into place, followed by prayer and the means of grace. Jesus paid it all; all to Him I owe!

Brothers and sisters, let us commit ourselves to prayer for those who teach—that each teacher would grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and the Word as well as in teaching skills, and that our congregations might be committed to a growing excellence in Christian education. There's no mistake about it.



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*building the base*

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# A foundation in the Word

BY PASTOR WES LANGAAS

When the apostle Peter confessed to Jesus, “you are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Jesus said to him, “... on this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18). That truth is expressed in the hymn by Nicolai Grundtvig, “Built on the Rock the Church doth stand, even when steeples are falling” (*Ambassador Hymnal*, no. 294).

Church buildings, of course, are not the Church. Throughout the centuries, steeples have fallen from neglect, from the effects of war, or from destruction by enemies of the Church. Steeples do fall, doors and windows need replacing—all are part of normal maintenance. These changes have no eternal consequences.

The real danger is what happens inside the building, in the Church itself. Lack of maintenance for the “household of God” does have eternal consequences. False teaching and moral relativism creep into congregations, and its members stray from the way of righteousness. The people develop “itching ears” (II Timothy 4:3) and become like children who are “tossed ... and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14). And the steeple—a beacon of truth—falls. A faith that once pointed to the heavens and to the Almighty God is damaged by social trends and current fads. We must rigorously maintain the true Church, building “on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20). This is done by preaching and teaching the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Grundtvig also wrote the hymn, “God’s Word is Our Great Heritage” (*Ambassador Hymnal*, no. 258). In exalting God’s Word

we are admonished to “spread its light from age to age,” and “keep its teachings pure, Throughout all generations.” With false teaching creeping into mainline churches in the early days of the AFLC, its leaders wisely chose to provide its own bible-based, Lutheran Sunday school material. Today Ambassador Publication provides Sunday school and confirmation materials and a vast array of Bible studies, devotionals and other resource materials that are built on the solid foundation of God’s eternal Word.

While serving on the Board of Publications and Parish Education from 1985-1995 we began writing and printing the new Ambassador Sunday School Series that is used today. The lessons, teachers’ manuals, and even art work were carefully examined to be sure they were biblically sound. During that time we completed grades two and four, the latter published in 1991.

Coming back on the Parish Ed board this year, I find that we are currently updating grade four again. Imagine working so hard on the first lessons, then coming back 20 years later and doing the same lessons all over again. But the point is that the lessons have not changed to reflect current moral, cultural, or social trends as many other publishers have done. The lessons are still solidly based on the same Scripture, the same foundation, as they were at the beginning. By God’s grace we will continue to build on the foundation of His Word and always “keep its teachings pure, throughout all generations.”

*Langaas, a member of the Board of Publications and Parish Education, is a retired pastor who lives in Karlstad, Minn.*