

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

JANUARY 2018





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WHEREVER YOU ARE

BY JENAYA CRESTIK

My dear friend has been an encouraging sister in Christ as she has prayed for me, written me notes of encouragement, and left me the sweetest voicemails when I have missed her phone calls. I love her joy and how she tears up out of the gratitude in her heart, overflowing in thankfulness to her Lord Jesus. Although this sweet sister in Christ has moved to another city and we have had a relatively short friendship, it is one that I will never forget. I think part of the sweetness of this friendship comes from the more than 70 years between us.

The experience of this friendship has affirmed to me a valuable truth found in the words of I Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." It is heartbreaking when a believer in Christ forgets who they are and begins to believe the lie that his or her life has no purpose. This could be a 12 year old tired of the limitations of youth, just wishing to grow up. Maybe it is an exhausted mother with toddlers, waiting for the day she can send her kids off to school. Or maybe it is someone in my friend's stage of life who is retired. Perhaps most of their family and friends have passed away, and they wonder if there is any point to life anymore.

Each person has purpose and worth. Each person has a unique perspective and experience. Every single one is valuable and can "abound in the work of the Lord." Youths can be encouraged, knowing that they can "set an example for the

believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity" (I Timothy 4:12). A mother with young children ought to remember that the godly training she gives has a lifelong impact upon her children (Proverbs 22:6). Remember, also, the value that comes with the wisdom of age (Job 12:12).

The value of our lives is not merely a measurement of our productivity in society or even in how valuable we feel we are. Our value is found in who we are in Christ, and that will never change regardless of age, circumstance, or vocation (I Peter 2:9). The friend I shared about is using her time to pray, encourage others, and share the love of Jesus in the setting to which God has called her. To some, it may appear that her life is rather meaningless. However, as a firm believer in her Lord Jesus, she knows that God is not finished with her yet. Musician W. Rick Sturgill wrote, "You wouldn't still be alive if God didn't have a purpose for you. It doesn't matter if you're 13, 30, 50, or 85. God still has something important for you to do."

Which season of life are you in right now? Wherever you may be, God has a plan and purpose for this season in your life. Remember that you have a unique life experience and perspective that only you can share with others. Do not let the world fool you into thinking that your life is useless or does not matter. Christ is the One who has given you your identity and worth.

Crestik, a 2016 graduate of AFLBS, is a member of St. Paul's Lutheran, Cloquet, Minn.

Concerning church rites they teach that those rites should be observed that can be observed without sin and that contribute to peace and good order in the church, for example, certain holy days, festivals, and the like.

—Augsburg Confession, Article XV

The true and genuine Church Fathers themselves had both rites and traditions, yet they did not hold that these matters were necessary for justification.

—Amos Dyrud

The great benefit of the Christian year is that the worshiping church is able to follow a rich and meaningful way of orienting its life around the work of Jesus Christ.

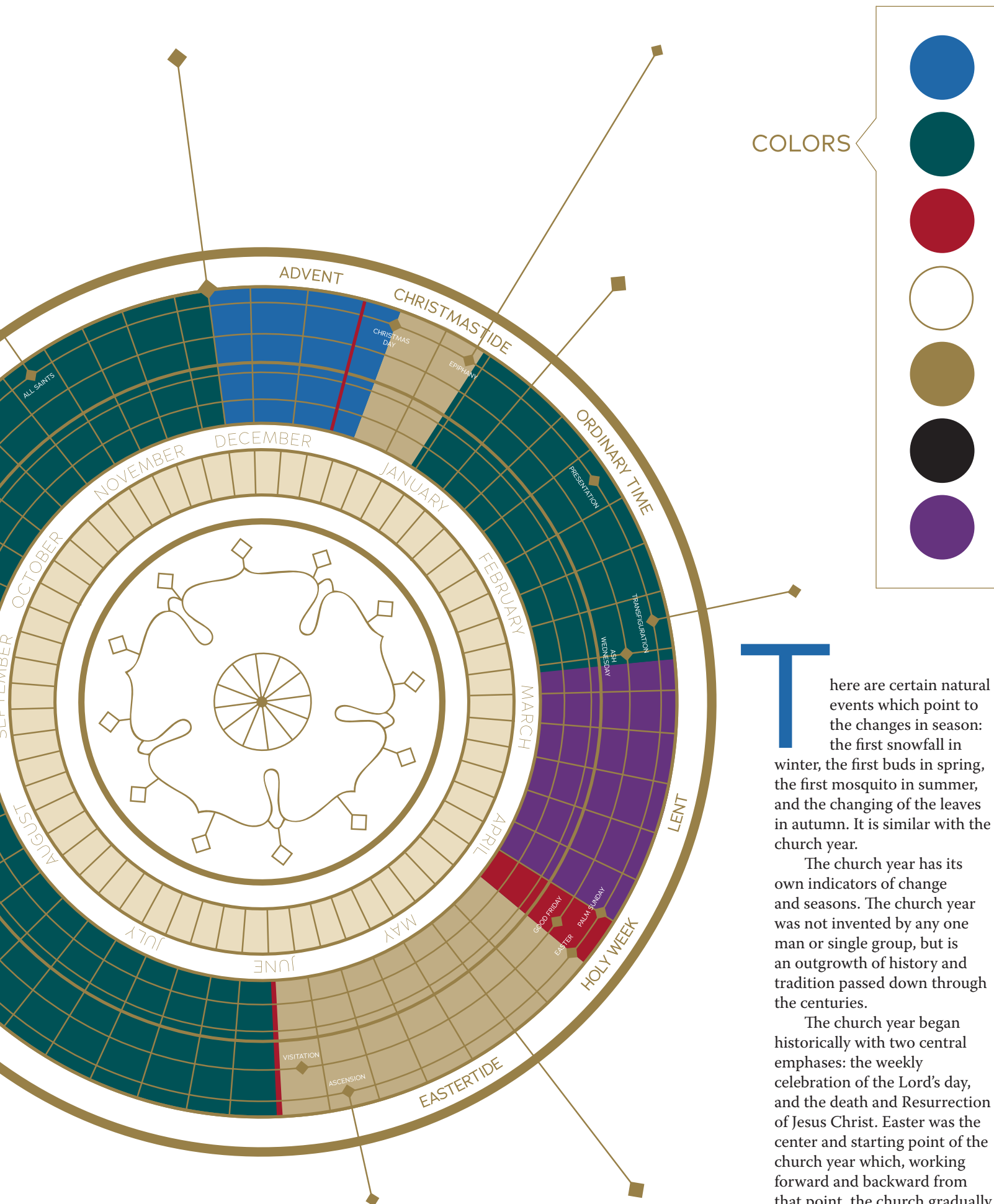
—Robert Webber

The events in and through which the living God has chosen to communicate with humankind are historical events. Even more to the point, remembering and proclaiming these events are the heartbeat of all preaching and worship.

—Don E. Saliers

In an increasingly secular society, the Christian year is a substantial help in creating a narrative world that can inform and shape the lives of Christians.

—H. Stephan Shoemaker



There are certain natural events which point to the changes in season: the first snowfall in winter, the first buds in spring, the first mosquito in summer, and the changing of the leaves in autumn. It is similar with the church year.

The church year has its own indicators of change and seasons. The church year was not invented by any one man or single group, but is an outgrowth of history and tradition passed down through the centuries.

The church year began historically with two central emphases: the weekly celebration of the Lord's day, and the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Easter was the center and starting point of the church year which, working forward and backward from that point, the church gradually formed into a complete cycle.

The CHURCH YEAR

BY DR. JAMES MOLSTRE



Historians tell us that Gregory the Great instructed missionaries to the British Isles to “transform heathen temples into churches and pagan days into Christian festivals, that hard minds may be reduced gradually, not violently” (*Worship*, 36). With this in mind, the Church has taken several days observed for pagans and turned them into Christian holy days. The Church began to celebrate the day Christian leaders were martyred, and the day certain leaders died of natural causes. Over the centuries there were an abundance of saints days, as well as historic biblical celebration days. The Lutheran Church, with its emphasis on worship, certainly appreciated the historic days and seasons. But the Lutheran Church also recognized the abuses of the medieval church, and restored the Christian year to its earlier simplicity.

The church year does not begin on January 1; it begins with the celebration of Advent. Advent is a four-week preparation for Christmas. It used to be a time of repentance similar to the Lenten season. Today it is celebrated as a time of watchfulness, remembering Christ’s first coming, and looking forward to His second coming. It is important to remember that the church year is intimately related to liturgy, which may be why many of our “low church” AFLC congregations do not observe the church year. The Scripture lessons, collects (prayers), graduals (choral arrangement of the Psalm for the day) for Advent stress the importance of spiritual preparation for the coming of the Messiah. The vestment color for Advent is purple, which is the color of royalty and is associated with the newborn King.

Christmas follows Advent and is celebrated on December 25 in the Western church, while the Eastern church celebrates the birth of Christ on January 6. The color of the vestments for Christmas is white, signifying the purity of Christ.

Epiphany is celebrated January 6, and is one of the most ancient feast days tracing its roots back to Egypt in the second century AD. The Epiphany season includes the baptism of Jesus as well as a celebration of the magi who visited Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in Bethlehem. The propers (Scripture lessons, collect, gradual, et cetera)

focus on the manifestation of Christ’s glory. The Epiphany season is to be a special time of rejoicing before the church year descends into the suffering season of Lent. The color used during the Epiphany season is also white, symbolizing the purity of Jesus Christ.

Septuagesima, *Sexagesima*, and *Quinquagesima* are in round numbers about 70, 60, and 50 days before Easter. Ash Wednesday is 40 days before Easter not counting Sundays. Sundays were not counted because while Lent was a time of fasting and penitence, Sundays should always be a time of rejoicing and celebration of what God has done for us.

The practice of observing a Lenten season was mentioned by early church fathers Irenaeus and Tertullian. At the Council of Nicaea, AD 325, a period of 40 days is mentioned. In the Pittsburgh area—where I served an AFLC congregation for many years—with a strong concentration of Roman Catholic, and Orthodox churches, the question asked during the season of Lent was often, “What are you giving up for Lent?” Many gave up sweets, and meat, some resolved to be kinder to their spouses, others gave up a bad habit or practice. The Lutheran observance of Lent has reacted from this strong subjective emphasis and is concerned more with the objective contemplation of God’s Word.

The rite of Confirmation has often been observed on Palm Sunday. This Sunday is the entrance to Holy Week. Holy Week is called the “Great Week” in Eastern Orthodox churches. It is a week of contemplation, remembering the Passion of our Lord. Maundy Thursday derives its name from John 13:34, “A new commandment I give unto you.” Maundy comes from the Latin *mandatum*, which means, “to command.” Maundy Thursday is a day to remember and observe the Lord’s Supper. The death of our Lord Jesus Christ is observed on Good Friday. Some historians believe that Good Friday is derived from “God’s Friday” which may have been the original name of the day. Some churches observe this day with a three-hour service in the afternoon, and an evening service. The altar is generally left bare, with a black shroud over the

cross. The vestments for this day and service are black.

The date and even the name of Easter has a long, colorful history and not enough space here to detail. The liturgical color is white. The congregational response of, “Alleluia,” which had been omitted in the liturgy since *Septuagesima*, returns on Easter Sunday.

Forty days after Easter, the Ascension of our Lord is celebrated, and 50 days after Easter, the church celebrates Pentecost. The liturgical color for this day is red, probably to commemorate the martyrs of the faith. The color red reminds us of what Tertullian said, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”

The final festival of the church year is the festival of the Trinity. This festival of the church year was not officially approved until 1334. The Eastern Orthodox church does not recognize the festival of the Trinity. The color used for the Trinity season is green to signify growth in grace. The Trinity season reminds us of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Trinity is also the longest of the seasons, lasting six months.

Above all else, the church year reminds us of God’s gracious work of redemption. To God alone be the glory.

Molstre is the dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary.

Order FROM CHAOS



BY DEBBIE SORENSON

From the first wooden puzzles of toddlers, to the 1,000-piece unit of bubble gum shapes, there is something within us that wants to create order out of chaos. Puzzles are challenging and consuming, especially if we have a picture to look at. I'd like to suggest that we in the church be purposeful about making the most of sharing the gospel of hope as we encounter another person who is ready to sweep the jigsaw puzzle of life off the table.

The church calendar can be our guide for an interesting approach to reaching out to the broken people in the world outside of the church doors. First, bring the truth into the doors of your home. Embrace it and live it personally. Then move outside your personal doors and look for places where God is at work. He will surely have new doors to open for you.

As Christians, we can be thankful that we serve a God who has brought order out of the chaos of sin. The church calendar might be viewed as directions to bring the pieces of our year in Christian living together. Let's create a picture that makes a bold statement of hope to this challenging world that we live in. To a person without Christ, the words of truth in the Bible may seem as

a bunch of puzzles pieces dumped into his or her life.

As we are on this journey of growth and faith, this could be the time to look for a broken person paralyzed with a jumble of cardboard pieces that have no meaning. Consider coming alongside and helping this person sort the hopeless pile into pieces that have a hope and meaning for eternity.

With most puzzles, colors are an integral part of moving our project forward. The same can be said of the church calendar. Colors have significance as identifiers. Churches that follow a liturgy are rich in using colors to shape recognition in a year of living out the gospel story.

We need to take back seasons and years for the sake of our Lord. Take a sincere look at how the church year is presented. It is all about salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Think about the statement we need to make to the decaying world around us.

Our church year moves in a circle, one season flowing into the next with holy days and activities that allow us to live in His story. History, in fact, is the story of God. Wherever we are in the year, we can trust the Holy Spirit to take us to the next opportunity to share the salvation message of Christ Jesus crucified and resurrected. We can continue on with the pieces and story that have gone before us and remain with us still.

There is no need to think you must do this on your own. God has provided the picture for our life puzzles, complete with all of the pieces. We are the ones who need to start sorting the colors, paying attention to edge pieces, and focusing on the details.

Seasons of the church year include Eastertide (Lent, Holy week, Easter), Pentecost, the time after Pentecost, Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. Colors traditionally include: Violet, representing the sovereignty of Christ or repentance of sin. Black, the color of mourning in some cultures.

White and gold symbolize the brightness of day. Red evokes the color of blood and death as well as the color of the Holy Spirit. Green is the color of growth and blue the color of the sky. The use of traditional colors connects us to the wider church body and creates an identity of believers.

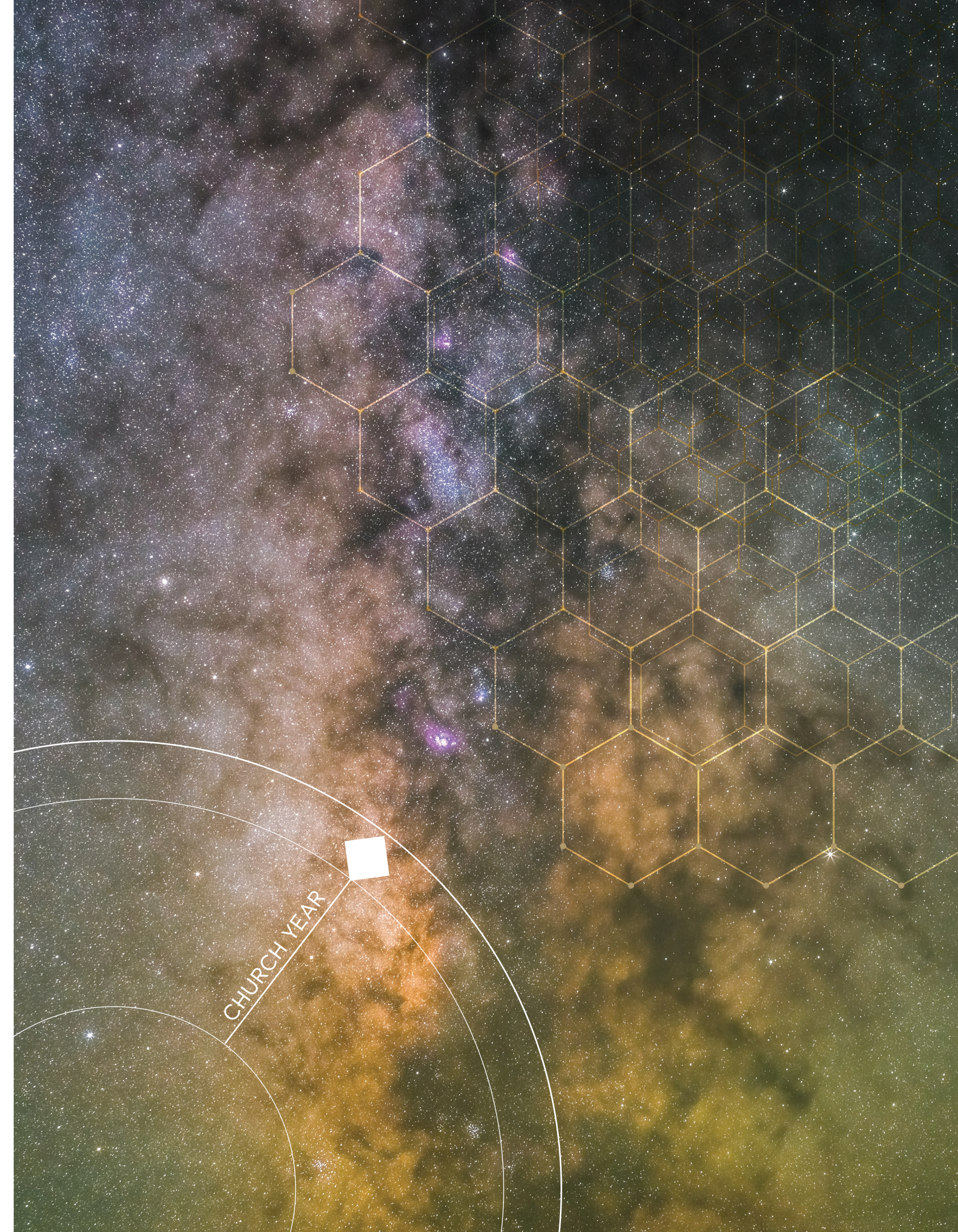
Consider bringing the calendar into your home by using those colors to decorate for the seasons. Trade out secular decorations for inspiration that point all to the One who is the creator of the universe. Inspire an attitude of gratitude, sharing freely what God has done for you and what you've become because of His great mercy and grace.


Become a trendsetter in your family and neighborhood by sharing current examples of people of faith who have made a huge difference in the world by being the hands and feet of God right where they have lived and worked. When the opportunity arises, go on to share the accounts of great people of faith from preceding years and centuries.

Look forward to daily spending time with God and seeking His will in your life. Watch how He is working in the lives of each believer around you. Never underestimate the power of the Risen Lord to bring the pieces of your life into proper alignment. Be prepared to be surprised by what that last crazy puzzle piece looks like.

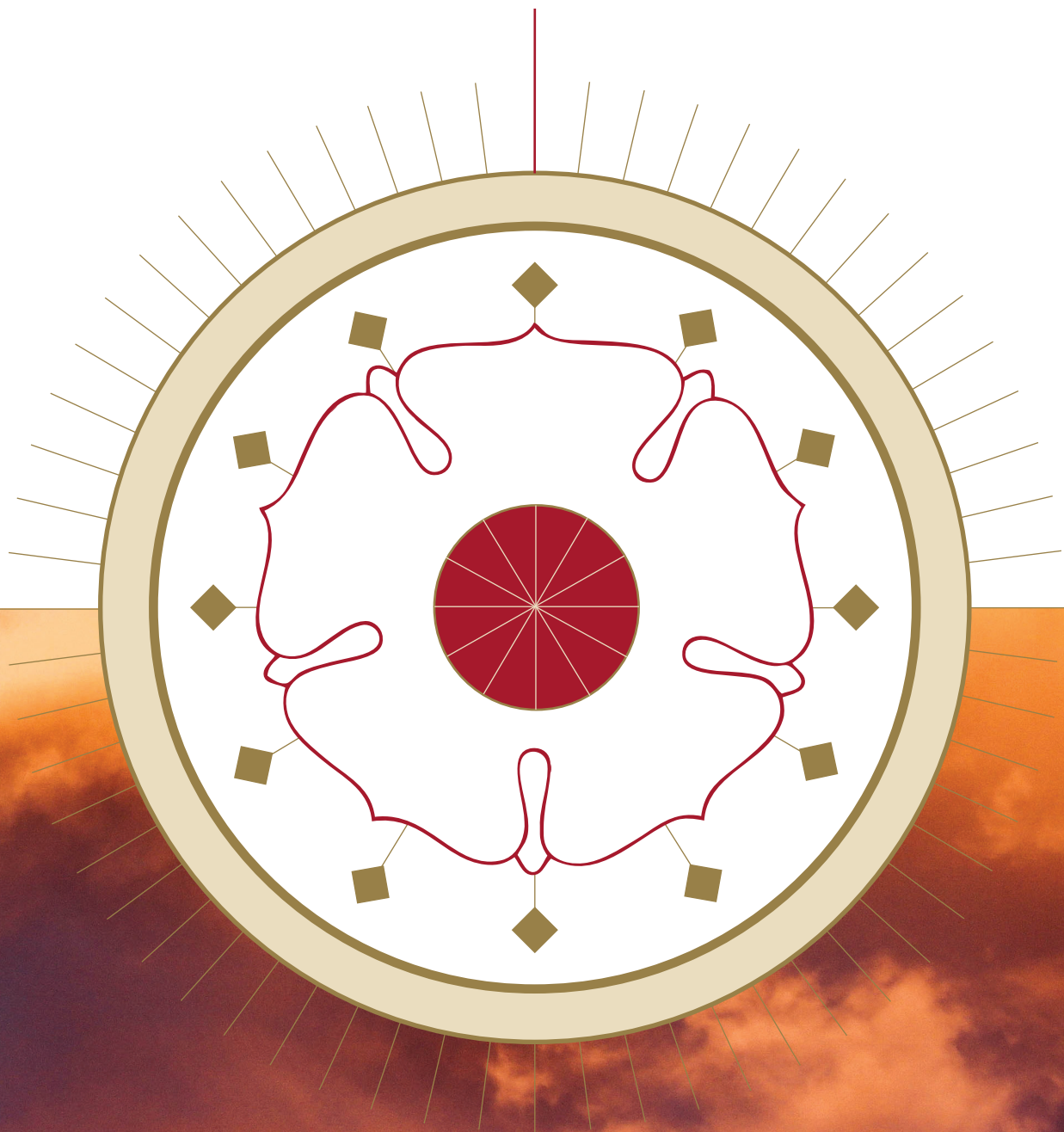
As we share how the pieces of life fit together in and out of the church, may we be a blessing to others. When others see the pieces of their lives come together in the picture of God's will for them, may they experience the peace that passes all understanding. May God guide us as we continue to fit the pieces of our church year together in our lives, for the sake of His kingdom.

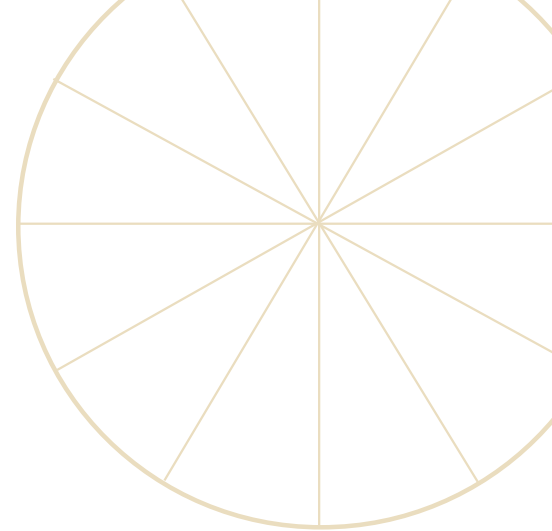
Sorenson, Butte, Mont., attends the AFLC Home Missions Butte Gathering.





FOCUS ON JESUS





BY PASTOR BRETT BOE

After a brief greeting, one of my parishioners asked me, “What does *Quinquagesima* mean?” She had read the front of the bulletin where we list the date according to the church year calendar. Understanding the church year calendar can be a confusing endeavor. Yet, despite its oddities, it provides an effective trellis on which the vine of our personal spiritual lives can grow.

A trellis is the wooden structure that is put out in a vineyard. Grape vines are hooked on the trellis and grow in every direction around the checkered wooden slats. Without a trellis, the grape vines grow helter-skelter in every direction. For the gardener, it can be a mess. But with a trellis there is an avenue for the vine to grow. The same can be said for our spiritual lives. Left unstructured, we can grow in different directions. If it were up to us, we would maybe focus on different topics in the Bible that are well and good, but perhaps with over-emphasis might skew our perspective. The trellis of the church year calendar keeps us focused on the most important thing: Jesus Christ.

There seems to be a growing interest developing in the church year calendar. For example, I receive notices from Christian bookstores promoting products dealing with Advent

and Lent. I’ve heard of churches from other denominations re-discovering such practices that flow with the church year. This is surprising due to the way many Christians have moved away from the flow of a church calendar. There are certainly other factors to this growing interest, but it is fascinating to observe.

Why has the church year calendar continued despite many Christians dismissing it as too structured or full of meaningless repetition? The answer is that the focus throughout the whole church year is tenaciously on Jesus Christ Himself. It lifts our eyes from our own efforts, however honorable, to the perfect work of Jesus for us. As embattled as the church calendar has been, it is an effective tool for shaping the warp and woof of our everyday lives as believers in Christ. And Christians are starting to see this reality.

Gene Veith, in writing about Lutheran spirituality in his book *The Spirituality of the Cross*, writes, “The spiritual life has to do with recognizing God’s work—what He accomplished on the cross and what He continues to accomplish in people’s lives through the Holy Spirit” (page 23). The church year calendar was designed to emphasize certain elements of the life of Jesus Christ, what He accomplished for us, throughout the year. II Corinthians 2:2 teaches, “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” By following the church calendar, congregations and individuals doggedly focus on Christ and Him crucified. The result of this focus reveals to us that our calendar links personal spirituality with worship, family, and community.

Week by week we gather together with our congregation to worship Christ and receive His good gifts. The varying emphases of each season in the church year guides our worship. The season of Lent has a way of humbling us as we enter into a time of focused repentance. The season of Advent helps us see that Jesus is the Son of God who has come to us, descended to us. We receive

these truths year in and year out through the church year.

As a parent of young children, I have personally seen the benefits of the church year calendar for family catechesis, or teaching. The meat and potatoes of this instruction in the Christian faith happens around the dinner table during our family devotions. We are able to bring insights from the church year and weave it into these discussions. As disciple-making parents, we are seeking to seize hold of the formal and informal opportunities to teach our family about Jesus Christ. The church year calendar provides a nice, structured outline for guiding that process.

In addition, the church year connects us to our community. In a similar way that every church has a liturgy, the culture also has a calendar by which they abide. Observe the displays at your local big-box superstore. From Black Friday, to Cyber Monday, to Back to School endcaps spooking school-aged children in the middle of summer break, there is a flow to that calendar. As we live out our lives in Christ, we’ll intersect, bump into, and contradict this opposing calendar. Abiding by the church year calendar and finding our unique ways to celebrate and practice each season of the church year can be part of our light shining bright into a dark world. Your neighbors might be curious about your family’s practices regarding Lent. Your Baptist friend might come to you soon and ask about your practices for Advent. Our actions spark conversations. And these conversations can be used to guide us to help others to focus on Jesus.

The seasons of life interweave with the seasons of the church year. We can find great blessing in the church year calendar. Our personal spiritual lives grow as we are nourished in the life-giving message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through that process we grow to appreciate that trellis of the church year calendar.

Boe serves King of Glory Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn.



WORSHIP

PRAYER

As the sun disappeared and the street became alive, my new Argentinian friend pulled out her guitar and began to sing a familiar tune. She sang in her native Spanish language. A few other friends joined in German and before we knew it, we had five different languages singing the same worship song together. There we were, in the middle of this busy street in Jerusalem, praising our awesome God together in one voice, and He understood every word of every language. As we stood there in this brief moment of praising God in Jerusalem, my heart was

given a glimpse into the future forever in the New Jerusalem, when those from every tribe, language, people, and nation will praise Him (Revelation 5). This brief moment forever changed my perspective of the global church and the awesome God we serve.

No matter who we are or what country we call home, our view of God and this life journey is directly impacted by our own culture. Our perspective defaults to our own life lens. On our own, most of us view life through a pretty narrow lens. As we grow, our lens can be changed if we allow God to have His way in our hearts. Sometimes that requires that we step out into situations that may feel a little uncomfortable. However, if God is leading us, our lens will definitely grow as we follow Him.

For some reason, God has given me many unique opportunities to experience life with people of many other cultures, both home and

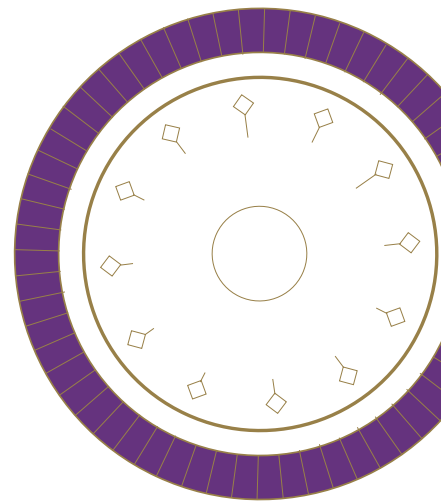
abroad. When we consider the evangelical body of believers of every culture, we can learn so much from each other. By no means am I an expert on culture, but it seems as though God has gifted the church in every culture with different strengths in their journey with Him. I think of long prayer gatherings in the middle of the night with my South African friends and how my heart was changed and challenged by their example and by the ways I saw God at work through those times of prayer and fasting. I think of the boldness of some of my European friends who share Jesus without hesitation. I think of the kind hospitality shown to me from a new Christian family in Palestine. I think of truth spoken in love by friends in Israel and the intellectual knowledge of God's Word from friends in Egypt. I think of the young girl in India who prayed for an opportunity for a job one day so she would have money to give for the offering that evening. I think of vibrant

LITURGY



UNITY IN THE CHURCH

BY HEIDI NELSON



worship services with believers in Latin America and of the respectful reverence and awe of God while worshiping with Russian friends. I can think of many other brief moments that have grown my lens and impacted my view of God forever. Though worship may look different in another culture, we are unified in the gospel story which is mirrored in our worship.

The most awesome thing about the way God created the church is that we are all His. No matter our gifts or where we come from, we are meant to be one body. Though we may have different strengths and weaknesses, we all have the same purpose. Our mission in life is to worship God. Our worship, our strategies, and our fellowship together may look different, but we celebrate the same amazing God who sent His one and only Son to die on a cross for every single person. That gospel story never changes. When I get ready for church on Sunday morning,

I know that friends in Israel have already taken a day of rest and that friends in Brazil will be gathering in the evening. We are all worshipping the same God. As I sing a familiar hymn in my home church, I can hear children from kids club in Mexico singing the same tune. While I prepare my heart during the Lent season by participating in a Wednesday evening service, my brothers and sisters in India are participating in several-hour-long prayer services to prepare their hearts, too. When I attend a funeral to mourn the loss of a loved one, I picture the young girl crying in my lap, saying good-bye to her mama, knowing that we will join her there someday, too. Then “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” (Revelation 21:4-5a). Until that day, only His Spirit can continue to change, grow,

and redeem our lenses. Only He can prepare our hearts for what is to come.

Lord, You are awesome and powerful. Please change my lens to see what You see. Give us courage to step wherever You lead us, even when it seems uncomfortable. Prepare our hearts now for the future forever, when we will join with every tribe, language, people, and nation to worship You, forever. It’s only in Jesus’ name that we pray, Amen.

Nelson is a member of Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis.



Season of Light EPIPHANY

BY PASTOR SCOTT MCLOUGHLIN

For Christians, it should be strange to hear talk of a post-Christmas letdown. Although some people may feel relieved that the busyness of the holiday season is finally over, many others feel an emptiness. They may have nothing to look forward to and celebrate once the brightly lit Christmas trees are unplugged and dragged out to the curb to be recycled.

If they only knew about the good news centered on the celebration of Epiphany!

During the Sundays of Epiphany, we are invited to journey “further up and further in” (to borrow C. S. Lewis’s well-known phrase) to the divine mystery of Christ. Epiphany means simply “manifestation,” and as such, each of these Sundays explores a further revelation about who Christ is, along with disclosing the mystery of the Holy Trinity and our own true human nature. Simply put, there’s a lot of breath-taking “furthering up and furthering in” that awaits the pilgrim willing to climb.

Like Christmas, Epiphany also has a fixed date every year—January 6. Traditionally, the Scripture for that day is from Matthew 2, where we read about the adoration of the Magi or Wise Men from the east. This well-loved story brims

over with all kinds of epiphanies. Perhaps this is the reason January 6 is known as “the Epiphany,” with the following Sundays known as “after the Epiphany.” However, we should never lose the understanding that each day and every act of the Lord is an epiphany. And this is exactly what we are given in the Scriptures of this season—from Christ’s revelatory baptism in the Jordan to His miracle at Cana of Galilee. Each one of these—and really, all what Christ did—are manifestations of His glorious Light of salvation to the nations.

Far from the season of light being over when the Christmas tree is taken down, Epiphany continues the unbreakable season of Light. This is the reason for the season. As the Apostle Paul wrote: “For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (II Corinthians 4:6).

As Jesus said, “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

McLoughlin serves Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn.

My journey has begun back to the biblical

Lutheran tradition in which I was raised. But now I understand what I didn't understand then: the depth, beauty and truth of Lutheran doctrine. The mysteries of God in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper fill me with comfort and joy. My plumb line in this journey has been the Word of God—if anything was contradictory to it, I would throw it out. I haven't thrown anything out yet.

One old tradition/new blessing is walking through the calendar year in light of Christ's life. I measure my year by Advent, Lent, and the number of Sundays after Trinity. The pages in my old black hymnal that had crazy words in my childhood (*Septuagesima*, *Sexagesima*, *Quinquagesima*) now hold meaning as we cross the bridge from Epiphany to Lent.

The last Sunday in Epiphany is celebrated as Transfiguration Sunday. And well it should be celebrated, for it is a very significant event in Christ's life. We find the biblical accounts in Matthew 17:1-13, Mark 9:2-13, and Luke 9:28-36. As I studied these passages, it dawned on me—I haven't grasped the significance of the Transfiguration because my focus was on Peter's comments. He missed it; I missed it as well.

The Transfiguration was a turning point in the gospel story—not the main event, but a big event. For Peter, James, and John, it was an earthly glimpse of Jesus Christ's heavenly glory. It vividly portrayed what Peter had exclaimed six days earlier, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!" This mountaintop experience would help carry them through His trial and crucifixion (II Peter 1:15-18).

For Jesus, the glory He had laid aside at the manger was revealed on this mountaintop. It must have strengthened Him for the crucible. He would finally be home with His Father, albeit the way there was through suffering and death.



For God, this is His answer to the frequently asked question, "Who is Jesus?" From above He spoke, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." In the most crucial public opinion poll ever, God had weighed in. Then He admonished, "Listen to Him."

Lastly, why is the Transfiguration significant for us? When we begin to lose hope, we look to the Transfiguration because it is a "foretaste of coming glory." What happened on that mountaintop is part of what gives us hope in our valleys. In Heaven, we will be transfigured!

We celebrate the Transfiguration as the Church through history has always done. And we sing the 15th century hymn ...

O wondrous type, O vision fair
Of glory that the Church shall share,
Which Christ upon the mountain shows,
Where brighter than the sun He glows!

And Christian hearts are raised on high
By that great vision's mystery,
For which in thankful strains we raise
On this glad day the voice of praise.

O Father, with the eternal Son
And Holy Spirit, ever one,
Vouchsafe to bring us by Thy grace
To see thy glory face to face.

*Talley is a member of Freedom Lutheran, Ottawa, Ill.
"Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor," by Abraham de Blois,
1728.*

Turning point TRANSFIGURATION

BY BETH TALLEY



♦ *Last words of Christ* **ASCENSION**

BY JANE QUANBECK

The last words I remember hearing my father speak were the Scriptures that were most precious to him: Psalm 23, John 14:1-6, and the Lord's Prayer. This sweet memory encourages me to cling to God's promises. Jesus' last words to His disciples, as recorded by Luke in the book of Acts, were not the words of a dying man, but the words of the Savior of the world who was soon to be seated at the right hand of the Father. They are words that are not only for those who were present on the day of His ascension, but for all believers and for all time.

Jesus had appeared to His followers many times in the 40 days since His resurrection. He had opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45) and He spoke to them about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). Still, on this last day with Jesus, the disciples struggled to understand this kingdom. They asked, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus redirected their focus, as He often did, to a new kind of kingdom.

His final words were full of promise and purpose. He promised them the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. "But you will receive

power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8a). He had directed them to wait for this promise in Jerusalem. I wonder if they had any idea what this gift would mean. Then He gave them new purpose: "and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8b). To fulfill this purpose, to build the kingdom of God in all the earth, was not something these men and women could accomplish on their own. They could not have understood the scope of this mission.

After Jesus spoke these words, He was lifted up and a cloud took Him out of sight. I can imagine myself standing with the disciples, awestruck, neck craned, jaw hanging open, eyes searching the clouds for one last look at Jesus. Again, the disciples needed help to turn their focus toward their purpose. God sent two men dressed in white to bring their gaze back to earth and send them on their way with another promise. "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11b). Did they walk away weeping, grieving the loss of their friend and Savior? Luke tells us in his gospel that they "returned to Jerusalem with great joy,

and were continually in the temple blessing God" (24:53). In Acts Luke tells us that they "with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer" (1:14).

Ascension Day can be a day to remember, to focus, on these final words of Jesus to His disciples on earth. These precious promises are for all believers. He has given us the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to fulfill His purpose to be His witnesses on earth. He has left us with the hope of His glorious return. Let us with the disciples respond with obedience and joy.

Quanbeck is a member of New Luther Valley Lutheran, McVie, N.D. "Ascension of Christ," by Georg Pencz, 1535.

Victory over death ALL SAINTS

BY RUTH GUNDERSON

It was evening as we drove through U.S. Customs and crossed into Nogales, Mexico, for our weekly prayer meeting. Peering into the dark streets from my backseat window, apparitions of ghostly faces and dancing skeletons met my gaze. They were momentary visages of death, but as an 8-year-old they stuck with me through the worship service that evening and into the following days. It was the beginning of November, and many were celebrating one of Mexico's national holidays, *Día de los Muertos*, the Day of the Dead, when families give *ofrendas* and pray for those who have died. It is a holiday intrinsically connected with the Roman Catholic Solemnity of praying to and for the dead on All Saints Day.

A dangerous, ominous day in my experience.

So why do Lutherans celebrate All Saints Day? The answer can be found in our disparate definition of "saint." After the establishment of All Saints Day in the 9th century, the growing tradition in Roman Catholicism called on followers to glorify the departed saint, praying to those canonized as "having an exceptional degree of holiness or likeness or closeness to God" (Daniel Diehl, *Medieval Celebrations*). Martyrs were one group, to be sure. But others followed—if they had enough money.

It was during the Reformation that "Protestant churches came to understand 'saints' in its New Testament usage as including all believers" in Jesus Christ, writes Justin Holcomb. In defining the Protestant traditions surrounding All Saints Day, Wikipedia explains, "While the dead are solemnly remembered during worship ... the festival is ultimately a celebration of Christ's victory over death."

Christ, "the firstborn from the dead" (Revelation 1:5), remains our focus as we continue to remember those who imparted a "pattern of holy living and victorious dying" (Robert Webber, *The Services of the Christian Year*). In his order of worship for All Saints Day, Webber outlines a three-year lectionary of texts filled with this rich message. Consider the victorious Lamb seated on the throne in Revelation 7, surrounded by those from "every nation, tribe, people and language" (vs. 9). Their focus is not inward. Instead, "they cried out in a

loud voice" their continual praise to Him who saves. Their white garments speak not of their holiness, but of His blood which washed them clean. And while they serve Him day and night, He bends low to shelter them with His tent. His empathy is palpable—"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (vs. 17).

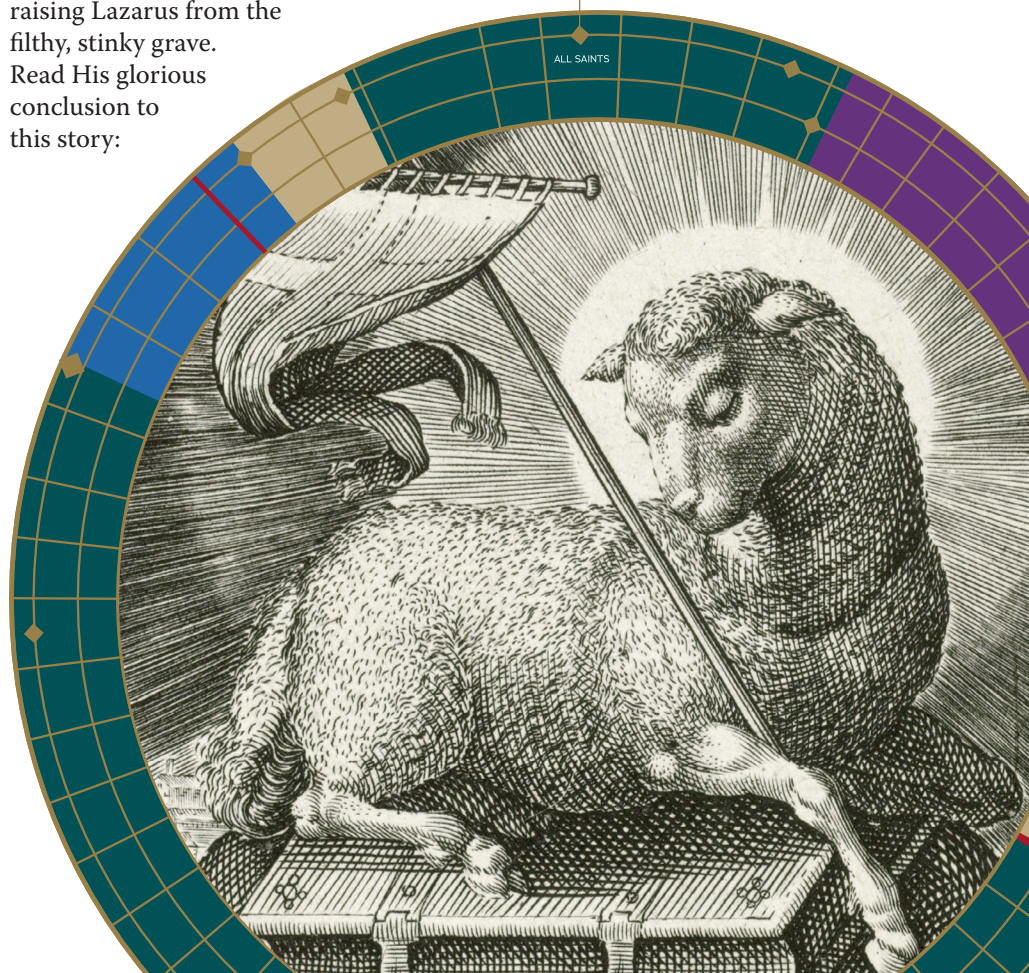
I wish I could include every Scripture outlined in Webber's order of service, for all speak of the One who entered into our suffering, who died, yet who overcame victoriously. And they record the result of that victory: the destruction of death (Isaiah 25:6-9), the glorious inheritance of the saints (Ephesians 1:11-23), the inexpressible joy of those who believe (I Peter 1:8), and our everlasting future with the Lamb (Daniel 7:18).

One Scripture lesson stands out, John 11:32-44, which records the story of Lazarus, who died before His Savior could come to him. And so our empathetic Lord wept (vs. 35). But then Christ does the miraculous, raising Lazarus from the filthy, stinky grave. Read His glorious conclusion to this story:

"Take off the grave clothes and let him go" (vs. 44). Ah! The visage of death removed! The dead brought back to life!

And so we look forward with hope to that day when we join those saints who have gone before us. We will stand together before the Lamb and with loud voices say, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Revelation 7:10).

Gunderson is the managing editor of The Lutheran Ambassador. "*Lamb of God on the Book with the Seven Seals*," by Crispijn van de Passe (I), 1601.



Remembering a godly grandfather

By Dean Franz

It was just as I had anticipated when I paused at the open door to Grandpa's nursing home room at the Houghton County Medical Care Facility in Hancock, Mich. Closed eyes, open mouth, and heavy snoring are those unmistakable signs of slumber.

His giant-print Bible lay on the table next to his bed. It had to be his most cherished and oft-used possession, for its worn appearance indicated much use. One might even think that it had been carelessly abused. But knowing that Grandpa read through the Bible every year since 1904—that he studied it daily, constantly sought counsel and advice from it, and shared its truths with others—was reason enough for its tattered look.

I thought of leaving and coming back later when he was awake, but I had learned from experience that he could be sleeping at just about any time, night or day. He often humorously, yet apologetically, referred to himself as a “sleeping Christian.”

“Grandpa?” I whispered as loudly as I dared. One eye promptly opened, while the other remained tightly closed. Cataracts had years ago brought about the removal of his left eye, leaving him only the right.

“Who are you?” he asked. In recent years, Grandpa always seemed to respond with that same question, which is understandable when you consider he was often aroused from sleep, and vision in his good eye was deficient at best. Likewise, my response was invariably the same: “I’m Dean, Herbie’s boy.”

My family’s move from Michigan’s Upper Peninsula to Minnesota in 1960 had



drastically affected my time spent with Grandpa. Consequently, each and every time I visited him, my answer to that same question would elicit a radiant, toothless smile. Not that he was any more eager to see me than any of his other grandchildren, but he was always interested in hearing about the work going on at St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cloquet where his son and my father, Herb Franz, was pastor.

God had continually blessed my father’s ministry wherever it may have been, so there was never a time when I could not share with him one or another of God’s recent blessings. Whether or not anyone was “getting saved” was his concern. “Is my son still preaching the Word?” he would always ask.

Several years had passed since Isaac Franz had been able to be actively about the Master’s business. Now physically weak from a recent stroke and almost blind, he was confined to a nursing home bed. His outwardly depressing situation, however, could not alter his peace, hope, joy and contentment—nor could it quench the Spirit of God within. Anyone who knew Isaac Franz at any point in his Christian life can testify to the fact that Jesus Christ meant *all* to him.

Grandpa Franz, up to the very moment he was ushered into glory, was a man who had an extraordinary love for God, His Word, and for the souls of men. His clear, undaunted, sometimes “blunt” witness for Christ was his unmistakable trademark. Upon meeting someone for the first time, He would say, “I’m Isaac Franz from Dollar Bay. Who are you?” After hearing their response, he would invariably follow up with: “Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior?”

Franz is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn.

A Request

In my retirement, I am writing a book, or an essay about the spiritual heritage of the Franz family, which began with Isaac Franz’s dramatic conversion in 1904. This is an account of the last time I saw Grandpa Franz before the Lord took him home to Heaven. It is unlikely that any *Lutheran Ambassador* readers remember him, but I know that many of you knew my father, Pastor Herb Franz.

No one has influenced my life more than these two men, and I know that they had an impact on many others—perhaps you are one of them. If you knew either or both of them, I would love to hear your story and include it in my story. I will include your name, or add your story anonymously, as you desire. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Please email your stories to deanlf Franz@gmail.com.

BROADCASTING FAITH

BY VICKI JOHNSON

‘Remember I Thessalonians 5:24, ‘Faithful is He who calls you and He also will bring it to pass.’ God bless your day!” I click “go,” pod down, and push the off button. Then I slip off my headphones, do a happy dance, and say, “Thank you, Lord!” I’ve finished another shift as a part-time announcer at WBYN FM/1075Alive.

I sometimes wish I could tell my listeners the full story of how my pastor hubby and I ended up in southeastern Pennsylvania. How we knew it was God leading us to move from our grown children and grandchildren in the Midwest to serve two church plants. How God has called me to a deeper level of faithfulness in my walk with Him. How He has proved His faithfulness to me more times in the past five years than

the 30 previous years. But that will have to wait. Instead, I will share how I started in radio.

To be honest, I expected to find a job as soon as I could after the move to help with our income. But the need never arose. God saw to it that we were provided for from the time we moved to Pennsylvania until now. As we established a routine for our ministry with Disciple Lutheran Fellowship and Living Faith Lutheran Church, my time was parsed out between developing relationships with church members, leading women’s Bible studies, and helping David in ministry. The pressure to be employed in a secular job faded away.

God led us to settle in the community of Boyertown. What a blessing to find out that this is also the home of a Christian radio station that began in the mid 1960s. David soon contacted the station and began airing daily morning devotionals called “God’s Word for Life” and his sermons each Sunday evening, called “Scripture Matters.” He was advised to record an intro and outro for each program with a different voice for added interest. I volunteered to help, after all, speaking is in my skill set.

I first recorded on Monday during the week our congregations hosted vacation Bible school.

On Tuesday I got a call from John Yoast the morning host asking if I would be interested and available to work on air at 1075 Alive. Could I come in to do a demo tape? “Uh, sure,” I responded. Quickly I called David and asked if he had said anything to John. No he hadn’t. This was just another occasion where the Lord provided an open door for a job that would use the gifts already developed in me. I found out that had I come earlier to seek employment at the station there wouldn’t have been a place for me.

Faithful is He who calls me. Faithful to build upon faith lessons from the past to use as foundation stones for my future. Our faithful God nudges and leads and guides us in the purpose to which we’ve been called: to be a faithful people broadcasting God’s faithfulness to the world.

Has faith nudged you toward an open door and you determinedly walked right past with more excuses than you could count? What opportunity do you have now to exercise your faith and trust God?

Johnson is a member of Living Faith Lutheran, Boyertown, Pa.

Schools to host January term, mid-winter Bible conference

The AFLC Schools will host January Term classes and the second annual Mid-Winter Bible Conference, January 9-13. The classes and workshops are planned to provide continuing education and practical ministry training for pastors, lay leaders, and congregation members. Saturday's Bible conference will be livestreamed at www.aflbs.org/live.

Classes will include:

- "Pastoral Care at the End of Life" by Pastor Brian Pearson (Jan. 9)
- "The Right Place of Reason in Reformation Theology" by Dr. Jonathan Strand (Jan. 10-12)

The Mid-Winter Bible Conference sessions will be held on Jan. 13. They include:

- "Piety in Lutheran Ethics" by Dr. James Molstre
- "Significance of the Song of the Sea" by Pastor Brent Olson
- "Engaging Younger Generations in Your Congregation" by Pastor Jason Holt

For more information on these classes, visit the AFLBS website at aflbs.org.

AFLBS inks cooperative agreement with VSB

In recognition of shared values and a similar mission, AFLBS has established a cooperative agreement with Village Schools of the Bible (VSB), a non-denominational discipleship ministry serving local churches in Minnesota and around the world.

Village Schools of the Bible holds classes in local congregations, most of which are in the Twin Cities metro and outlying areas. The classes consist of nine months of study, split into two semesters—16 weeks of New Testament and 16 weeks of Old Testament. The VSB program and curriculum helps believers gain a comprehensive understanding of God's Word through Bible survey classes in which students get an overview of Scripture from cover to cover.

The purpose of the cooperative agreement is to expedite the transfer of credits completed at VSB into the AFLBS program. Many students who complete VSB classes have a desire to continue formal Bible education at other institutions. AFLBS aims to make VSB students aware of further biblical and theological education opportunities and hopes to see many students enroll in the AFLBS program in the years to come.



Fosston group helps with Harvey relief

We were 11 men. With "boots on the ground," we came in Jesus' name. That pretty much describes the recent challenging but rewarding trip that was experienced by a group of men from Calvary Free Lutheran Church in Fosston, Minn., as we headed to Houston, Texas, to do relief work through the ministry of Samaritan's Purse after the devastation of Hurricane Harvey.

It was a God thing, which started at a men's breakfast where the desire from the guys was to put their faith in action in some intentional way. Then the hurricanes hit in late August. Before we knew it, 11 men ranging in age from high school seniors to retirement age loaded two old vans on Nov. 11 and headed to Texas to be God's servants for a week.

A shout out has to be given to how well run Samaritan's Purse is in this area of disaster relief. Our sleeping accommodations, showers, and meals were well provided. Before we began working on our first day there, we had a time to discuss important issues with a group of about 100 volunteers. We talked about our statement of faith that unites us, safety measures, and how our work week would look. And we met our team leader.

It was physically demanding week. We worked hard, sweated profusely, and ate and slept well. From pulling nails, tearing out sheetrock, and ripping out shower stalls, to destroying moldy flooring, doing quick-fix plumbing, and making electrical decision we seemed to cover it all. The debris on the curb said it all. Progress was being made.

More than that, spiritual cultivating was being done. As an entire group of volunteers we had devotions after breakfast every morning and had a spiritual debriefing time after supper. Our group also had our own time of reflection one night. At each residence we worked at, we gathered with our leader to meet the residents and pray with them. We respected their property. We tried to get to know them and hear their stories. At the conclusion of our time we would gather again, pray with the residents, and present them with a study Bible that we all autographed.

It was a life-changing week for us. The Lord brought us together as His team and we got to know each other better. Jokes abounded. Stories were shared.

We came in Jesus' name and we would do it all over again in a heartbeat.

Submitted by Pastor Alan Arneson, Calvary Free Lutheran, Fosston, Minn.

**WMF**WOMEN'S
MISSIONARY
FEDERATION**A**

fter many years
of praying
and planning,
members of Zion
Lutheran in Tioga,

N.D., have started construction on a new church building. It is exciting to see how God uses the entire body of Christ to accomplish His purpose, young and old, rich and poor. Ephesians 4:15 says, "From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." In His wisdom, God has blessed all of us with different gifts and talents so that we are "thoroughly equipped to handle every good work" He has planned for each of His precious children.

The land was generously donated to Zion by a man from Illinois whose mother and grandparents were members of Zion many years ago. They were moved to share their blessing of land with our congregation.

God directed several people with a vision for a new building that would be easily accessible to everyone. In our current church building, people have

THE BODY AT WORK

BY LORI OLSON

to go up or down stairs no matter where they go. With leadership and perseverance, our building committee came up with plan that would meet the needs of our many ministries. It has been wonderful to see many men who have helped at the construction site driving heavy equipment, leveling ground, pouring cement, putting up a snow fence, and organizing a fund raiser for an injured construction worker.

Matthew 10:8b says, "Freely you have received, freely give." This is always the difficult part. Nothing is cheap in the Bakken oil field, but God has been generous to many people of our congregation who have wanted to be part of God's plan for a new building. They have prayerfully given. There is still much money needed, so we continue to work together to raise funds. One of our latest fundraisers raised money for kitchen needs. Children, teens, men, and women came together with one purpose—to use the talents they were given to accomplish God's work. We cooked, baked, rolled, sewed, cut, glued, knit, crocheted, painted—just about anything you could think of we had at our craft sale.

Honestly it will be difficult for many of us to leave our current building. We hold many dear memories of baptisms, Sunday school and VBS, countless hours of study for confirmation classes, marriage ceremonies, and farewell funerals of loved ones. But we also have memories of watching loved ones struggle to go up the steps to get to the sanctuary to worship or go downstairs to be part of the fellowship in the dining area.

We are reminded that a building isn't the church; the people are the church. Our prayer is that our congregation will continue to be a guiding light to the people in Tioga and the surrounding area, that we will continue to be a church that stands firm on the truth of God's Word, and that we will continue to show people the love of Christ. Please take a few minutes to pray for our mission to spread God's truth, for volunteers, for funds, for safety, but most of all, that God would be glorified in all that we do.

Olson is a member of Zion Lutheran, Tioga, N.D.

Schools Christmas concerts focus on God's glory



The AFLC Schools hosted a weekend of Christmas concerts Dec. 1-3, featuring gospel teams, Concert Choir, Proclaim Choir, Seminary Chorus and Wind Ensemble. The theme, "All Glory Be to God on High," mirrored the celebration of the Reformation. Pictured (clockwise from top left) the Seminary Chorus, members of the audience joined the choirs during the closing Hallelujah Chorus, seminarian Ryan Patenaude led Scripture reading, the combined choirs, and senior Hannah Peterson sang a solo.



ON BEING GOOD

BY PASTOR TODD SCHIERKOLK

Little Todd was standing in the doorway when, according to my mother's memory of the moment, I looked up at her and asked, "Mommy, what good does it do to be good?" Good question. Other kids seem to ask it, too.

Little David was a good kid according to the Bible stories with which we're familiar. He was faithful in taking care of the sheep, played great Christian music, and demonstrated heroic faith at a young age (remember the incident with Goliath). Seems to me he should have been voted most likely to succeed, even though his family left him out in the field when the prophet Samuel came

calling, looking for a future king to anoint.

So it had to come as a shock when the young King David was having the Ark of the Covenant brought up to Jerusalem and one of the attendants, who was surely "just trying to help," reached out, touched the Ark, and died instantly. And the king who was such a good kid might very well have wondered what good it did to be good. So, he left the Ark where it was, in someone else's house.

Young people in our youth group here in Jerez, Mexico, are finding themselves in a similar situation. Kids who have been good for a long time are wondering what good it does—kids who have been good examples; kids who haven't walked in the ways of the world; kids who have prayed a long time for things to change and for their hopes to be fulfilled. And after all those years of being good, what's the point? Not only were their prayers for people to change not answered—yet—their situations got worse. Their circumstances got harder and they suffered. And where, they asked, was God? And what good did

it do to be good, or to go to youth group, or to be confirmed and have a good testimony? So they left the church building where it was and have gone on with their young lives, all prepped to make the same decisions and walk in the same paths of others who caused them so much pain.

When King David saw how much blessing was heaped on the family where he left the Ark, he changed his mind and brought it to Jerusalem. And he was reunited with God. We're hoping and praying for the same kind of reunion with some of the kids in our youth group. We're praying that God would open their eyes to see how much their Father loves them and how good their Savior has been to them. We want them to see all the blessings that have been lavished upon them in Christ so that they will be reunited with their God, too.

Schierkolk and his wife, Barb, serve as AFLC missionaries in Jerez, Mexico.



PEOPLE & PLACES

AFLC Home Missions will host a leadership retreat Feb. 5-9 at Calvary Free Lutheran in Mesa, Ariz. With the theme of “Worship” from Romans 12:1-3, the retreat will feature workshops led by Pastors Steve Lombardo, Dale Finstrom and Joe Ocker. For more information and to register, visit the Home Missions website (aflchomemissions.org).

Journey Missions will send out four short term assistants under AFLC World missions in 2018. They include:

- **Adam Erickson**, a senior at AFLBS, has been approved to serve as a short term assistant to a Spanish-speaking country yet to be determined.
- **Ben Smith**, a junior at AFLBS, has been approved to serve as a short term assistant in Uganda under Pastor Brent and Emily Raan, for the summer of 2018.
- **Lucas and Katie Pillman** will serve as short term assistants for the month of January at the Horeb Home in India.



Pastor Scott Stroud, center, was installed Nov. 19 as senior pastor at St. Ansgar’s Lutheran Church, Salinas, Calif., with Pastor Gary Jorgenson, assistant to the AFLC president, officiating. Stroud has served as associate pastor of St. Ansgar’s for six years.

NOVEMBER MEMORIALS

- | | |
|---|---|
| AFLBS
Ruth Claus
Doris Rosenberg
John Loiland | ... in honor of
AFLBS
Dr. James Molstre
Chad Friestad |
| Home Missions
Pastor Don Schrage | AFLTS
Dr. James Molstre |
| Parish Ed
Carol Dietsche | |

World Missions restructures Ambassador Institute

Board and leadership disbanded, work will be turned over to the missionaries on the field

At its Dec. 1 meeting, members of the AFLC World Missions Committee decided to make changes to the Ambassador Institute, a division of the World Missions department. The Institute, which has been in existence for 10 years, has developed curriculum to be used around the world for doing biblical training using an oral method



Dr. Kevin Olson

of instruction. The Institute has been headed by Dr. Kevin Olson.

The fourth and final book of the curriculum has been completed and is in the final stages of editing. With the completion of the material the committee felt the institute no longer required a full-time department head or board. The work of the Institute will continue, in particular in the countries of Uganda and India. The expectation is that it will be headed up by missionaries on the field, with teaching to continue to be done by AFLC missionaries and national teachers.



World Missions Committee members are extremely grateful for the work God has done through the Ambassador Institute and for the ministry of Dr. Olson in developing the curriculum, training missionaries and national workers to teach it, and developing and organizing the program. The Institute has national boards leading the work in India and Uganda which Dr. Olson has organized and trained.

The World Missions Committee anticipates using Olson’s gifts in the future for occasional training missions using the orality method. The committee also looks forward to what future ministry opportunities the Lord will open up for Dr. Olson.

Submitted by Pastor Craig Johnson, chairman of the AFLC World Missions Committee.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-November 30, 2017

FUND	REC'D IN NOVEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$33,820	\$367,994	\$422,873
Evangelism	10,556	122,130	110,272
Youth Ministries	8,213	120,121	95,002
Parish Education	11,192	156,635	138,434
Seminary	25,751	249,622	233,606
Bible School	33,376	481,378	464,526
Home Missions	40,742	507,233	452,256
World Missions	46,795	411,648	477,427
Personal Support	58,397	557,382	534,057
TOTALS	\$268,844	\$2,974,142	\$2,928,453

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

THE AMBASSADOR INSTITUTE

The Ambassador Institute, according to the AFLC website, is the training branch of the World Missions department. The purpose of this ministry is international biblical education. The training is done through an oral style of instruction using the parables and question style of teaching which Jesus also used. Classes are held in the students' own language from the very beginning. When students are able to study at home in their own culture, the benefits include keeping families together, allowing students to continue in their vocations and



Pastor Robert Lee

leading their churches, and the daily practice of the courses they have studied.

Members of the World Missions Committee informed the campus family by email on Dec. 4 that the

Ambassador Institute Department had been "reorganized." The Institute board was disbanded, and Dr. Kevin Olson was dismissed, effective Dec. 31, paid through the month of February. It was the "general feeling" of the committee that the primary purpose of the department was the production of the orality curriculum, and now that this material is nearing completion, there is no longer a need for a department head or a board. The committee will be seeking the help of current missionaries to be the Ambassador Institute department heads over individual countries so that the work continues.

Gratitude was expressed by the committee to Dr. Olson for his 10 years of service and to the Institute board. The email stated, "We are convinced that God has given him the ability and desire for a wider ministry than what he has been able to accomplish in this capacity. We are confident that God will continue to open future doors for ministry in the U.S. and around the world."

As a former member of the Ambassador Institute board, I was

surprised and disappointed by the committee's action. Our stated purpose was "to prepare and facilitate solid biblical and theological training throughout the world," and it would seem that the production of the material is not the conclusion of our work, but the preparing of a foundation and tools for future and fruitful ministry. The mission of the Institute and its methodology have been presented in many of our congregations, which have supported the work so generously that last year's budget, completely separate from World Missions, was fully met.

From the beginning our committee was mindful that the goal of the Institute training was to prepare pastors and lay leaders for free and living Lutheran congregations. It is my understanding that this is beginning to happen in Uganda, and we need to pray that the removal of leadership for the program does not hinder the progress here and in India.

The notice from the World Missions Committee seems to suggest that Dr. Olson should seek for a "wider ministry" outside of the AFLC. Ten years ago I said to the committee that in my opinion the Ambassador Institute was the cutting edge of AFLC World Missions. It would be sad indeed if he needed to work with others outside of the AFLC in the unfinished task of both "preparing and facilitating solid biblical and theological training throughout the world" (emphasis mine).

God bless you, Brother Kevin, and lead you in the months to come. You have been an important part of our headquarters and campus family for many years, and you will be greatly missed. Thank you for your dedicated service to God and to His Church on behalf of our AFLC.

... OUR THANKS

The first issue of the New Year is a time to say thanks to all of our 2017 writers. The *Lutheran Ambassador* articles are the result of dedicated volunteer labor, and Ruth and I continue to be amazed and grateful for the scores of gifted and willing writers who bless our church family from month to month. A special word of thanks is extended to those who have written a series of columns: Pastors Steve Lombardo and

... it would seem that the production of the material is not the conclusion of our work, but the preparing of a foundation and tools for future and fruitful ministry.

Peter Franz, for their Reformation emphasis in the "Encouraging Word," Jennifer Thorson for the freshness of "Something to Share," and Pastor John Brennen for this thoughtful and practical "Building the Base."

Our new writers for 2018 are Jenaya Crestik in the "Encouraging Word" column, Aila Foltz who will write the "Something to Share" column, and Pastor Richard Gunderson who will write the "Building the Base" column. We look forward to the blessings these writers will bring to our church body in the New Year.

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

Periodicals

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

association retreat center

THE CALL TO GO

BY KIRK RAUTIO

'G

o into all the world and preach the gospel" (Matthew 16:15). This verse, which is so very key when talking about world missions, is a command of

God to go. But where that may mean is different based on the call God has placed on each of our hearts.

My family and I have been called to the small town of East Farmington, Wis., to spread the good news of the gospel at the Association Retreat Center. In our time here, we have seen how this is a pivotal mission field.

We have the privilege of housing AFLC missionaries who are on furlough from their mission fields as they endeavor to inform their supporters and others of the work to which they have been called. Our mission is to serve them so that they can rest (amongst their VERY busy schedules) and rejuvenate.

Over the past six months, two missionary families have walked through our doors and stayed with us. They have brought us much joy, moments of prayer,

and a lifelong friendship. We are excited to see this continue as we open our doors to many more missionaries.

The ARC is also a mission field to hundreds if not thousands of people throughout the year who step onto our campus. In October we housed two major college campus ministries. Through this we were blessed to learn about their mission, to see souls won and deepened for Christ, and to bring new prayer partners for the ARC.

We have also hosted a dozen family gatherings, reunions, and get-a-ways that have blessed our family, the ARC, and the families which attended. One week very early on when my family had just arrived at the ARC, we hosted a sweet family reunion that blessed the socks off my daughter. She had just moved from a town of people she knew and friends she missed to a large camp with people who come and go. In the midst of this transition, this family embraced my daughter, accepted her, played with her, and ministered to her soft and weary soul. She was so excited to see them

again at Family Camp and talks weekly about them and how nice they were to her.

Jesus has used the ARC as a mission field for our family, both to serve and be served. Add to that the blessing of our fellow staff with whom I work each day, often for long hours. Oh how the morning coffee and talks of the old days gone by ministers to my soul as I gain a deeper understanding and knowledge of the ministry of the ARC.

I challenge you today to seek where God has called to you go. Is it across the street to the neighbor who needs to talk? Is it serving coffee or playing piano for the person who needs a break? Or is it going overseas to minister to one who has never heard of Jesus? Where is your mission field and how has God called you to go? If you ask and listen, He will answer.

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