

THE LUTHERAN 

JUNE 2008

# AMBASSADOR

From discipling  
the new believer  
to reaching out  
to members who  
have slipped  
through the  
cracks, God  
calls us to

EVANGELISM



# Encourager

BY JOAN CULLER



**M**y church, St. Paul's Evangelical Free Lutheran in Leitersburg, Md., is more than 180 years old, so it has a lot of history. One of the documents preserved over the years is the Declaration of Principles of our founders, which declares, in part, "The spread of the evangelical gospel is our most ardent desire." My husband is fond of saying, "it is *still* our most ardent desire."

I've come to see that the practice of encouragement is an important key in fulfilling this desire. We want to encourage those outside the church to come in, and we want to encourage those within to participate more fully in the body of Christ. The question is, how do we accomplish this? What exactly is encouragement and how do we do it?

The Bible speaks often of encouragement. It is listed among the spiritual gifts (Romans 6:8) and commended as a personal ministry (Acts 4:36). We can be encouraged by the Scriptures (Romans 15:4), through prophecy (I Corinthians 14:31), by the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31), and — most significantly for us as individual Christians — by people of faith (Acts 13:15). In fact, encouragement is an integral part of Christian fellowship (I Thessalonians 5:11).

Encouragement gives hope to the grieving. This may come in the form of a note, an invitation, a hug or just the opportunity to sit and talk. Encouragement stands with those who feel helpless by lending a hand. It gives generously to those in need. Moving furniture, baby sitting in an emergency or dropping off a week's worth of groceries may sometimes encourage far more than the most eloquent prayer. Encouragement stirs up our gifts and abilities. It says, "well done," "thank you" and "could you help with

this?" Encouragement may also mean "to beseech or exhort," but it is never judgmental. Like love, encouragement sees the best in people and it never gives up

(I Corinthians 13:7). Encouragement always says, "I care about you." Its joy is in seeing others thrive and grow.

Encouragement wears many faces. I think of my friend, Dawn, who never forgets a birthday or anniversary and often writes short notes saying, "You're such a good friend," or, "I'm thinking of you." I remember a little boy named Sean who loved going to church with our family so much that his invitation eventually led his whole family to Christ. I give thanks for Pastor Dave who recognized my love of writing and suggested many ways to use it in our congregation. I feel admiration for Paul, who devoted his retirement years to leading Bible studies at the local jail and at the Rescue Mission; he even invited one of the men to live in his home and work with him. These are only a few of the encouragers I have met.

There are as many ways to encourage as there are people. There is an infinite supply of people to encourage. You can be the face of Christ to someone; your hands can be His hands at work in the world. Who will you encourage today?

*Culler is a member of St. Paul's Lutheran, Leitersburg, Md.*

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God uses men who are weak and feeble enough  
to lean on him.

— Hudson Taylor

We don't have the impact God has planned for  
us when we're pursuing impact; we have it  
when we're pursuing God.

— Phil Vischer

[ From the beginning, Christians have been  
tempted to confuse success with faith.

— Mark Galli ]

It is our duty and our privilege to exhaust  
our lives for Jesus. We are not to be living  
specimens of men in fine preservation, but  
living sacrifices, whose lot is to be consumed.

— Charles Spurgeon



By Pastor Jason Siemens

## If you lead someone to Christ today, what then?

**T**HERE'S A LITTLE BIBLE CAMP IN THE middle of the wild woods of central Alberta. It sits on the shores of a dirty lake with a mud bottom that turns the water a bile-like shade of green. Every year during the 17 days of summer we get in Alberta, the camp fills up with boys and girls of all ages.

I know this young boy who went to that Bible camp one summer and had a great time. The speaker made him laugh and want what he was talking about, but the best part was his cabin counselor. He felt like a big brother, someone you could tell all your secrets to, and never worry that he'd tell a soul.

One night after the telling of some scary stories and reading Matthew 24 about the end of the world and the return of Christ, great fear gripped the boy. He was terrified that he would be "left behind" if Jesus came back right now. The cabin counselor prayed with him to receive Jesus as his Savior, and he did.

The next year the boy was excited to go to camp again, but it didn't go so well this time. He didn't fit in. The boys made fun of his size and clumsiness. He didn't click with his new cabin counselor. His heart ached for how it was before. He decided he didn't want to go back again the next year.



# DISCIPLESHIP

Or ever.

Junior high came and the young man was feeling the pressure to fit in. He'd had enough of what he didn't understand. He turned his back on the God of Bible camp and turned to a dark world filled with cursing, pornography and witchcraft.

The boy in Alberta was me. Without anyone to cultivate the seed that was planted, I turned from God. I fell into a dark and ghastly world filled with devils and fleshly delights, with no one to blame but myself for listening to the sweet whisper of Satan.

I have wondered many times, what if?

What if the camp had a follow-up program that would have matched me with someone who could explain what a "Thou" was? What if I'd had someone come alongside of me so that I wouldn't have felt the need to travel that dark path? What if I'd listened to the Holy Spirit's leading instead of the spirit of lies? What if I'd been discipled as Jesus tells us to in Matthew 28:19a: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations"?

A lot of questions go unanswered in this lifetime, but one question we can answer: "What if I lead someone to Christ today, what then?" If you don't disciple that person, or help them find someone to disciple them, you may do them great spiritual harm. That sounds harsh, but you and I need to begin to think about the next step in a young believer's life. Jesus did not call His disciples and then abandon them. He spent the next three years pouring His life into them.

At the risk of sounding pastoral, I need to clarify my point. Don't get me wrong. I don't want to discourage anyone from sharing their faith and praying with someone to come to faith. That's the last thing I want to happen. I do want you to think about what happens next in the lives of those the Bible calls spiritual infants.

We've just adopted a beautiful little girl from South Carolina named Maycee. Our other child, Austin, is 13 and pretty self-sufficient. It's different with babies. If you don't feed them or change them they cry, really loud. At least Maycee does. She's got a good set of lungs.

Have you heard the cry of the ones who have come to Christ but are now yearning to be fed? They know they need to change their lives to glorify God, but they don't know how to do it on their own. They need someone to come alongside them and help them remove the stinky past. It takes time and effort, but the "infants" need us to help them grow. I Peter 2:2 describes how it works: "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation."

God used that little boy in spite of what he did. I find it hard to believe that He did that for me, the one who abandoned Him and was found again. It has put a desire in my heart to see people discipled to maturity and then have them disciple others. I was terrified the first time I sat down with a new believer and started to try to disciple them. But God is faithful. He cares about those infants, and in the end we both grew in God's grace.

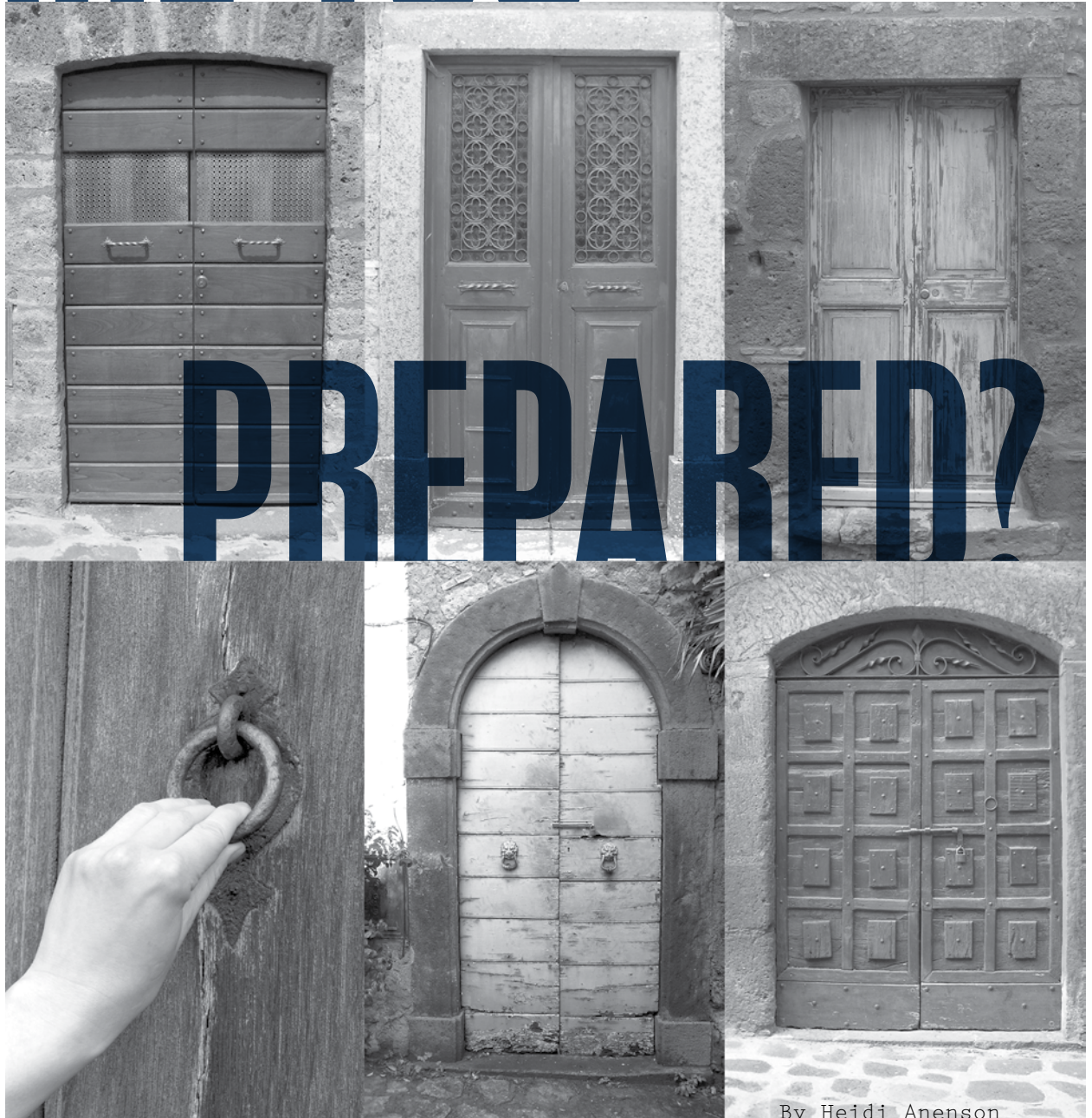
Discipleship might be the most neglected of the spiritual disciplines. It takes effort, but you can experience the great reward of seeing someone grow and mature in their faith.

Will you look for the one whom you can come alongside and feed God's Word? These infants need you and me to look for them and be willing to get our hands dirty helping them grow. You can be the one whom God uses to help a young boy or girl walk the right path and live a life that glorifies God.

*Siemens serves St. Matthews Evangelical Lutheran, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.*



# ARE YOU



By Heidi Anenson

AFLBS students study  
methods of evangelism

ONE OF MY FAVORITE CLASSES AT AFLBS was Evangelism and Discipleship — one of the most important classes offered by AFLBS. It is easy for us as students at a Bible school to learn about what the life of a Christian should look like. But how do we go out from here?

Do we just stay in our Christian bubble, like the Pharisees, not wanting any sinners to get in our way? Or do we long to share the love of Jesus with as many as possible? Who am I to think I have the right to keep this good news to myself? Even the disciples and apostles in Acts received power from the Holy Spirit, not just to keep to themselves. They prayed, were empowered and boldly proclaimed the gospel message so many repented and came to know the Lord.

During the class, we spent time learning about different approaches to evangelism based on who people are and what they already believe. We watched videos on how to witness to Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, had guests come to speak about leading homosexual people to Christ (and leading people to Christ in general), went door knocking, and were taught the importance of discipleship so new believers are not forgotten.

We also learned that there is not just a set method to lead someone to Christ. Just as in Paul's example in I Corinthians 9:19-23, I learned how important it is to meet people where they are at in life and to lean on the power and guiding of the Holy Spirit (Luke 12:12). But I also learned that I must always be prepared for any situation the Lord sets before me (I Peter 3:15).

What impacted my life the most was the assignment to use one of the methods taught in class and take it to the real world. I went to a park. I guess I had never really gone up to random people before just to ask what they thought about Jesus. When the woman I asked said that she did not believe in Jesus, I remember feeling almost shocked. I asked her a few more questions. When she said she did not want to go on, I moved on to someone else. That day was such a wake-up call in my life. I realized how much more I need to care about the many lost people all around me. Who am I to spread the Word for the Lord? But after all He's done for me, how can I not proclaim Him at every opportunity?

I spent last summer on a ministry team teaching vaca-

tion Bible school. I realized just how sinful I am when a little girl in my preschool class said that sin makes her heart dirty. I have no right to judge people. Instead, I must love them as the Lord desires. He wants them to know the truth, too. Who am I to limit the power of the Lord and judge who He can use and when He can work?

When the ministry ended, I wept as I thought of the possibility that the children I had been with did not know the Lord. Then the Lord showed me that I have to let them go and put them in His hands.

I went to Israel for a few days at the end of my summer break. While there, I was challenged by the fire of the believers I traveled with and by the opposition from some Jewish people we encountered. One man said, "We hung Jesus on a stick 2,000 years ago. If He came back we'd do it again, and we'll do the same to you." We were ridiculed and spit on. But compared to the persecution suffered by so many, it really made me think. Why do I believe? Would I really be willing to give it all? Is Christ really my center?

The Lord has already opened up doors for me to use the methods and questions I learned in Evangelism and Discipleship class. I've witnessed to a man on the plane ride back from Israel, children and other people during summer teams, people on the streets of Minneapolis through the Street Level ministry, one of my nanny families, and others. I know I should say more — and I want to — but I have to remember to wait for the Lord's timing. Psalm 128 says that unless what we do is by Him, for Him, and through Him, all our work is worthless. Who am I to think I can do anything for the Lord on my own? As a familiar Casting Crowns song says, "How refreshing to know You don't need me; how amazing to find out You want me ..." The song goes on to talk about how we can claim the victory because of the power of Christ in us.

The Lord promises to equip us for everything He calls us to do (Hebrews 13:20-21) and to give the Holy Spirit to any and all who ask (Luke 11:1-13). Wow! Zechariah 4:6 says, "'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty."

*Anenson, a senior at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, is from Richfield, Minn.*



By Pastor Jeff Swanson

## A new mission frontier for AFLC Home Missions

**I** AM EXCITED TO SHARE WITH YOU WHAT God is doing in Alaska. The final steps are being taken in the transfer of properties from the Lutheran Mission Society (also known as The Alaska Mission) to AFLC Home Missions. What properties are we talking about? How has this arrangement come about? What does the change mean for future ministry?

### History

Let me begin with a brief history of the Lutheran Mission Society. LMS has been working in Alaska for many years, first ministering to Norwegian fishermen in the early years and moving on to local evangelism and church planting in various communities among native peoples and settlers. Pioneer missionaries like Oscar Brown and Elmer Ellingson endured hardship and paved the way in a harsh land to break ground for life-changing gospel ministry. LMS work and ministry today centers in the Bristol Bay communities of Naknek and South Naknek.

### Present ministry

LMS currently has churches in Naknek and South Naknek, as well as a radio ministry (KAKN Radio) and an aviation ministry. The two churches are not large but are beacons in their communities, seeking to lift up Jesus and faithfully proclaim God's Word that souls might be saved, disciples made, and believers equipped. KAKN is a 24/7 Christian station offering solid biblical preaching and a variety of Christian music ranging from contemporary to country/bluegrass to native artists. Programs like "Unshackled" are especially well received and effective in

bush Alaska. Translators/repeaters help KAKN to broadcast in other remote area villages and impact lives for Christ's Kingdom. It is a thrill to see planes departing most Sunday afternoons from the LMS hangar to unchurched area villages to conduct services. Currently three planes call the LMS hangar their home base, though the only LMS-owned plane (a C-175) is currently in Minnesota finishing up repairs and will be back in Alaska this summer.

### AFLC ties

In recent years there have been increasing ties between LMS and the AFLC. The LMS board is almost entirely made up of AFLC pastors and laymen. Recent missionaries in Naknek have been predominantly from the AFLC. Pastors Tom Olson, Henry Mohagen, Doug Niessen and I have pastored the Bristol Bay churches for eight of the last ten years. Work/ministry teams from AFLC congregations in Kalispell, Mont.; Frost, Minn.; Helmar, Ill.; and Reva, S.D., have constructed the hangar, an addition on the South Naknek church and countless other projects. A work team from Emmaus Lutheran in Bloomington, Minn., will be working in Naknek this summer and conducting vacation Bible school. AFLC-related ministries like FLAPS (Free Lutheran Association of Pilot Supporters) and MATA (Missionary Aviation Training Academy) have been involved and had a significant impact on the Alaska mission and its ministry.

### Transition

This past fall as the LMS board met and considered its future, all of the above facts led to a decision to trans-





fer two church properties, two parsonages, KAKN Radio, the LMS hangar and plane to AFLC Home Missions. The Home Missions board has agreed to this transfer and it is indeed an AFLC first in the “last frontier.” What an open door God has put before us. Please pray for the finalization of this transfer, that the transition would be smooth and would result in greater impact for the gospel in rural Alaska.

#### Potential ministry

My family and I moved to Naknek last September in response to God’s call through LMS. We are so thankful for the opportunity to preach God’s Word and work with precious souls here in bush Alaska. We rejoice in the ministry at KAKN as we hear person after person tell of its blessing in their lives. Just before we moved to Alaska I read an article in a magazine put out by Village Missions. They reported that there are at least 120 villages in bush Alaska that have no resident pastor or regular church meetings. We see some of those villages being reached by servants flying out from our hangar. We see some of those villages reached with God’s Word through our radio station. We have been to some of those villages and have seen the impact of God’s Word and heard the appreciation of the people there.

Early this winter we flew to a village 80 miles northwest of us and spent five days there among a people longing for English-speaking ministry. What a joy! What a challenge! How might God use us in the AFLC to bring Christ to more of these locations through the aviation and

radio ministry?

Life in rural Alaska can be very difficult. It is a place of extremes. Extreme weather, extreme prices, and extreme problems. Social ills are rampant. The needs are great. Many people despair. Yet God works through His Word. Jesus changes lives.

Last fall we heard the testimony of a young father who had lost his two young sons to drowning. He told of constructing their caskets and burying them under a cross that he had also made. The inscription on the cross read, “God is good.” Through his tears he testified of coming to know Jesus and experiencing His saving, sustaining grace. That man is the fruit, to God’s glory, of gospel ministry in rural Alaska.

What a privilege to be a part of God’s kingdom and His work. What an open door God has given now to the AFLC. LMS is a small ministry with a declining support base. Many of us involved see God’s hand and timing in this transition. Rejoice and pray with us for God to lead and bear fruit.

Lead On O King Eternal!

*Swanson, an AFLC pastor, serves the Lutheran Mission Society in Naknek, Alaska.*

**W**HAT IS THE MISSION OF THE church? What does God expect us to do? These are questions I have been asking myself since being elected evangelism director of our congregation. I believe our Lutheran theology rightly teaches us that we are to proclaim the law and the gospel, and to rightly administer the sacraments, to borrow words from Martin Luther.

These seem to be obvious answers. But how are we as a local church called to fulfill this mission? Sure, we can and do support missionaries. We send support to the many worthy departments of our AFLC. But what about closer to home in our community? Or, closer yet, what about our own congregation? How can we be confident that we are evangelizing and reaching out to as many of those as possible who are in some way associated with our congregation?

I am becoming more and more convinced that the first step of our mission is to make sure that every soul who walks through the doors of our church has the chance to understand certain fundamental truths. The first one is that each of us is a horrible sinner. Our natural inclinations, desires, wills and actions leave us with no hope of being able to stand before a holy, just and righteous God. The second is that even though we are horrible sinners, God loves us so much that He became one of us. He did all we are unable to do. He lived the perfect life for us, and then was given the punishment we deserve. He stood in our place and took God's wrath for us.

I believe we are doing fairly well at these things for those who come regularly to our church. Our pastor rightly divides God's Word. We have a weekly Bible study. Our women and men gather for study and prayer. We use Christ-centered Sunday school materials. With the help of our Home Missions Barnabas teams we have had an excellent vacation Bible school.

But what about those on our church rolls who do not hear God's call to them to gather with other Christians, to regularly hear God's Word preached, and Christ's command to receive His body and blood in His supper? Many times these are people who once were active in the church

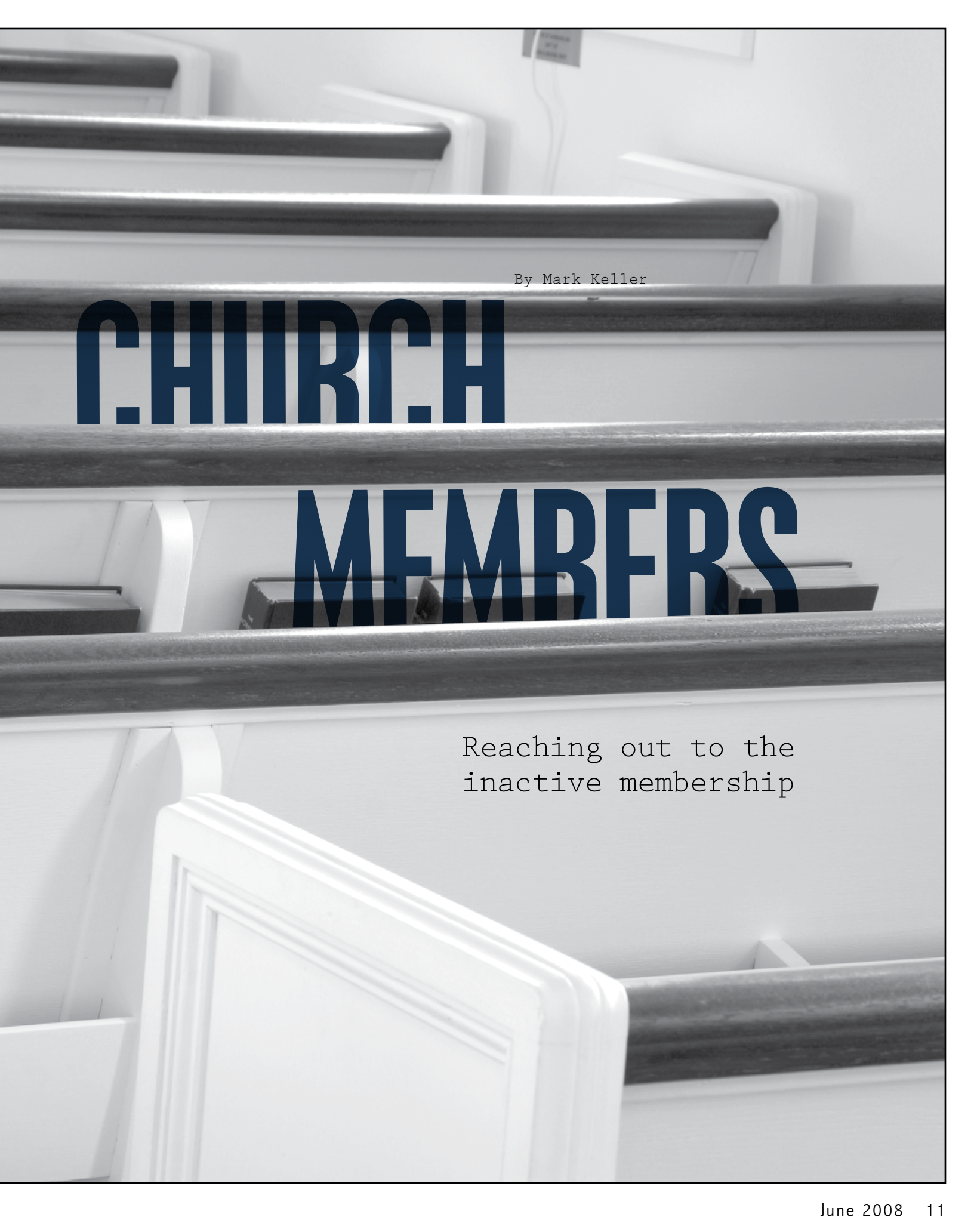
or were confirmed and slowly drifted away. This is where it gets much harder. These may be the hardest people for us to talk to about the Savior. In a small town they know all about us and all of our faults. They should be the ones we most persistently reach with the Lord. They are our friends and family. They could be our children, parents, siblings, neighbors and co-workers.

Nearly all congregations have at one time or another struggled with how to bring those who are inactive members back into the fold. This may be the next mission God is calling our congregation to accomplish. When Pastor Jim Rasmussen, the AFLC's director of evangelism, spent time with our congregation talking about our focus on evangelism, I was excited. He gave us a list of available programs and one jumped out to me. Friend-to-Friend evangelism sounded like something maybe we could use. Through Scripture examples, Pastor Rasmussen outlined how a friend, neighbor or family member could impact people by inviting them to meet Jesus. In Acts 10 Cornelius called together his family and friends to hear Peter talk about Jesus. In John 1, Andrew and Philip both told their brothers they had found the Messiah.

It became apparent to me from the statistics, facts and examples Pastor Rasmussen gave that the best way to reach out to those among us is for one friend to invite another to come, see and hear what we are all about. We need to tell them of the forgiveness of sins and new life found in Jesus, and let the Holy Spirit do His work of bringing sinners to faith in Jesus.

Our congregation is in the initial stages of finding out how God would use us to accomplish this mission. At our last church council meeting we discussed hosting a friendship Sunday, giving members an opportunity to invite a friend to church. This is a new mission for us and we are not sure how to proceed from here. Please pray for us and ask God to guide and direct us. I believe that with the tool of God's mighty Word and the Holy Spirit as our guide this is a mission we can accomplish.

*Keller is a member of Peace Lutheran, St. Francis, Kan.*



By Mark Keller

# CHURCH MEMBERS

Reaching out to the  
inactive membership

# It takes a special approach to reach our rural areas

By Pastor Dale Finstrom

**E**VANGELISM MUST BE AT THE forefront of the local congregation. Jesus gave us the mandate to fulfill the Great Commission: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). The command is an active command — while we are going, whether at our work place, in general conversation, or by lifestyle, we are called to share the good news of Jesus.

Sometimes this mandate can be a great challenge depending on where we are called to serve. Rural America, with its decreasing population, has many challenges. Many families claim to have a church home but do not attend. The affluence of our society and a growing apathy toward the things of the Lord keep people from seeking and worshipping the Lord. Whatever the reason, there are still many people in our rural areas who need to be reached for Christ.

Evangelism is an absolute necessity. It gives renewed life to the congregation. It causes the congregation to have an outward look. It stops congregations from becoming in-grown so that members don’t become hens pecking at each other until they draw blood. New individuals and families coming to the congregation bring joy and enthusiasm to its people. However, the greatest thrill is when these new people come to know Jesus and are spiritually born again. This is the greatest cause for rejoicing.

How is this outreach to be accomplished? It all begins with prayer. Nothing happens without prayer. If the people of the congregation do not pray they won’t actively go out and share Christ with others. How can you lead someone to Jesus without praying with that person? The key is to train people to pray.

How? Maybe we need to cut the service shorter to allow time for prayer or set aside a certain evening just for prayer with an emphasis on kingdom praying, that God’s kingdom would come among us and be expanded around us. We must not do this solely with the intention of growing the local church but more so that people would come to know Christ as their Savior and be a part of the body of believers. The motive must be the individual’s personal salvation.

The best way to engage in prayer is by making a prayer list that includes neighbors, family, and friends. Then go



to them and ask how you could pray for them. Lighthouses of Prayer is a good ministry tool to help us organize and pray for these people. Another way would be to organize a prayer walk, praying for your local city and the people living in that area.

Pastors and leaders are called to train and equip the congregation for the work of the ministry. This includes training on how to evangelize and lead someone to a personal relationship with Jesus. There are a variety of tools to help in this training. Friend-to-Friend evangelism is a simple method where everyday life is a means of evangelism. The Bridge method is a great way in which, through casual conversation, you can sit down and draw





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out the way of salvation on a napkin or piece of paper. You may want to use Share Jesus Without Fear, which is a series of questions designed to help you lead an individual through the Scriptures, showing them the way of salvation. Information on all of these tools can be found from the AFLC Evangelism department.

What are some of the opportunities that could be used to implement evangelism in a rural area? It is important to know the interests of the people and the availability of things that could enhance outreach and evangelism. One congregation organized a winter ice fishing event that included men and children from the church. They, in turn, were encouraged to invite others to join them. The

result was that the fish houses were places of fellowship and evangelism. Other activities could include snowmobiling, wild game suppers or a family camping event at a Bible camp or lake where time is set aside for devotions and sharing. Some may use their hobbies — woodworking, restoring antique tractors, or whatever it may be. It is important to be creative yet always keep evangelism and soul winning as a primary motive. Keep in mind that everyone needs Jesus. Make the most of every opportunity and enjoy life as you share Christ with others.

*Finstrom serves Resurrection Free Lutheran, Beltrami, Minn.*



# Jesus the **TRUE VINE**

By Pastor Gary Jones

**O**FTEN IN THE LUTHERAN Church we have a problem when it comes to evangelism. We don't understand it and we don't do it.

Evangelism is sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with the world. It is conveying the truth of John 3:3-5 that we can be "born again."

To share the good news effectively the evangelist or messenger must be a born again Christian believer, born from above, a genuine spiritually regenerated man or woman. This is essential. The Holy Spirit needs to live in the heart of the messenger if he is going to carry the message of regeneration, pardon of sins and new life in Christ to others.

Evangelism is not only about carrying historical biblical facts about Jesus of Nazareth to the world. That is important, but evangelism is also about God doing a work in a believer's heart, and then he or she shares that change of heart with others. We declare, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). Our sharing is to be Holy Spirit-energized.

Evangelism where people memorize a few appropriate Scriptures and go door to door in the neighborhood sharing those Scriptures, is sometimes received and sometimes not. Often the one doing the sharing is scared because they are not sure of their memory. It's a problem if they are just sharing a canned and memorized presentation and haven't truly been born again. There needs to be a desire to share the new life and freedom from sins. Evangelism should

never be a religious work motivated by a sense of guilt or fear of judgment if you don't do your share.

Congregations must be taught that Christians are branches growing out of Christ, who is the "True Vine" as taught in John 15. If we are not rooted in Christ, the True Vine, there will be no spiritual fruit, but only dead, dried-up religious fruit.

Many folks today are mystified by Jesus' words, "You must be born again" (John 3:3). Nicodemus had trouble understanding it and so do many today. It is about the power of God making us a new creation. Not simply the old man made over.

The church of Jesus Christ — the local church — is referred to in the New Testament as the kingdom of God. This kingdom consists of tares and wheat — believers and non-believers (Matthew 13:24-30). The congregation must strive to teach and preach spiritual regeneration, trusting in God's Word to cleanse us and make us into what He wants us to be. The congregation must desire to be Christ-like in our lives at home, at church and outside in the everyday world. Genuine faith in Christ has a corresponding action of God working in me to do His will. Only God can change the congregation and its attitudes toward evangelism — but God can do it.

*Jones serves Good Shepherd Lutheran, Pleasanton, Texas.*

BY ROBIN JAMESON

I recently ran across the word “compel” in the Scriptures. It means to force or drive, especially to a course of action. I started thinking about what compels us in our daily lives. We move out of mom and dad’s house or graduate from college and our desire to eat and pay rent compels us to get a job. Our health is poor so we are compelled to see a physician. Our blood pressure or blood sugar is high, or our clothes no longer fit so we are compelled to adjust our diet or lifestyle. Our desire or need for something compels us, moves us to action.

II Corinthians 5:14 says, “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died” (NIV). The NASB version says, “For the love of Christ controls us.” As a believer, that is my desire, to be controlled by the love of Christ, to listen and be obedient to the Holy Spirit.

Often times, however, that is not the case. My sinful nature is in control and my wants and desires rule, not the love of Christ. As believers we have something so precious. We have redemption by the shed blood of Jesus. We have His everlasting love and His grace, mercy and forgiveness. What do I do with them? I often hide these gifts from the world and am afraid people will laugh, mock or even harm me.

Conviction comes as I read and study this passage. “One died for all.” That means Christ died for my neighbor across the street, the angry young teen I see passing my house, the families that are broken, and the lonely, empty people all around me. I am stirred, but not often compelled. Fear and pride control me, not the love of Christ.

We have the answer to the world’s emptiness and brokenness. We are called. We are commanded to be His witnesses, to let our light shine, to preach the good news, and to go make disciples. II Corinthians 5:20 says we are ambassadors for Christ as though God were pleading through us that the lost be reconciled to Him.

I’ll tell the world, that I’m a Christian,  
I’m not ashamed, His name to bear;  
I’ll tell the world, that I’m a Christian,  
I’ll take Him with me anywhere.

I’ll tell the world, how Jesus saved me,  
and how He gave me a life brand new;



# tell the world

And I know that if you trust Him,  
that all He gave me, He’ll give to you.

—Baynard L. Fox

Are you controlled by the love of Christ to the point of obedience? Do you hear the Spirit calling you to your neighbors’ side? Are you compelled to reach out to that broken family down the street? Is His love overflowing in your life so that each life you touch He touches? Does His grace and mercy splash out of you to others? Is the joy of your salvation contagious? Oh, let us tell the world that we are Christians. Let us tell each life we touch that He loves and died for them, too.

*Jameson, a member of Freedom Lutheran, Ottawa, Ill., is the communication secretary for the national WMF.*

# *something* WORTH *celebrating*

By Pastor Craig Johnson

**I**n 2005 a cyclone ripped through southeast India. It hit the village of Etheru where Shiloh Free Lutheran Church is located. The church's building and house for the pastor was destroyed. For two years the congregation met in a house they rented. Finally, on Jan. 16, a new church building and home for the pastor was dedicated. It was a cause for celebration.

The celebration began on the outskirts of the village. Two carts had been acquired for the occasion, and each was being pulled by two oxen. Dr. Francis Monseth, Free Lutheran Seminary dean, Dr. Lyle Mattson, AFLC World Missions Committee member, and myself climbed up on one cart. Pastor Del Palmer, AFLC World Missions director, and Pastor Al Pinno, AFLC Canada president, were on the other one. We were joined on the carts by numerous Indian brothers and sisters. In front of the carts some musicians played and others marched along. And so the parade began.

As we entered the village crowds gathered alongside the road to see what was going on. The others on the ox cart with us had bags of flower petals. Those were being frequently tossed in the air. The band kept playing, the painted oxen kept marching, people were laughing and smiling, and flower petals were flying. It was quite a parade.

We turned off the main road onto a smaller one that led to the new church building. The pastor's home is connected to the church. Pastor D. Devasahayam serves the congregation.

The church building and parsonage were dedicated, the ribbon was cut and we entered in for a worship service.

A number of AFLC India pastors were at the dedication service. Twelve of them had spent nearly an hour together in a small taxi in order to get to the service. Various ones read Scripture. There was a time of singing. One elderly gentleman stood up and sang a song. It was in the Telegu language so I have no idea what he was saying, but the sincerity of his passion was evident.

Some in the back of the room sat on chairs and benches. All the floor space in the middle and close to the front was filled up with people sitting. It looked like a U.S. fire safety inspector's nightmare. Some were outside the building looking in and listening as Pastor Pinno and Dr. Monseth both shared from God's Word. Dr. Monseth encouraged the congregation to strive to ensure that the building always remained a house of prayer.

On the road in front of the church a long line of tables was set up. The people were in abundance and, thanks to God's provision, the food was in abundance as well.

Another thing that was clearly in abundance throughout the festivities was joy. The cyclone had been devastating and did much damage, but the Lord kept the congregation going. God provided and now the congregation has a place where they can meet. The pastor has a home for his family and a place where he can study. They were rejoicing in the goodness of God and they wanted others to share in their celebration.

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP: Members of Shiloh Free Lutheran Church in Etheru, India, celebrated the completion of the congregation's new church building with an ox cart parade. Pastor Del Palmer, AFLC World Missions director, and

Pastor Al Pinno, president of AFLC Canada, stand on one of the ox carts as it is led through town. Members gather inside the new church building for the dedication service. Pastor Al Pinno shared from God's Word during the service.







## BF work group delivers pews, builds parking spaces in Texas

Builders Fellowship organized a work project earlier this year at Crown of Life Lutheran in Tomball, Texas. Roger Timm, a member of Christ the King Lutheran, Wilson, Wis., along with Greg Koch and Ray Block, delivered 12 church pews, which were donated by Trinity Lutheran, Long Lake, Minn. While there, the men installed the pews in the church building and also constructed a 24-foot-square concrete pad for two handicap parking spaces.

TOP: Roger Timm and Ray Block smooth out a concrete walkway connecting a new handicap parking pad to the church entrance at Crown of Life Lutheran, Tomball, Texas.

NEAR RIGHT: The 24-foot-square parking pad that the work group laid at Tomball, Texas.

FAR RIGHT: Crown of Life Lutheran Church is served by Pastor Gordon Waterman.



## ARC hosts family camp July 20-26

Family Camp at the Association Retreat Center is July 20-26 in Osceola, Wis. The evening speaker will be Pastor Michael Brandt from Sioux Falls, S.D. Other speakers/leaders for the retreat are Pastor Mark Olson, Pastor John Eidsmoe and seminarian Brian Rieke. Vacation Bible school will be provided for children through sixth grade, led by an AFLBS team. There will also be a youth program for teens. Check out more information on the ARC's Web site at [www.arc-aflc.org](http://www.arc-aflc.org).

## AFLBS announces summer ministry teams

Eight teams will provide music, camp and VBS ministries

**A**FLBS students were named to eight ministry teams that will travel throughout the United States this summer visiting congregations. Team members will provide music ministry and testimonies, as well as work with vacation Bible school programs and summer camps.

Members of the Ambassadors include Andrew Abel, Jordan Rumohr, Miriam Alanen, Emily Nelson and Elizabeth Berge.

Members of the Majesty team include Ben Nash, Jon Langness, Carmen Parsley, Sarah Vigness and Anna Alme.

Members of the Cornerstone team include Daniel Hurner, Andy Benson, Julia Osthus and Hannah Dahl.

Members of the Foundation team include Micah Horneman, Austin Albers, Annika Nyman and Rachel Foss.

Members of the ARC team include Greg Tanner, Jacob O'Flanagan, Grace Jermeland and Feven Mesmer.

Members of the South Barnabas team include Dan Warner, Jeremy Langness, Alison Knutson and Amanda Aldrich.

Members of the North Barnabas team include Nathan Olson, Brandon Marschner, Sarah Tonneson and Heidi Anenson.

Members of the Timothy team include Ryan Folsland, Owen Parsley, Cassie Fugleberg and Laura Satren.

# AFLBS celebrates 40 years of graduates



**T**he Association Free Lutheran Bible School hosted a celebration March 15 on the Plymouth, Minn., campus, marking 40 years since the first class graduated from the two-year school. AFLBS was founded in 1966. Since 1968, more than 2,800 students have attended AFLBS.

Activities, coinciding with the annual alumni basketball tournaments, included a banquet in Heritage Hall and service with past and present students participating. Five members from the first graduating class were present at the events, and gospel teams from several years provided special music.

Pastor Jerry Moan, class of 1981 and current AFLBS/AFLTS instructor, was the service leader. Pastor Phil Haugen, also an AFLBS/AFLTS professor, provided the message.



TOP: Members of the 1973 Ambassadors ministry team from AFLBS provided special music during the celebration service on March 15 at the chapel building on the AFLBS campus. Members of the team include (from left) James Lindgren, Joel Erickson, Anita (Waddle) Stulen, Tom Fugleberg, and Julie (Dahlgren) Fugleberg.

ABOVE: AFLBS faculty sang "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken" during the banquet in Heritage Hall preceding the celebration service. Pictured are (from left) Pastor Robert Lee, Dr. Francis Monseth, Pastor Jerry Moan, Pastor Phil Haugen, Jerry Nelson and Pastor Joel Rolf.





# the poor

BY BECKY ABEL

Jesus had a special sense of mission to poor and oppressed people. His example should lead us to see our responsibility. We must use the wealth God has entrusted to us to glorify Him by sharing with the poor. This truth was taught by Jesus Himself in Matthew 25:40, “Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto Me.”

In our life on the mission field we have often used opportunities of caring for the needs of the poor as a means of transmitting the message of the One who can satisfy man’s deepest longings and bring lasting change. Over the years we have shared the love of Jesus with many as we have helped with food, medicine, employment, housing and other needs. Our little community here at the ARCA is a snapshot of a group of people who have received the grace of God as a result of an outreach to the needy.

Marcia and her two little girls, Amanda and Gleiciele, lived in an abusive situation. The girls lived in fear. Even after Marcia became a Christian we heard weekly sagas of what happened in their home — daddy taking after mommy with a knife, lack of basic provisions, constant profanities, inappropriate music and TV shows. But their situation is different today. They live with us in the security of a loving family and with the joy of knowing Jesus. Mom and daughters have been baptized and are an integral part of our lives and ministry.

José and Irany were in a desperate situation in a different city. The two are somewhat mentally handicapped and have several health problems, as well. José tried to make a living collecting recyclable garbage. But they lived in squalor. In response to the need we helped build them a small house at the ARCA several years ago. Others help with assistance for food and medicine. José continues to collect recyclables, pushing his little cart all over town. They both

love the Lord and reach out to others in the community, visiting and praying with people.

Evaldo and Lourdes have suffered some unfortunate business setbacks. Having lost everything they had, Evaldo fell into depression. Seeing their struggle as an older couple trying to find meaningful employment, we offered them a place to live and work at the ARCA. They have fully recuperated and have grown closer to the Lord. Today they have their own home where they graciously minister to many through counseling and prayer.

A place to sleep, a plate of food, a job, the warmth of caring people, a sense of belonging—all these means of caring for the poor prepare the way for them to open their hearts to the gospel, to realize that Jesus is real, to discover that God has a special plan for each life for now and for eternity. Caring for the poor goes beyond providing physical solutions. It’s just the first step in gaining the right to share the gospel. The goal is that all men might be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

With so many needs and desperate situations we need wisdom to know how and when to help meet physical needs. We have at times been criticized for helping someone who “doesn’t deserve” to be helped. We respond with another question, “Where would any of us be today if it depended upon us deserving or being worthy of God’s love and salvation?” Perhaps we have erred at times in obeying the still small voice of the Holy Spirit, but we would rather err on the side of generosity and love than on neglecting someone for whom Christ died. After all, “He who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord” (Proverbs 19:17).

*Abel and her husband, Pastor Paul Abel, are AFLC missionaries serving in Curitiba, Brazil.*





BY DANIEL KEINANEN

I was standing in Uganda, near the equator, catching fruit for supper. My friend, Nate, was picking and then throwing avocados down to me. That night we enjoyed fresh avocados with lemon juice squeezed on top, and then sprinkled with sugar. They were delicious! When my wife and I returned home from our time in Uganda, we bought some avocados at our local grocery store. We ate them the same way we did in Uganda. They were not the same. In fact, they weren't all that good. Obviously, these were not as fresh as the avocados in Uganda. We tried to substitute, but it didn't work.

What would happen at next summer's FLY Convention in Estes Park, Colo., if we offered the students something else rather than Jesus Himself? What if we depended on ourselves to put together the convention? Instead of going to the source, Jesus, what if we went to a supermarket to find what we need? Perhaps it would all work out and the week would go well. However, would that produce everlasting fruit? Would it help students see their need to be grounded or firmly planted in Jesus?

The theme for the 2009 Free Lutheran Youth Convention is "Firmly Planted," taken from Psalm 1:1-3. "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers."

We want to offer Jesus at the FLY Convention. We

want Him to be our guide and leader through it all. We cannot substitute Him. We cannot compromise His message. Man has tried and done a decent job making it look good. However, just like I knew the avocados here weren't fresh once I tasted them, so we know when God isn't in complete

control. The verses in Psalm 1 tell us that if we delight in the law of the Lord both day and night, we will be like a tree firmly planted. We all know that if the avocado tree in Uganda didn't have roots, Nate wouldn't have been able to climb the tree, and we wouldn't have had avocados that night. The need to be firmly planted in Jesus is even more important if we are to bear fruit for His Kingdom.

I am excited to witness firsthand what God will do at the 2009 FLY Convention. I can tell you the members of the FLY Committee have been praying for God to move in whatever way He desires. God has provided some great speakers for us already. He has paved the way for a Christian band to come and minister to us through music. He has given us others to assist and help in the planning process. The FLY Committee's desire is to be firmly planted in Jesus and to produce everlasting fruit. Pray with us. Pray that God will continue His work at the FLY Convention. Pray that students and adults will see their need to be planted in Jesus. I hope to see you in Estes Park July 6-10, 2009.

*Keinanen, the president of the 2009 FLY Committee, is a youth pastor at Christ is Lord Lutheran, Onalaska, Wis.*

## ► March/April memorials

### AFLBS

Alexina Amiot  
Mary Ann Blake  
Anna Asp  
Arlo Pearson (3)  
Kurt Blake  
Corrine Nansen

### AFLTS

Corrine Nansen  
Mary Ann Blake  
Anna Asp  
Eldon Anderson

### General Fund

Josie Danielson

### Home Missions

Anna Asp  
Aurene Kragness  
Myron Koppang  
Ray Erbes  
Arlo Pearson  
Jervis Bjerkgager

### Miriam Infant Home

Samuel Keith Johnson

### Parish Education

Margery Boschoff

### WMF

Stella Opsahl  
Florence Otto

### World Missions

Harlan Sondrol  
Pastor Milo Gudim  
Pernell Dahlen  
Genevieve Jensen  
Bruce May  
Manly Miller  
Corinne Danielson

... in honor of

### Parish Education

Judith Wold

### WMF

Dorothy Presteng

### World Missions

Mabel Melby

## PEOPLE AND PLACES

**Doris Persson**, 92, wife of Pastor Ray Persson, died April 14 in Astoria, Ore. The Perssons served AFLC congregations in Astoria; Bemidji, Minn.; Boscobel, Wis.; and interim work in Lake Stevens, Wash. A memorial service was held at Bethany Free Lutheran in Astoria on April 18. She is survived by her husband, her son, Paul (Lois) Persson, her daughter, Pauline (Bill) Moberg, six grandchildren and two brothers.

**Hazelle Featherstone**, 80, wife of the late Pastor Phil Featherstone, died April 20 in Osceola, Wis. Born Aug. 21, 1917, in Red Wing, Minn., she was the daughter of Aaron and Vandella Lundell. She worked as a nurse for 26 years at St. Barnabas Hospital in Minneapolis. She married Phil in 1974. They served AFLC churches in Colfax, Wis., and Pukwana, S.D. They moved to the Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis., in 1996. The funeral service was held April 29 at the ARC, with Pastor Robert Lee officiating.

**Andy Coyle**, a 2008 graduate of AFLTS, will be ordained June 8 at his home congregation, Word of Life Lutheran, Mankato, Minn. The Coyles have accepted a call to serve the Iowa congregations of St. Paul's Lutheran, Jewell, and Salem Lutheran, Radcliffe.

**Olaf Friggstad**, 86, an evangelist with the AFLC Canada, died April 11. Born June 29, 1921, in Frontier, Saskatchewan, he was the son of Anna and Berto Friggstad. He married Carol Gilbertson, Feb. 3, 1943. She died in 2006. He was a farm innovator and manufacturer, founding Friggstad Manufacturing in 1970. He was a member of Bethel Lutheran, Frontier. He traveled extensively as a lay evangelist for 35 years to churches, conferences and Bible camps. The funeral service was April 16 at Bethel Lutheran.

The members of **Sunburg Free Lutheran**, Sunburg, Minn., will celebrate the congregation's 130th anniversary on August 24. Everyone is welcome to the special events planned for that day.

**Pastor David Hesje**, Sidney, Mont., accepted a call to serve Bethel Lutheran Church, Elbow, Saskatchewan, and has already begun his ministry there.

## Giles step down from world missions work

Pastor Dan and Debbie Giles have resigned from their work as AFLC missionaries in Jerez, Mexico. Last December they requested time away from their work in Mexico to be with Dan's father, who is suffering from health problems. The World Missions Committee granted the Giles a two-month leave of absence, and they traveled to Phoenix in January.



Through prayer and after considering the condition of Dan's aging parents, the Lord impressed upon Dan and Debbie that He would have them continue to care for Dan's father.

Dan and Debbie have been missionaries with the AFLC since 1985 and will be dearly missed. The work in Jerez will be carried on by Todd and Barb Schierkolk. Dan and Debbie's daughter, Ingrid, and their son, Danny, and his wife, Marcela, remain in Jerez and continue as short-term mission assistants. They are supported by free will offerings sent through the AFLC World Missions department.

## AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- April 30, 2008

FUND	TOTAL (Subsidy)	REC'D IN APRIL	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$360,331	\$36,710	\$126,510	35
Evangelism	113,084	7,965	31,081	27
Youth Ministries	71,249	7,707	30,150	42
Parish Education	116,771	15,326	43,916	38
Seminary	220,252	19,366	60,569	27
Bible School	346,706	40,295	98,901	29
Home Missions	332,985	24,406	80,282	24
World Missions	288,948	25,213	105,640	37
Personal Support	457,495	45,099	164,368	36
TOTALS	\$2,307,821	\$222,086	\$741,419	32
TOTALS 2007	\$2,220,688	\$188,934	\$735,181	33
Goal 33%				
These are the Annual Conference-approved budgets but do not reflect all the financial needs of the departments. Contact the individual departments for further information.				

# [GOD'S] CREATION

**M**ight our religion be killing us?" That is the title of a recent opinion piece Oliver "Buzz" Thomas wrote for *USA Today*. He asks the question, "Is what we preach — and ultimately, what we believe — hastening the destruction of our planet?" Thomas believes too many people are following the command of Genesis 9:7: "As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it." He fears overpopulation is going to destroy the planet and urges religious leaders to tell people, "Stop having so many children."



Pastor Craig Johnson

Thomas is not alone in his fears. Many are concerned about increased population and pollution. They are nervous about the rising temperature on the planet and worry about all the things that might go wrong.

I've read a little bit about global warming, but the reality is science was not my favorite subject in school.

When they start giving the statistics on how much ice the polar bears have to live on I get tempted to doze off. Some people enjoy diving into the details of the scientific arguments. I'm afraid that's not me.

Thomas' argument, however, isn't scientific as much as it is theological. He is basically saying we are going to ruin God's creation if we do what God has said. That is a very low view of God and His Word.

Whatever God has told us to do is the right and best thing to do. We may give directions that later prove to be faulty, but God is not like that. The Bible says, "Be careful to obey so that it may go well with you" (Deuteronomy 6:3, NIV). It is good for us and all of God's creation if we follow the Lord's commands.

The problems that exist on this planet are not because we have obeyed God. Our disobedience is the cause of the troubles. Too often we have treated this earth as if it is ours to do with as we please. We should take good care of it and not pollute and mistreat it because it all belongs to God. Jesus said, "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property

to them" (Matthew 25:14). The Master has graciously entrusted His property into our care. He will return and take account of what we have done with it.

We care for creation not because the earth is "our mother" as some claim. We care for it properly because the earth belongs to our Father in heaven.

Since this is our Father's world, we don't live in fear about what is going to happen to it. Some think the future of this planet is totally dependent on what we do. We are not that strong, and God is not that weak. God created the earth, and He is the one who keeps it going. He is able to sustain it in spite of our sinfulness and foolishness. The earth will continue to exist until the Lord decides it is time for the new heaven and the new earth to come into being,

The problems that exist on this planet are not because we have obeyed God. Our disobedience is the cause of the troubles.

and the first heaven and the first earth will pass away (Revelation 21:1).

Our confidence for the future should not be taken as a license to abuse God's creation. Instead, the graciousness of God and the hope we have in Him should motivate us to take good care of all He has made and enjoy His good gifts. We do it not because our future is dependent on what we do, but because our confidence is in Christ.

In October 2007, in a museum in Paris, vandals punched a hole in a renowned work of art by the famous painter Claude Monet. People deplored this defacing of a masterpiece.

Mistreating God's creation should be looked at in a similar way. Creation is the most beautiful work of art our eyes can behold until Jesus returns. Out of love and respect for the Artist let us properly care for it.



*something to share*

# Spiritual FITNESS

BY NATHAN OLSON

When I visited a workout center recently, I couldn't help but notice the shirts soaked with sweat, the heavy breathing, and the sense of achievement as substantial weights were being lifted to their highest potential. The people working out were seeing the result of becoming more fit: losing the extra weight they had put on over the winter and slowly but steadily lifting and pressing more weights. It was quite impressive to watch the training. They were able to do far beyond what I could imagine doing.

While I watched in wonder, one of the nearby staff members also wondered about the chance of getting me to sign up for a membership. He patiently explained to me all the benefits of the fitness program they had available and how there was "no other thing that I should be more concerned about" than in being as fit as I could be. I could improve my cardiovascular system, build and tone my muscles, and even increase my life expectancy by getting into a daily workout routine — with them, of course!

As I left the workout center, impressed by some of the physical achievements I had witnessed, I thought back to what the gym trainer had told me about being as fit as I could be. There's a lot of truth to what he said. It reminded me of Paul's exhortation in I Timothy 4:7: "Train your-

self to be godly ..." It's the same kind of call as the trainer had given me, except Paul calls us to spiritual training.

Just as there are benefits in physical training, spiritual training offers lifelong benefits. Through times of prayer and devotions in God's Word, each and every one of us can see the benefits not only in this life, but also in the life to come. It can definitely increase your life expectancy.

But how is this possible? How can we train to be godly? You can't enroll in a monthly subscription for godliness — or can you? Spiritual fitness is something God calls us as believers to subscribe to (without the monthly fee). Amidst busy lives filled with jobs, family, and friends, spiritual fitness means disciplining yourself to load on those spiritual weights, take up the spiritual barbells and dig into the Word of God.

How about you? Is your shirt going to be soaked with the sweat of prayer? Are people going to notice your spiritual muscles? Ultimately this spiritual training that God calls us to will lead to benefits both in this life and in the life to come. Therefore, as believers in Christ, we need to be keeping fit and training to be godly.

*Olson, a junior at AFLBS, is a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn.*