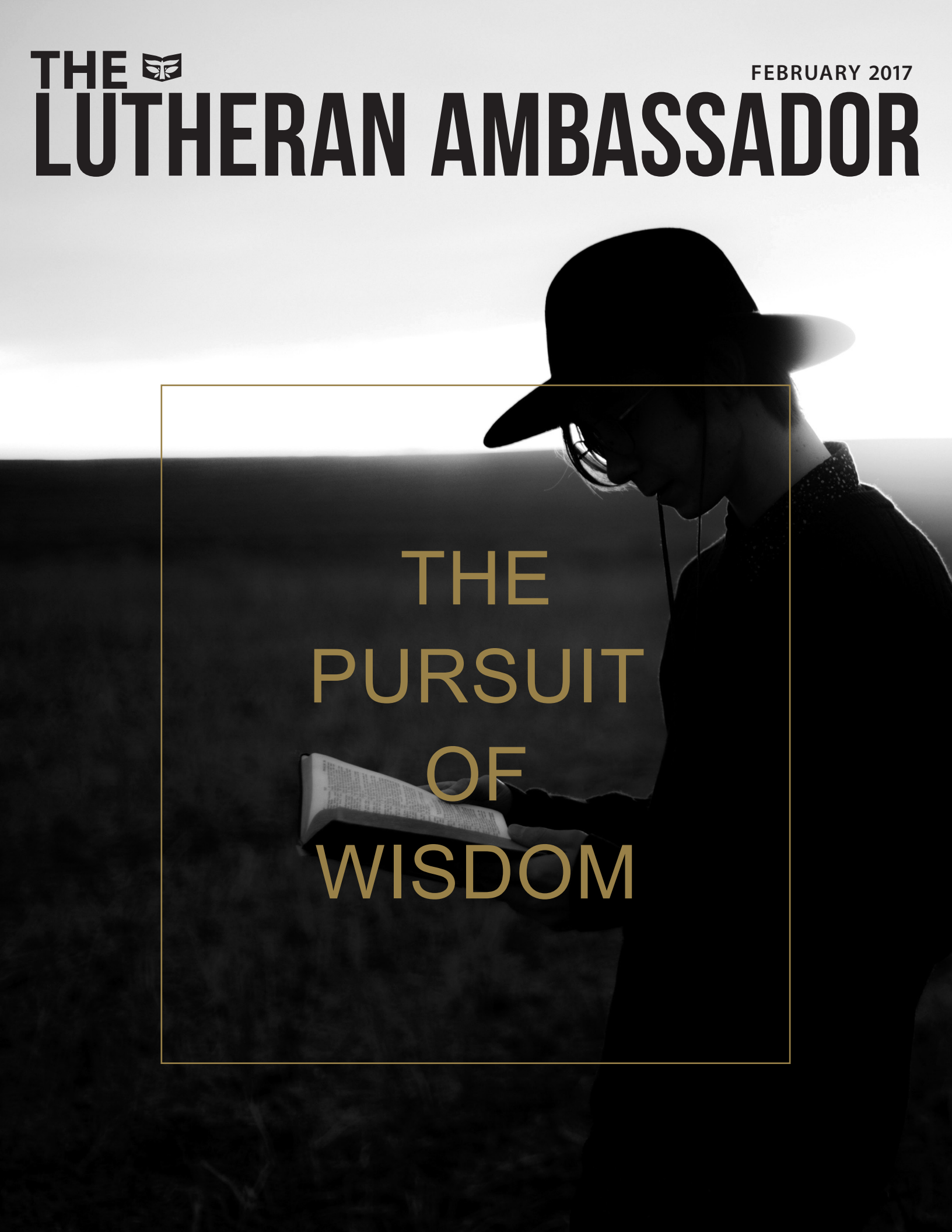


THE 

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LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR



THE
PURSUIT
OF
WISDOM



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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TO PREACH THE WORD

BY PASTOR STEVE LOMBARDO

"He held to the real presence of Christ in preaching ... the preaching of Christ is Christ preaching. There can be no higher view of preaching than this."

(David Larsen, *The Company of the Preachers*)

M

artin Luther has gifted us with a lofty perception of preaching. As he proclaimed Christ, the sermon soared to mountain heights which for centuries had not been scaled.

The Reformers, in their zeal for the gospel, preached Christ and shook the world.

In our day preaching generally has fallen upon hard times. Tim Keller writes in *Preaching*, "We live in a time when many are resistant to any hint of authority in pronouncements; so the culture's allergy to truth and the great skill that is required mean the church loses its grasp on the crucial nature of preaching for the ministry of the gospel." Preaching is viewed negatively by sizeable numbers of people who can be heard exclaiming, "Don't preach to me!"; "That was a bit preachy." Yet, Paul writes: "... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (II Timothy 4:2).

There are, of course, various forms of the proclamation of the Word which are used today with profit—i.e., hymns, songs, videos, films, skits, concerts, books—but these can never replace preaching. While we will always require a host of varied forms of Word ministry, the specific public ministry of preaching is irreplaceable, writes Keller. For Luther, the ministry of the Word is pulpit focused.

In "What We Believe" on the AFLC website under "Church Life" one reads, "The preaching of the Word of God must be the central part of the service." Luther would say, "Amen!" to that. In fact, he asserted, "A Christian congregation should never gather together without the preaching of God's Word and prayer no matter how briefly" (*Luther's Works*). The sermon is definitely not optional in worship. When the preacher is faithful to the text, he delivers the very Word of God. The preacher has confidence that God is speaking through the proclamation of truth. This makes preaching a very serious task indeed.

It is serious for those who preach. There must be diligent study, fervent prayer, and dependence upon the Holy Spirit. The perspective of the preacher has to be that of Puritan Richard Baxter who said, "I preach as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men" (Larsen, *The Company of the Preachers*).

It is also serious for those who listen. The sermon is Christ preaching. He lays the soul bare and then clothes it with lavish love. No other voice has such power!

Lombardo, retired AFLC pastor living in Yorkville, Ill., spoke on "Luther As Preacher" during the fall Revival Conference at the AFLC Schools.

After one recitation, the master should explain in a simple and correct manner the Lord's Prayer, the creed, and at another time the Ten Commandments. And he should impress upon the children the essentials, such as fear of God, faith, and good works.

—Philipp Melanchthon

The biblical educator must not only have a Christian understanding of the material, he must have a biblical understanding of the student. If he does not, then the result will be a hybrid Christian methodology employed to achieve a humanistic goal.

—Douglas Wilson

The goal of education by the grace of God is to create self-governing people who live under the Law of God for the glory of Christ.


—Tim Yarbrough

Christian education begins where evangelism ends, helping believers grow in their faith.

—Perry G. Downs


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

—C. S. Lewis

A photograph of a woman and a young girl reading a book together in a field at sunset. The woman, with her hair in a bun, is wearing a dark blue sweater and has her arm around the girl. The girl is wearing a maroon sweater with a white unicorn and floral design. They are both looking down at an open book. The background is a soft-focus field with a warm, golden sunset light. The title text is overlaid in the center.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION BEGINS WITH GOD

BY ERIN MCMINN



Education today is filled with a plethora of choices starting from the earliest moments in a child's life. Parents choose what option they think is best for their child to be most successful. We fill schedules full of activities, enrichment opportunities, weekly youth group meetings, and Sunday school lessons with the hope that our children's education is well rounded and complete.

Do we consider Christian education? Where do we place God? According to a 2015 U.S. Department of Labor Time Use Survey, the average American spends nine minutes a day on religious and spiritual activities. Nine minutes. I was stunned to hear this statistic. How was I doing as a homeschooling mother of five with my own children? Where am I placing God within their education?

Parents are a child's first teacher and the most important ones. Prior to having children, I was blessed to have the opportunity to teach elementary students in the public school system. I saw the extreme importance of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and my place impacting children to be successful in those areas. Like most of society, I believed that only formally trained teachers have the role of educator in children's lives. It was not until I became a parent that I fully understood that parents are primarily responsible for the education of their children.

God's Word states in Deuteronomy 6:4-9:

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

These verses do not say, "Certified teachers, pastors, youth directors, and children's ministry directors." No. This passage speaks directly to us as parents.

Christian education begins with God and should be weaved into every aspect of our lives. Begin your day with God and end it with Him. Lead your children to Him, daily. Show the beauty of creation in all things large and small. God wants to be ever present in our lives and He wants us from the beginning. Christian education should not just occur on Sundays and perhaps midweek, but every day.

You don't have to be a home educator to follow the classical model of education. This model can help all parents understand the basics of what is appropriate to teach at each stage of development. The classical model

of education is divided into three stages of learning called the trivium: the grammar stage, the logic stage, and the rhetoric stage. While we will all choose differently where our children are educated academically, we can all apply the trivium to Christian education.

The grammar stage is considered the stage when children are sponges. During the elementary years, fill their minds with as much information as possible. God has commanded us to impress His Word upon our hearts. Now is the time we can do this with our children. Teach them Bible stories, memory verses. Teach them the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer. They may not understand the meaning of everything they are learning, but they will be building blocks of information. Education is a process encouraged by God. God created our minds and designed that a child who grows to maturity should increase in knowledge, wisdom, and skills (Proverbs 1:1-5). God wants an intimate relationship with each and every one of us. Learning His Word brings us close to Him.

The logic stage in the trivium allows children to dig deeper into God's Word. In a recent article, *Scriptural Principles of Higher Education*, Steve and Teri Ong write, "God holds us responsible for what we take into our minds. We are to be wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil (Romans 16:19). We are responsible for what we take in through our senses into our minds (Matthew 5:29, Luke 11:34-36)."

Christian education in the logic stage prepares our children for the ability to understand what they believe, and why they believe it.

The final stage in the trivium is the rhetoric stage. This stage, which happens during the high school years, is dependent on the foundation of the previous two stages. We as Christian parents cannot exclude God from our children's education in the early years and then introduce Him in high school. We must be like the wise man who built his house upon the rock. In the rhetoric stage, Christian students learn to defend their faith as in I Peter 3:15, "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."

Christian education begins with God and must be intentional. Nine minutes a day is not sufficient for training our children in the Word of the Lord. We are given the blueprints. The Bible leads and guides us as parents to best prepare our children. We must teach them diligently.

McMinn, M.S. Ed, is a member of Ruthfred Evangelical Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa. Her husband, Bryce, is a junior at the Free Lutheran Seminary.

The shelves are full of books. The aisles are full of music. Cards are in their little compartments. Many of them are striking, causing your eyes to settle on them and to look more closely. Familiar phrases are emblazoned on their fronts, including snippets of Scripture passages that you have cherished through the years. You pick up a book wondering if it might be worth your time to read. How do you know? You came looking for a present, maybe some music and a card. You pick up a CD and card, questioning whether these might encourage and strengthen the faith of your friend. How do you know? As a believer, you desire to share what is true.

You need discernment. This is not something new to the modern believer, this need stretches back through the centuries. For example, Solomon recognized his need. When he was told to ask what he would like from the Lord he replied, "Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil" (I Kings 3:9). The Lord granted his request and gave to him a "wise and discerning mind" (I Kings 3:12). We might not be royalty, but innumerable situations come before us demanding discernment.

We might use "wisdom in action" as a definition of discernment. As it is used in the Scripture, wisdom and discernment are sometimes used interchangeably. When there is a distinction, discernment is used as the subset of wisdom in which good and evil are distinguished from one another. Defining discernment in another way, Tim Challies says, "Where evangelism is a gift that is offensive in nature, taking the battle to new regions, discernment is a defensive gift that protects the ground that has already been taken (*The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment*).

But where does discernment come from? God desires that we know the truth, holding to that which is excellent (Philippians 1:9). We are also told in Job 12:13, "With God are wisdom and might, he has counsel and understanding." So, we are directed to the source of all truth, to God who desires that we be discerning. Therefore, we turn to the Bible, God's Word, where truth is revealed.

The Bible makes clear that certain things can be known from creation, namely, His eternal power and divine nature. But by nature, sinful man habitually, or continually, suppresses this truth (Romans 1:18-20). Without the work of the Holy Spirit, we are unable to understand spiritual things as we read in 1 Corinthians 2:14: "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."

Therefore, God has mercifully provided the Bible for us, which clearly and powerfully declares that which would otherwise be unknowable—the wonderful news of the gospel: "The righteous shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17).

The Apostle Paul wrote, "test everything; hold fast what is good" (I Thessalonians 5:21). Christian education presents us with the truth so that believers might know God's standard and cling to it. Christians exercising discernment are doing the opposite of divination. Divination is attempting to determine things God has not revealed by means He has not provided; discernment is determining things God has revealed by the means He has provided. In Christian education, Christ and His revealed Word are explained so that all might know He has given us everything that we need regarding life and godliness (II Peter 1:3). Discernment is not some mystical practice, as if our lives were a game show and we need to know whether to choose door number one or door number two. God has provided, in the Scriptures, a framework to discern between what is good and evil, as He has defined them.

This framework is vital as we discern how to use our tongues. As Christians, we desire to listen to and obey the second commandment as we find it in *Luther's Small Catechism*, "Thou shalt not take the Name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, conjure, lie, or deceive, by His Name, but call upon Him in every time of need and worship Him with prayer, praise, and thanksgiving."

Christian education teaches that which we can rightly say about God and this precious world. Discernment is produced because the Holy Spirit, through the Word, produces praise and thanksgiving to God as well as reveals that which is false, should be avoided, and should be spoken against.

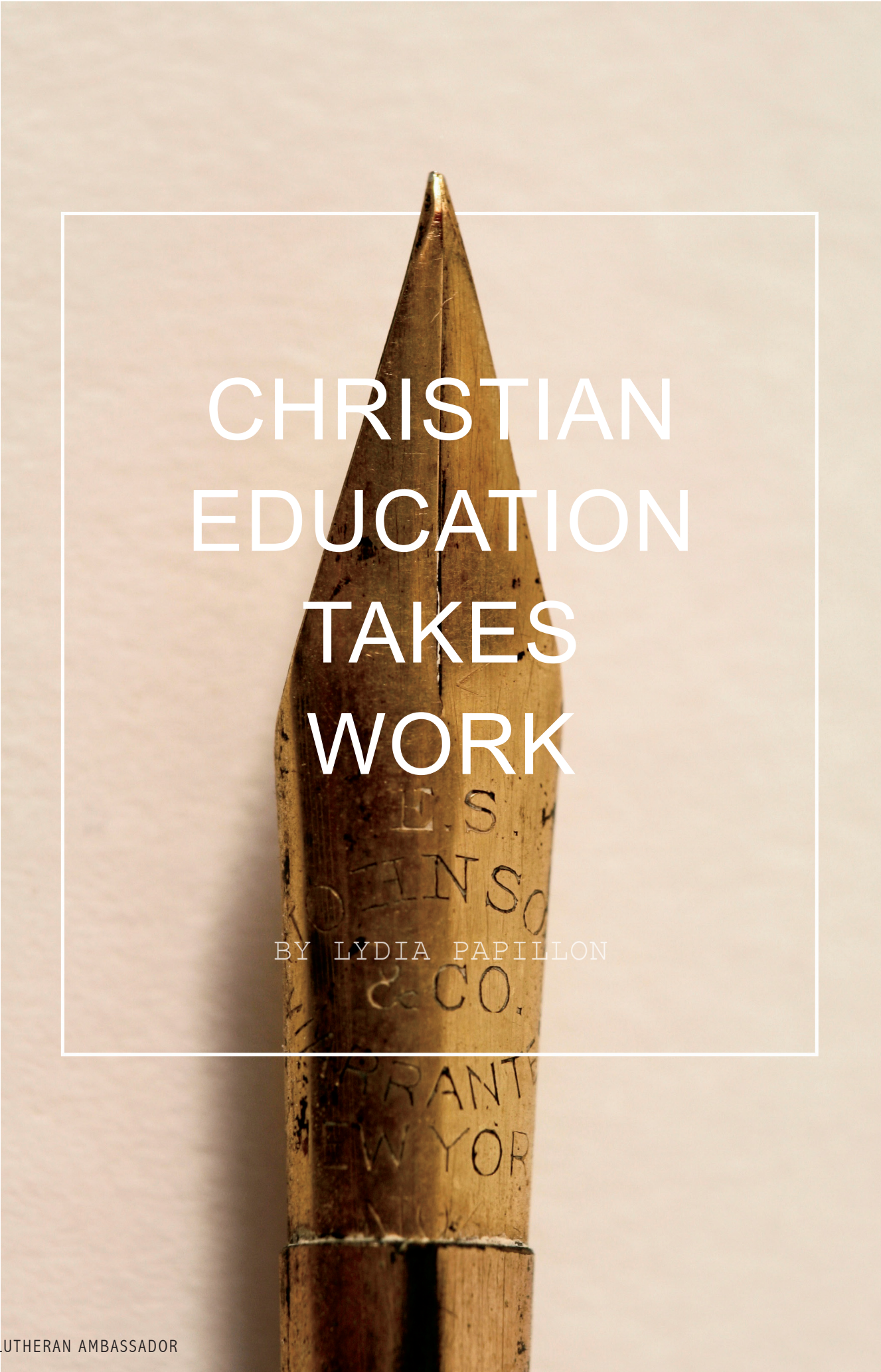
Therefore, Christian education is an act of love. The Scriptures teach us about God's nature and our situation: His perfection and love, our rebellion and sinfulness. For without God's Word we can't rightly see our own sin, (Psalm 19:12, Jeremiah 17:9). Without God's Word, we would not know the redemption purchased for us at the cross. Thanks be to God for faithful teachers and pastors who have spoken to us of Jesus and the Holy Spirit who produces discernment.

Norby, a member of the Board of Publications and Parish Education, serves Hope Lutheran, Enderlin, N.D.

A person stands in a field of tall grass, holding a very tall, narrow stack of books. The books are of various colors and are stacked vertically, reaching up towards the top of the frame. The person is wearing a light blue shirt and jeans. The background is a sunset or sunrise scene with a warm, orange glow. There are birds flying in the sky, and some books are shown in motion, as if being tossed or falling from the stack. The entire scene is framed by a white border.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION PRODUCES DISCERNMENT

BY PASTOR DENNIS NORBY



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION TAKES WORK

BY LYDIA PAPILLON

Apathy is easy. Laziness is instinct. Quitting is second-nature. In a culture like this one, people expect the instant—maximum results at minimum effort. It's the American way.

I would know. I'm the best quitter around and a perseverance nightmare. I expect my muscles to sharpen for good after a single 20-minute workout. I want my novice garden to flourish with a cumulative half-hour of weeding and an occasional rain shower. I'm still in search of the diet that promises weight loss with a regular intake of bread and mashed potatoes. The result is always the same: I neglect the work, grow lazy, and toss in my resignation at the first sign of struggle. I know my methods won't work, but I keep fancying the illusion.

Somehow I think the same way about my Christian walk. I try to reason that growth, understanding, and maturity will just happen to me without the grueling steps to get there. While I crave the arriving, I disdain the journeying and try to bypass the hard part. But every time I want to quit because God didn't cure every trace of my biggest sins with one simple plea, and each time I grow discouraged because prayer and Bible study take so much time, I begin to realize that maybe God isn't into the automatic stuff. Maybe growth only comes with the day-after-day pursuing of Him. Maybe I see Him best in the "run[ning] with perseverance" that He calls me to in Hebrews 12. As with any worthwhile aim in life, growing in Christian knowledge and understanding requires work.

Certainly, my identity and security in Christ depend on Him alone—my efforts never earn me more favor with God than I have already in Jesus. But the process of learning, growing, and gaining understanding often looks a lot like work. Knowledge of Him and His ways doesn't just appear, spiritual maturity doesn't simply happen, and biblical thinking doesn't merely show up after a bedtime prayer. The journey requires purposeful steps and a heart willing to chase after the goal repeatedly—it demands tenacity from both teacher and student.

Behind every successful student stands a dedicated teacher. Though I strive to be one, I can't yet count myself among them. But I know what a good one is. I've used the "throw something together" method enough times to know that good teaching takes time and careful effort. The best of my many Christian educators have been those who possess a heart for their students, who take time for each question, who pour over their material with a desire to communicate it well. The best teachers are learners themselves. There's no laziness about it. They know their role functions best when they dive in, strive to grow, and strain to build their understanding. Without their diligent efforts, Christian education

would be stagnant and fruitless.

But education of any kind requires more than just a devoted instructor; it demands an eager and attentive student. I've seen lazy students. I've been one. It's easy but rarely profitable. In order to flourish as a Christian learner, a student must possess a heart to know and a will to chase after that knowing. Proverbs 2 says, "accept my words and store up my commands ... turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding." The passage goes on to describe an active, determined, persistent pursuit of wisdom—"as for hidden treasure." This hardly sounds like a kick-back approach to education. Learning is an active thing. It's a difficult, uncomfortable process. But God's Word shows that it bears beautiful fruit.

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Second Peter 1:5, after assuring Christians that God has "given [them] everything [they] need for life and godliness," urges believers to "make every effort to add to [their] faith ... in increasing measure." I have the best Teacher and the supreme resource in God's Word, but growth requires movement. It takes a willingness to surround myself with opportunities to grow in wisdom and knowledge. It takes courage and humility. While at youth groups, Bible school, or in the "real world," I've chosen passive Christianity. But it's never led to flourishing. When I slip and stumble and neglect the pursuing, He calls me to continue again. The day-after-day returning is where the refining happens. Even if it's tough or tedious.

The process is scary because the classroom of Christian growth isn't like the others. It's not just intellectual training—it's heart reconstruction. Christian education doesn't just change the mind, it changes me. Though my comfort-hungry nature wants to run from the work, God's Word continually reminds me that the seeking and searching are so worthwhile.

This calling may seem like a gospel-empty demand. And without Christ, it would be. No one can do this work well enough. I am a sad model of a student and ill-qualified to tell anyone to keep at the grueling journey. But He is enough, and "His mercies are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:23). The One who met all the requirements for me calls me each day to look into His Word again, to reopen my prayer closet, to seek out good teaching, to take His words to action. Since I belong to Him already, I can set my hand to the task, ready to grow, knowing that He is truly the one working in me.

Papillon, a 2012 graduate of AFLBS, is a member of Trinity Free Lutheran, Grand Forks, N.D.

Does your son read the Bible at home?" asked Pepe's eighth grade teacher. Taken aback, Pepe's mother responded affirmatively. "I thought so," continued the teacher, "because he seems different from the other kids in his class."

What wonderful words for any Christian parent to hear about their child. A few years ago, though, Pepe's mom, Araceli, may not have expected to hear those words about her son.

My family met Pepe and his family when he was about 3 years old. Since then, we have watched him grow from a toddler into a young child burdened by the grief of his sister's death. As the weight of family conflict wore away at his little heart, we saw a boy far older than his years whose faith weakened with the painful realities of daily life. Then his parents met Jesus and began to read the Bible. The healing and reconciliation God brought to their hearts through His Word spread to their young son, who began to radiate a joy and peace that we had never seen in him before.

For the last six years, this small family has studied the Bible together with faithful eagerness, and the results are beautiful. The weary, burdened boy whom we knew years ago has grown up into a teenager who follows the Lord and studies His Word, a young man with a faith that even his non-Christian acquaintances can see.

The Word of God has incredible power to transform hearts and lives. If we believe that the words of the Bible are inspired by God, we can know that He is present in each story, each page, and each word. When Pepe's parents began to walk with the Lord, they knew very little about the Bible; in fact, his dad, Leobardo, could barely read it. By God's grace, our ability to understand the Word does not define its power. Through His death, Christ has made His precious Word equally powerful and accessible to all of us, from the wisest of pastors to the newest of believers. Pepe's parents did not need to be Bible scholars to effectively convey the most powerful message they could ever teach their son: God loves him.

That love, present in His Word, is also present in His

followers. Written so clearly across the pages of the Bible, His love is taught not only by the words of the text but also by those who teach it, modeled by their own love for God and others. As I think of Araceli and Leobardo, humbly teaching their son the little they knew of the Bible and demonstrating to Pepe the love that comes only from Him, I remember Paul's words in I Corinthians 13:1-2: "If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love ... I am nothing." If I have the gift of teaching, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I know the Bible backwards and forwards, but do not have love, I am nothing. Praise God that His power, presence, and love are not bound by my ability to reflect or understand them; He lives in me, and His presence goes with me and speaks through me everywhere I go. He lives in Araceli and Leobardo, and He used them to teach Pepe of His love.

Years after we first began to witness the transformation God worked in Pepe and his family, He continues to grow and nourish their faith. As they have continually read the Bible and sought to follow it, the fruits of their faithfulness have not gone unnoticed. Pepe, now a 14-year-old, does not act in the ways that his classmates do, and his teachers can tell. He knows the Word of God, he follows it, and he knows why he does so. Along with the writer of Psalm 119, he treasures the Word, he delights in it, and he has fixed his eyes upon the way of

God. His love of God's Word has stemmed from God's love for him.

May our primary goal as Christian educators always be to teach the love of God, for that love transforms. And that love enables Pepe to live each day as Paul encourages us in Romans 12: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind ..." This is the goal of Christian education: that through the love found in the presence and Word of God, lives may be transformed and lived for His glory.

Hedstrom, daughter of AFLC missionaries to Mexico, Todd and Barb Schierkolk, and a 2014 graduate of AFLBS, lives in Minneapolis, Minn.

May our primary
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CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CAN TRANSFORM

BY MEGAN HEDSTROM

A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a blue button-down shirt, is sitting in a field of tall grass. He is holding an open book with both hands and looking down at it. The background is a bright, slightly blurred landscape with a blue sky and some distant structures. A white rectangular frame is superimposed over the image, containing the title and author's name.

TO PURSUE WISDOM ALL OF YOUR LIFE

BY NAOMI JONES

For some, the term Christian Education may call to mind a formal system, and for others, wrestling with the Word in youth or adult study classes. While so many people have personal experiences with some aspects of formal Christian education, it is vital to explore how education manifests itself for those not currently enrolled in formal courses because this encompasses the vast majority of adult Christians.

For me, Christian education creates a few images. I was blessed to attend a small, Christian, K-8 school in Rochester, Minn. After high school and a stint at a public university, I attended the Association Free Lutheran Bible School (AFLBS). As I chugged up the driveway of the school in my old Honda, I thought I would learn everything about Christianity there. After all, two years is a long time, right? Upon graduation, I expected to have a vast knowledge of Christianity. However, the diploma I held only seemed to amplify a reverse notion.

Perspective

It wasn't until I began the teacher education program at Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) that I reflected upon the value and meaning of a Christian education. I found myself asking questions like, "Was Bible school a waste of time? Why do I feel like I know so little?"

While attending MSUM, I came upon an oft-quoted adage that reveals an important truth about the value of education: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime." This saying, coupled with Proverbs 3:13—"Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding"—have informed my philosophy of teaching and learning.

As I look back upon my Christian education, I realize that too often I was asking for fish. I wanted the answers, but I wasn't concerned about how to find them. This was my main mistake, as formal education does not continue forever. The final bell rings and the classroom doors close. With no deadlines or tests for which to prepare, complacency sneaks in through Netflix binges, family commitments, and hectic work schedules. Unless I actively continue in my Christian education, my growth can be doomed to a similar fate as the seed among thorns in Matthew 13. As Solomon states in Proverbs 3, wisdom must be pursued, found, and treasured.

Blessed is the One

While wisdom is truly a gift from God, as evidenced by Solomon's request in I Kings 3, Proverbs 3 states

that wisdom is *found*. So many Christians who count themselves as unable to understand the Bible throw their hands up and proclaim that "God works in mysterious ways." Although we will never be able to fully understand the ways of God until we are united with Him, Proverbs 3 tells us that we should *actively search* for wisdom. Giving up the search when it becomes difficult would be an oversight. Yet, another mistake would be to pride ourselves in this wisdom, as it is a gift from God (Romans 12:3). Christians cannot boast in wisdom, as nothing gives us worth but Christ (Galatians 6:14). This balance is strenuous, but Solomon makes the important assertion that wisdom and understanding are more precious than gleaming gold or shining jewels, so balance we must (Proverbs 3:14-16).

If wisdom is so precious, and yet obtainable, why are we content to stay in the dark? American culture champions the virtues of hard work. We will go to extreme lengths to provide food, clothes, and gifts for our families. While this is an admirable trait, and we are called to provide for our households (I Timothy 5:8), many are not as ready to impress the value of wisdom upon their families, even though Solomon states that wisdom is "more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her" (Proverbs 3:15 ESV). In order to grow in faith on one's own, the search for wisdom must be encouraged.

The Pursuit of Knowledge

We must not be content with only receiving fish; we must seek out fishing lessons so that wisdom can be *found*. We should pursue knowledge with as much urgency as the father prescribes to his son in Proverbs 4:5, "Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth." The active pursuit of knowledge will lead to a fuller Christian life. If you feel you do not have the faculties to possess it, take heart in the promise found in James: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him" (1:5). An enduring thirst for wisdom in Christ will be met if we only ask.

Jones, a teacher in Chaska, Minn., is a member of Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis.

Christian education is a growth process encouraged by God. God designed and created our minds in such a way that as we grow, we are meant to increase in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

It's a process King Solomon acknowledged in the opening verses of Proverbs 1. In it, he outlines his life's purpose, to "know wisdom and instruction, to discern the sayings of understanding. To receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity ..." (vs. 2-3). He then writes, "A wise man will hear and increase in learning ..." (v. 5). In other words, the process continues throughout the many stages of life.

For many years I worked as a missionary in Campo Mourão, Brazil. Besides running a Bible school and seminary, our campus houses the Miriam Home, where children and youths at risk find a safe home to grow up. Working with the children in the home was extremely enlightening; we saw first-hand a growth process as these young people were introduced to a loving Savior.

Some of the older children who had lived on the streets brought their negative baggage with them when they moved in: fighting, lying, swearing, stealing, etc. It was a long process to teach them how to respect, help, and love those around them. Those kinds of actions became possible when they realized that Jesus loves them and seeks their salvation.

I really appreciate Dorothy Law Nolte's perspective on learning in her poem, "Children Learn What They Live." The premise of this poem is that the best way to teach children is through modeling a Christian life.

The first and greatest lesson that we modeled for the children of the Miriam Home was to actively put their trust in their heavenly Father.

When my family lived on the campus in Campo Mourão, there were several Brazilian boys who looked up to the missionary men on campus. We were their surrogate fathers. It was a great responsibility. Our goal in mentoring these young men was to model for them the role of fathers. We wanted them to see in us what God the Father is to all mankind. At the same time, we were rewarded as we watched them grow in their thinking and living for Jesus.

As they matured in faith, they also learned to trust God as their Father. The process of Christian maturity in thought, word, and deed brought them to a point where they understood that because Christ loves them, He would not leave them. This was a huge lesson for these former street children whose greatest fear was to be left alone.

The apostle Paul writes in I Corinthians 13:11, "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me." Just as Paul matured in his faith and outgrew childish reasoning, we encouraged these

children to do the same.

Growing in the Christian faith is not an automatic process. Growth takes work. The second aspect of a life of faith that we modeled for the Miriam Home children was the importance of daily Bible reading and prayer. Psalm 119:9-11 says, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You."

I am hopeful of our current generation of young adults. Given a foundation of biblical understanding and an emphasis on maintaining a relationship with a loving Savior, I believe Christian young people today are as dedicated to missions as at any other time in history. It all comes down to parents and Christian educators instilling in this generation a joy in pursuing a life of faith.

In fact, it is wonderful to see this generation's vision and dedication for the needy. They reflect what James wrote about: "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress ..." (1:27).

Young boys we mentored when we lived in Campo Mourão have grown up into adulthood with a sure foundation in the faith. But their need to continue growing in faith has not ended. Our brains are made to acquire new information until the day we die. God commands us to seek wisdom and understanding. And He has promised that if we continue to seek it, He will give it to us. "For if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:3-5).

The search for knowledge, wisdom, and understanding should continue into the golden years of life—as long as we are able. Senior folks who impress me the most are those whose faces glow with Christ's love and hope. They are positive and always learning more. They never refer to themselves as getting old, rather, they say they are getting closer to seeing God face to face.

Daily Bible reading is when God speaks to us through His Word. Prayer is when He allows us to speak back to Him. What a joy to have this daily walk with the Lord. Learning new things from His Word adds wisdom and joy to our lives.

Such wisdom and joy can only come through Him, who lavishes His people with these good gifts. As James writes, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (1:5).

Dyrud, a former AFLC missionary to Brazil, is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IS A PROCESS

BY PASTOR CONNELLY DYRUD



Based on Psalm 130, the chorale “From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee” is the first funeral hymn of the Lutheran Reformation. It was sung at Frederick the Wise’s funeral in Wittenberg in 1525. This hymn was also sung at Martin Luther’s funeral at Halle, Germany, before his body was moved to Wittenberg for final burial in the Castle Church.

The melody with its downward leaps is very solemn as well as majestic, which is fitting for funeral use. Like many other Luther hymns, there is a hint of the old medieval sound, which is characteristic of the eight different musical scales (modes) at that time. By the time of Luther’s death in 1546, these eight musical scales were a thing of the past. In the beginning of the 1600s, there would only be “major” and “minor” musical scales in Western music.

When looking at the text of this hymn, we see the Lutheran faith and the Christian hope of heaven in every stanza. This hymn is another fine tool to teach salvation.

~Pastor Gordon Waterman
Crown of Life Lutheran
Tomball, Texas

From depths of woe I cry to thee

1. From depths of woe I cry to Thee,
Lord, hear me, I implore Thee.
Bend down Thy gracious ear to me,
My prayer let come before Thee.
If Thou rememb’rest each misdeed,
If each should have its rightful meed,
Who may abide Thy presence?

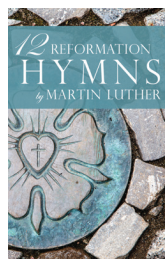
2. Thy love and grace alone avail
To blot out my transgression;
The best and holiest deeds must fail
To break sin’s dread oppression.
Before Thee none can boasting stand,
But all must fear Thy strict demand
And live alone by mercy.

3. Therefore my hope is in the Lord
And not in mine own merit;
It rests upon His faithful Word
To them of contrite spirit
That He is merciful and just;
This is my comfort and my trust.
His help I wait with patience.

4. And though it tarry till the night
And till the morning waken,
My heart shall never doubt His might
Nor count itself forsaken.
Do thus, O ye of Israel’s seed,
Ye of the Spirit born indeed;
Wait for your God’s appearing.

5. Though great our sins and sore our woes,
His grace much more aboundeth;
His helping love no limit knows,
Our utmost need it soundeth.
Our Shepherd good and true is He,
Who will at last His Israel free
From all their sin and sorrow.

Text: Psalm 130
Author: Martin Luther
Trans. Catherine Winkworth, 1863, alt.
First Published in Johann Walther’s
Gesangbuechlein



These hymns are featured in a new booklet from Ambassador Publications, *12 Reformation Hymns by Martin Luther*. Featuring a hymn of Luther for each month of the year, the booklet is available for \$2/each. For more information, visit ambassadorpublications.org.



WHAT JESUS TAUGHT

BY PASTOR MARLIN HARRIS

Jesus is our greatest example of being a great educator and teacher. He is the foundational base and example upon which chaplains and ministries bring God the Father the glory He is due. As a teacher, Jesus was all about bringing the Father glory. This is highlighted when Jesus went to teach at the Feast of the Tabernacle at Jerusalem in John 7:14-18.

Jesus said, “He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him” (John 7:18). What we see in this statement of our Lord Jesus is a genuine expression of His humility. Without doubt Jesus’ own glory was revealed in His ministry in so many ways. It was certainly apparent in the many miracles of healing which

He performed. It can also be seen also in His omniscience, that He knew all things, even what was in the hearts of men. And He revealed the power He possessed over nature in calming the storm at sea.

Time and again, people saw Jesus’ glory in His teaching; but Jesus was not about seeking His own glory. He didn’t speak from Himself, on His own, or with His own authority. He represented the Father and revealed the Father’s expressed will for the salvation of His people, for you and me, and for the people of the world. Jesus glorified the Father in all He did.

Recall how Jesus called upon the Father and glorified Him in raising Lazarus from the dead. Recall how even in the last days before His death, when Jesus was once again teaching in the temple, He called upon the Father to glorify His name. “Father, I glorify Your name. Then a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘I have both glorified it and will glorify it again’” (John 12:28). The Father was glorified in the Son; Jesus fulfilled the Father’s will that we might be saved from the curse of the law.

In the greatness of Christ’s humility, the Father was glorified before the world, and is so even yet today. In obedience to the Father’s will, Jesus humbled Himself. What a great example

He gives us in Philippians 2:8-11: “He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” The Father exalted Jesus because Jesus didn’t put Himself first; instead, He put our great need for salvation before Himself. In all this Jesus secured righteousness, a righteousness which God has credited to us through faith in Jesus’ name.

Yes, Jesus has been exalted. Because of this, we can willingly and joyfully glorify Him before the world. This is our joy and delight, for in Him we have life. We will praise His name here and in eternity. May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Harris, who serves True Vine Lutheran, Morris, Minn., is the director of AFLC Chaplaincy.

AFLC Brazil celebrates 50 years

BY PASTOR CRAIG JOHNSON

In 1966 Campo Mourão was a 19-year-old town on the frontier of Brazil, in the state of Parana. It had approximately 35,000 people, but before the arrival of Pastor John and Ruby Abel and family, it had no missionaries. By the end of 1966 work had begun on planting two Free Lutheran Congregations there. The work begun in Campo Mourão has continued on and spread and in November 2016 the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations mission work in Brazil was celebrated.

AFLC Journey Missions organized a group of 18 people from the United States who traveled to Brazil to join in the anniversary celebration. The first half of the trip was spent in Curitiba, the capital city of the state of Parana, where missionaries Paul and Becky Abel serve and where four AFLC congregations have been planted. A Bible camp ministry exists on the outskirts of Curitiba as well.

From Curitiba the group traveled by bus to Campo Mourão. They had the opportunity to visit the campus of the AFLC Bible school and seminary. They also had the chance to meet some of the children and youths living at the Miriam Infant Home and learn about the ministry of the home from missionary Jonni Sliver.

Maringa is a major, growing city in the state of Parana. It is also the site of a relatively new AFLC congregation, served by missionaries Jonathan and Tamba Abel. The congregation has just moved into their first church building. The dedication of the building was held on



Eighteen Journey Missions team members from across the United States traveled to the AFLC Brazil mission field in November 2016 to mark the 50th anniversary of the work there. Pictured are (from left) Wanda Jacobson, Pastor Del and Karen Palmer, Mary Ann Christensen, Pete and Deb Carlson, Cindy Petsinger, Pastor Connely Dyrud, Margie Fisher, Deb Benson, Pricilla Wold Dutcher, Pastor Lyndon and Linda Korhonen, Martha Petsinger, Steve and Karen Deysher, Linda Levengood, and Pastor Craig Johnson.

the Thursday evening before the anniversary weekend. Various laypeople, pastors, and leaders gave greetings during the worship service. Included among those giving greetings was AFLC President Lyndon Korhonen and AFLC World Missions Director Del Palmer. There was much singing, fellowship, and giving thanks to God for His gracious provision of the new building.

The next night was the graduation ceremony for students of the AFLC Brazil Bible school and seminary. Seven students graduated from the seminary and seven from the Bible school. The graduation also celebrated the first three students to graduate from the Bible school's recently begun extension program. The program enables students who cannot relocate to Campo Mourão to use the internet to pursue Bible school studies.

During the graduation former teachers at the schools who were present for the anniversary celebration were recognized. These included former missionaries to Brazil John and Ruby Abel, Connely Dyrud, and David Abel.

Saturday of the anniversary celebration weekend was the annual conference of the AFLC

Brazil. During one of the conference worship services missionary Connely Dyrud shared a message about what God has done in the past through the mission work in Brazil and about the purpose of the mission. Recognition was made of some of the early missionaries who were part of the founding of the work in Brazil. These missionaries include John and Ruby Abel, Alvin and Frances Grothe, George and Helen Knapp, and Connely and Carolyn Dyrud. Another former missionary who traveled to Brazil from the U.S. for the anniversary was Priscilla Wold Dutcher.

During the conference, founding missionary John Abel shared a word of greeting, challenge and encouragement, encouraging all those in attendance to have vision, compassion and take action in sharing the good news of Christ throughout Brazil. He also encouraged the church body to continue to be involved in planting new churches in Brazil.

Pastor Augusto Fiuri's family have been long-time active members of the AFLC Brazil. Pastor Augusto now lives and works in Geneva, Switzerland, and pastors a congregation there.

He attended the conference in Brazil and encouraged the conference to pray for the work in Switzerland. Discussion was held during the conference about AFLC Brazil beginning a World Missions department and developing a vision for the work in Switzerland as a missions outreach God has given them.

During the evening worship service of the conference Pastor Oseias Camara, a former president of the AFLC Brazil, shared about the current needs and blessings God has given the AFLC Brazil. He encouraged the conference from Hebrews 12:2 to keep looking to Jesus. During the Sunday morning worship service of the conference Pastor Fernando Henrique Hunhoff shared from God's Word about a vision for the future of the AFLC Brazil and the need to stand firm on God's Word.

The Sunday morning worship service was a Communion service. That service featured a choir of pastors who also sang during the Saturday morning service of the conference.

The graduation and conference sessions were held at the Central Church in Campo Mourão. The conference also included time for people from the various congregations of the AFLC Brazil to share about work God has been doing in their congregations. AFLC Brazil currently has 18 congregations.

The anniversary celebration involved a lot of renewing of relationships among people who had been a part of the AFLC Brazil over the past 50 years. It also involved a renewing of the vision of spreading the good news of Jesus throughout Brazil and planting free and living Lutheran congregations.

Johnson serves Bethany Lutheran, Astoria, Ore.



The new church building in Maringa was dedicated during special service in November.

ON THE MISSION FIELD

BY DEB BENSON

When I was a child my family regularly prayed for missionaries during family devotions. I grew up knowing the missionaries in Brazil by name and looked forward to their visits to my church when they were home on furlough. It was my dream to one day visit Brazil and see the work and the people for whom I had prayed for so many years.

It was my privilege to be a part of the Journey Missions team that traveled to Brazil for two weeks in November 2016. The team consisted of 18 members from Arizona, Oregon, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Nebraska, and South Dakota.

We spent the first week in Curitiba with AFLC missionaries Pastor Paul and Becky Abel as our gracious hosts. We helped with various projects around the ARCA (the AFLC Brazil's camp and conference center), attended church services at the AFLC Brazil churches in Bateias and Campo Largo, spent time at the beach, and helped out wherever we could.

When I returned from Brazil, several people asked me what my favorite part of the trip was. It was a hard question to answer because the whole trip was a blessing. Visiting the Miriam Home in Campo Mourão and interacting with the kids there was a highlight. We were able to play with and hold the babies, and help celebrate the seventh birthday of Victoria, one of the home's residents. Several WMF groups gave money for

the covered patio project, and to see it completed was an answer to prayer.

Becky Abel and the women on the team attended a women's home Bible study one afternoon hosted by a Brazilian pastor's wife. Although we couldn't understand much of what was said because of the language difference, we were blessed by the singing, a time of testimonies, prayer, and fellowship. It was encouraging to see the ladies' willingness to share their testimonies and the joy they have in Jesus. Even though we don't speak the same language, we love and serve the same God.

Another highlight of the trip was attending the AFLC Brazil Annual Conference and the anniversary celebration of 50 years of the AFLC in Brazil. The joy and enthusiasm of serving the Lord was very evident by the song sung by the national pastors, who were joined by present and past missionary pastors.

At the end of the trip we were able to see God's majesty and the beauty of Iguazu Falls.

As I serve as the national WMF treasurer I am encouraged by the gifts given by the local WMFs to support missions. I am thankful for the opportunity to have seen some of the work that these generous gifts have made possible.

Benson, who serves as treasurer of the WMF, is a member of St. Peter Lutheran, Armour, S.D.

Sverdrup discussion forum meets on campus



Members and friends of the Sverdrup Society met on Jan. 13 on the campus of the AFLC Schools for the annual seminary discussion forum. The annual event drew a crowd to hear several presentations of scholarly papers, including presenters Alex Amiot, Pastor Jason Gudim, and Pastor Brett Boe. Pictured above, Amiot, who is in his seminary internship year, present his paper titled, "Sverdrup's Concept of the Justified Congregation and Its Implication for Pastoral Ministry." At right, Pastor Don Richman asks a question.



Pastor Nate and Rhoda Jore and their family were able to move from Jinja to their new home in the village of Nabukosi, Uganda, in early December. Pictured at left is their home, which was still under construction last fall. The Jores continue to work through issues to renew their visa to stay in Uganda. Please pray for God's continued guidance in this process.

PEOPLE & PLACES

AFLC Schools President **Wade Mobley**, **Dr. Mark Olson**, and **Pastor Robert Lee** attended the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) in San Antonio, Texas, on November 15-17. The theme for the year was "The Trinity," and more than 2,000 people representing various U.S. and international schools and ministries were in attendance, as well as representatives and displays from Christian publishers. The 2017 meeting will be held next November in Providence, Rhode Island, and the theme will be "The Heritage of the Reformation."

Michael Rokenbrodt, Chippewa Falls, Wis., returned to Uganda in January to serve as a short term assistant missionary with Journey Missions. He will serve alongside AFLC missionary Micah Berger for several months in Karenga, which is located in the north of Uganda.

Danielle Thompson, of Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, is serving as a short term assistant with Journey Missions in South America. She will first travel to Cartagena, Colombia, to volunteer with a children's ministry, then will travel to Campo Mourão to work with AFLC missionary Jonni Sliver.

Youth workers from throughout the United States met together Jan. 6-8 in the Twin Cities for a weekend of workshops, fellowship, and worship. The featured speaker was Tony Souder, founder of the Pray For Me Campaign.



Pat Flanders, who has served as the director of the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis., has resigned from his position. Members of the ARC Board are currently seeking a new director. Roger Van Someren, board chair, is currently acting as interim director. Other positions currently needing to be filled are operations manager, events manager, and maintenance. The ARC closed during December and January in order to remain solvent. The search for new employees reflects a restructuring of staff in order to balance the budget.

THE POWER OF THE WORD

BY PASTOR KEVIN OLSON

The pastor preaches week after week without any noticeable change in his congregation. Parents raise their child with the Word and mourn over him when he turns away from the Lord. Missionaries give years of their lives to tell people about Jesus without any visible impact. Does the Word make any difference?

We know that the Word is effective, but it can feel like either the message or the messenger is failing when the results are not visible. The Word by its very nature always elicits a response. Either the person hearing the promise will reject it and his heart become harder, or he will receive it by God's grace. While the preacher, parent, and missionary long to see receptive hearts, they are only the messengers of the Word of God.

Samuel and Sanjee Varao

are twin 17-year-old boys from India who have felt God's call to be messengers of His Word. They heard about and started attending an Ambassador Institute class that was being held near their home. When they heard the Word of God through the stories in their class, the Holy Spirit changed their lives. They started writing and singing worship songs about the Lord. They asked to be baptized and desired to serve the Lord with their lives.

But ministry will be more difficult for them than for others because both of them had polio. They are unable to move their hands or their feet and spend their days in wheelchairs. Their plan for ministry is for one of them to sing and the other to proclaim God's Word.

Kieliand is a business man, a father, and a carpenter from India. In 2013 he received Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. Recently, he started to learn the Word of God through the Ambassador Institute classes. It was a method that he could understand and use to pass the gospel message to others. He learned about loving his neighbor through the Good Samaritan text.



He understood it easily and he started to share it with others, including the Sunday school children. People have asked him how he, a simple man who doesn't know how to read and write, has gained so much knowledge of God's Word. They are amazed at how easily he shares the Word of God.

Fortunately, sometimes God allows us to see receptive hearts from the proclamation of His Word. We get to see how He transforms lives, forgives sin,

gives hope, and provides purpose to people who have had hard hearts. Look carefully at your own hard heart, and then look to God's Word to make you new.

The Word of God does exceedingly, abundantly, beyond all we could ask or imagine ... and sometimes we get to see it!

Olson, who is a member of Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., heads the Ambassador Institute.



In Memoriam

Pastor Theodore S. Berkas, 85, of Kenyon, Minn., died Jan. 15 in Bloomington.

Born Jan. 30, 1931, in Kenyon Minn., he was the son of Sever and Cecelia (Anonby) Berkas. He married Delores Eide in 1956.

He served in the U.S. Army from 1951 to 1953. He graduated from Augsburg College in 1956 with a bachelor's degree. Ted and Dee served as missionaries in Madagascar. He then earned a master's degree from the University of Minnesota in 1972. He graduated from the Free Lutheran Seminary in 1984. He served Faith Lutheran, Granite Falls, Minn. (1984-1988), and Calvary Lutheran, Wallace, S.D. (1988-1996). He retired, and then served as interim pastor at several AFLC congregations, including Fosston, Minn., Park River, N.D., Snohomish, Wash., and Wallace, S.D.

Surviving are his wife; four sons, Thomas, Duane, John, and James; three brothers, Chester, Ernest, and Roy.

The service information was not available before press time.

Pastor Peter Bergstedt, 71, of Chisago City, Minn., died Jan. 12, 2017, at Parmly LifePointes, a care facility in Chisago City.

He was born Aug. 1, 1945, in Duluth, Minn., to Sakrie and Aili Bergstedt. He married Joyce Marie Somero Aug. 31, 1968, in Chico, Calif.

He graduated from Esko High School, Esko, Minn., in 1963. He attended the University of Minnesota, Duluth, and graduated from Portland State University with a degree in psychology. He served in the U.S. Army from 1967 to 1969. He attended the Inter-Lutheran Theological Seminary, Minneapolis, and was ordained by the AFLC. He served a congregation in Negaunee, Mich., and Sunnyside Free Lutheran, Stacy, Minn. He also worked in sales and carpentry.

Surviving are his wife; one son, Nathan (Chelsea) Bergstedt, Lakewood, Wash., five daughters, Sarah (Chris) Sannes, Saint Paul, Minn., Beth (Gregory) Besonen, Overland Park, Kan., Heidi Bergstedt, Maplewood, Minn., Anne (Tim) Miller, Shoreview, Minn., and Rachel (Michael) Palkki, Gwinn, Mich.; one brother Jacob (Elaine) Bergstedt, Esko, Minn.; three sisters, Margaret (Gary) Petersen, Mesa, Ariz., Naomi Hilman, Sylvan Lake, Alberta, Canada, Janet (John) Pelto, Bloomington, Minn.; and 13 grandchildren.

The service was held Jan. 21 at the Esko Apostolic Lutheran Church. Burial was in the Apostolic Lutheran Cemetery.

Dean Hobelmann, 81, of Deshler, Neb., died Dec. 23, 2016.

Born June 4, 1935, near Byron, Kan., he was the son of Harold and Frieda (Bostelmann) Hobelmann. He married Deanna Hoops May 26, 1957.

He graduated from Byron High School, Fairbury Junior College, and Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia. He taught school, working at Norway Grade School, Norway, Kan.; Toledo Township High School, Saffordville, Kan.; and Scandia High School, Scandia, Kan., and then focused on farming in Republic, Kan. He was a member of Abiding Word Lutheran, Deshler. He served as chairman of the Republic County Teachers Association, Republic County Farm Bureau, and Abiding Word Lutheran council. He also served for more than a decade on the AFLC's Commission on Evangelism. He also was a volunteer fireman and storm watcher.

Surviving are his wife; two sons, Greg (Peggy) Hobelmann, Smith Center, Kan., and Matt (Lisbeth) Hobelmann, Omaha; one brother, Wayne Hobelmann, Kansas City; and five grandchildren.

The service was held Dec. 28, 2016, at Abiding Word Lutheran, Deshler, with Pastor Jon Langness officiating. Burial was in Washington Cemetery, rural Republic, Kan.

Memorials may be sent to Abiding Word Lutheran, and AFLC Evangelism department.

DECEMBER MEMORIALS

AFLBS

Eugene Nesland (2), Adeline Kvam, John Larson, Ruth Claus, Drew Papillon

AFLTS

Ruth Finstrom, Carol Hegland, Pastor Erling Huglen, Pastor Wayne Juntunen, Marge Anderson

All Ministries

Viola Drew

Evangelism

Janice Schmitke, Dean Hobelmann, Pastor Victor Young, Pastor Wayne Juntunen, Eugene Nesland, Bethel Cudmore

Home Missions

Janice Schmitke

General Fund

Iris Brustad, Eugene

Nesland, Earl Hartsoch

FLAPS

Harvey Hoops, Robert Olson

Parish Education

Janice Schmitke, Dr. Mary Lindquist, Pastor Dale Mellgren, Pastor John Mundfrom

World Missions

Harvey Hoops, Janice Schmitke, Mrs. Jim Anderson, Pastor Jay & Harriett Erickson

... in honor of

Amb. Institute

Pastors Justo Pillman, Nate Jore, Kevin Olson

FLAPS

Pastor Brian Davidson

World Missions

Pastor Irvin Schmitke
Carol Haugen

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-December 31, 2016

FUND	REC'D IN DECEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$82,577	\$505,450	\$367,874
Evangelism	11,563	121,836	135,059
Youth Ministries	9,382	104,385	107,792
Parish Education	11,798	150,231	145,630
Seminary	29,843	263,450	290,489
Bible School	64,669	529,194	537,653
Home Missions	73,000	525,256	496,104
World Missions	56,779	534,006	484,051
Personal Support	78,725	612,725	609,844
TOTALS	\$418,335	\$3,346,532	\$3,174,496

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

TELL ME A STORY

Storytelling is the way that we learn naturally. We seem to know that this is true even without putting it into words. The stories that parents and grandparents told us, for example, are lessons that have shaped our lives and characters, even



Pastor Robert Lee

though they were not presented in any sort of a formal training setting. This is surely at the core of what God commanded to the people of Israel when He told them to teach their children diligently “when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:7).

Jesus taught by storytelling, too, when He used His many parables ... earthly stories with a heavenly meaning. This was a common Jewish form of teaching, and when He was asked why He spoke in parables, He explained that for His disciples it was a means of revealing the mysteries of heaven, but for the unbelievers it was a sign of judgment (Matthew 13:10ff). Then He proceeded to explain the parable of the sower that He had told them earlier.

Human beings are story-telling people, and for thousands of years stories have been told to transmit information, to pass on history to new generations, and to entertain. It is fascinating to learn of the orality-style teaching at the heart of our Ambassador Institute program, and how effectively the Scripture is learned when presented as a story.

It should not surprise us to learn that educators have discovered that there is a scientific basis to learning by storytelling. A 2010 study from the National Academy of Sciences concluded as follows: “By engaging students with compelling stories that impart important material, teachers reach students both emotionally and

biochemically, increasing the potential for rich learning experiences.” Our brains are actually hard-wired to seek out a coherent narrative structure in the stories we hear and tell, and this structure helps us to absorb the information in a story, and to connect it with our own experiences in the world. There are more than 150 studies that discuss the effectiveness of storytelling on learning.

It is the privilege of your editor to teach the history of Christianity, and I am increasingly aware of how frequently the facts of history are conveyed by me in story form. “Church history is a mighty preacher,” wrote Fredrik Wisløff. “It preaches about human faults and foibles, but also about perseverance and firmness, about struggles and victories. Most of all, history tells us of the faithfulness of God. He is the same. The possibilities and the power are there, if we only have the courage of faith.” The stories of history can inspire us to be hopeful and prayerful.

Pastors can preach and teach by telling stories, too, as they make good use of appropriate illustrations. Don’t be like the pastor, though, who took a telephone into the pulpit with him. The congregation waited attentively throughout the sermon to learn the point he was making, but there was no explanation at all. When he was asked afterwards about the purpose of his visual illustration, he said that it was merely to get their attention. Spurgeon once said that illustrations are like windows, “meant not so much to be seen as to be seen through.”

Teachers, one of the most innovative

ways to teach may be to slow down and tell a story. Technology is a great tool, but story-telling may be a better one. Parents and grandparents, take time to tell your stories to the young ones who have been entrusted to you. “One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts” (Psalm 145:4). Remember the ones that have been told to you, too, and pass them on.

Dear readers, every child of God has stories to tell. Some of us can recall a life without God and the transformation that took place when we came to know Jesus. Pass it on. I recall an older lady who thought that she didn’t have much of a story to tell of her spiritual journey because she had loved

Jesus from earliest years of childhood. “That’s a wonderful testimony,” I assured her, “and a story that many people need to hear.” So it is with your faith story and other stories that have informed and shaped your life. There are others who need to hear them.

P.S. This editorial is written while I am teaching a seminary

course on the history of our AFLC. We are using the 50th anniversary Jubilee book this year, a collection of stories from many who have been a part of our church family over the years, and I recommend it to you. It’s available through the parish education bookstore.

*Dear reader,
every child
of God has
stories to tell.*

building the base

THY WILL BE DONE

BY DR. IVER OLSON

The poet Ralph Waldo Emerson defined prayer as seeing everything from the highest possible point of view.

There are differences in viewpoints among the creatures on earth. A bug can see only a matter of inches; a man can see for miles; a bird can scan the horizon for leagues on every side; an astronaut on his way to the moon comes to see the earth as another—though larger—satellite. Only God sees everything as it is.

To pray is to see everything as nearly as possible from God's point of view. It is to desire for the world what God wills for it. Even the word with which we normally end our prayers is indeed itself a summary prayer: "Amen" means "so let it be."

To pray thus is neither easy nor pleasant, for God's way frequently leads to a cross. It did so for Jesus. True man that He was, He shrank from the cross in horror, pleading with His Father to be released from this onerous enemy of all that lives. But He knew how to pray; He made His request known and left the solution to His Father. He bowed to God's will and accepted the cross.

There is something in us which does not want to go the way of the cross—His or ours. How lithely and lightheartedly the worlding would follow Christ if it were not for the cross. He balks indignantly at Christ's cross. How attractive the example and teachings of Christ would be if He had not ended His life so ignominiously. How beautiful His life could have been had He mellowed into the maturity of middle age and serenely softened into old age.

The cross stands ominously at the end of His young life. There is something in us which does not want a cross.

Had the Christian life been a primrose path of pleasing prospects alone, the pilgrims would have been plentiful on this road. But Jesus Himself spoke of a cross for everyone.

So prayer becomes our saying "no" to all such inclinations within. Instead, prayer says, "Thy will be done."

The lesson must be learned anew by every follower of Christ, for it is not inherited through natural generation. The Holy Spirit is the great teacher in the art of prayer. Yet we can also help each other pray.

Only in heaven is God's will done

perfectly today. Angelic creatures serve Him day and night without asking why. God's wish is their want, and they choose it constantly. In ages past, some of their number rebelled against His will. Dire consequences ensued; all maladies of mankind are the result. It can be said of these mutinous spirits as is said of Judas: they went to their own place. The angels who resisted this urge to contumacious self-aggrandizement were transferred to heaven. They now serve God with angel-hearted delight.

The manner in which they now serve has become the model for men on earth. We, too, ought to serve without asking why.

Fret not yourselves, ye weary saints, for failing to follow the Lord's will as well as you might wish you could. The day is coming when you shall join the angelic hosts to serve God in perfect manner.

Olson (1906-1987) was the dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary. Reprinted from the Sept. 25, 1973, Ambassador.